

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

125

WILLIAM SMITH AND THE BAY CHALEUR

FISHERY

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Notarized accounts of William Smith with those engaged in the Bay Chaleur fishery in the decade prior to Loyalist settlement in Gaspesia.

KEN ANNETT

WILLIAM SMITH AND THE BAY CHALEUR FISHERYFOREWORD

Charles Robin of Jersey, in his fascinating REMARKS ON THE SETTLEMENT IN LOWER CANADA SINCE THE CONQUEST, opens with this statement:

"The first British Merchants who settled in Bay Chaleurs, in the township of Bonaventure, were some of the best Quebec houses, as MOORE and FINDLAY, ALEXANDER MCKINSEY and a few others. In the year 1766 C.Robin explored the said Bay Chaleurs, where he went in the brig "SEA FLOWER" on a fishing excursion; to satisfy his curiosity and for the advantage of the concerned. That very year William Smith ( who had been brought up in the House of MOORE and FINDLAY and had been at Bonaventure at different times to settle their business) came to Bonaventure on his own account to lay the foundation of a House of trade and fishing. William Smith and Charles Robin begun their operations the following year, the former at Bonaventure and the latter at Paspébiac with each a vessel..."

The information on the background of William Smith provided by his contemporary, Charles Robin, can be supplemented by the following extract from a report of the Caledonian Society of Restigouche at the Old Athol House Cemetery Memorial Service of August 6th., 1972:

"... The British Traders were slow in moving in after the Battle of the Restigouche and it was not until 1768 that George Walker, a Scot, set up a trading post at Walker Brook. In 1769 Hugh Baillie, another Scot, and a partner of Walker, built up a large trade in fish, furs, hides and salted salmon. Baillie sold his property to John Shoolbred, a London Merchant,

in 1773. Shoolbred established the first permanent settlement on the Restigouche when his agent, William Smith, brought out eight Aberdeen fishermen and their families and established his headquarters and a salmon pickling factory at Old Misson Point. Samuel Lee leased this property from Shoolbred from 1785 to 1787 but in 1788 Shoolbred lost his title and Samuel Lee obtained a direct grant to the property from the Province of New Brunswick..."

In addition to his interests at Bonaventure and Restigouche, William Smith and his business associate, Duncan Anderson, bought the Seigniory of Grand River on the Bay Chaleur from Henry Morin, his wife and Michel Bouchard in 1772 for the sum of £ 2200. Owners of the Seigniory had full right to fish, hunt and trade from a territory with a frontage of one and a half leagues on Bay Chaleur and a depth of two leagues.

The context of the Bay Chaleur fishery was succinctly outlined in the REMARKS of Charles Robin as follows:

"...On William Smith and Charles Robin first settling in the Bay (Chaleur) they found their predecessors, the Quebec merchants in a state of decay and two years after they were bankrupt and gone. A Halifax Employ of considerable magnitude was set up at Bonaventure on the first year of their settlement, which subsisted about three years. At that time Percé, Bonaventure Island and the coast near Gaspé was a complete wilderness and remained so for many years till the fishermen of Rhode Island, Cape Cod and neighbourhood came with sloops and schooners which they laid up in Gaspé and carried on the fishery in whale boats which they bought at the different posts from Cape d'Espoire to Point St. Peter, which was the renewal of that business on that coast since the French had been driven out of it; no European shipped off any of that fish to the year 1778. Owing to the American war, William Smith went to the country for the last time.."

The American War - these words of the REMARKS of Charles Robin recall one of the most dramatic and troublesome periods of the Bay Chaleur district. From Gaspé Bay to Restigouche, American privateers prowled the coast, seized shipping, plundered and looted fishing posts and settlements and encouraged native Indians to attack and harry merchants and settlers. The story recounted in the Public Archives of Canada Report - "CORRESPONDENCE WITH MAJOR NICHOLAS COX, LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF GASPE", an unpublished appendix to the GASPE OF YESTERDAY article - THE LIFE AND TIMES OF NICHOLAS COX. 1724-1794, contains most interesting letters of both William Smith and Charles Robin, among others. As example, the letter of William Smith of October 3, 1778 from Bonaventure to Governor Haldimand at Quebec, includes these points:

" Since his previous letter the coast has been repeatedly threatened with destruction by the enemy, which had been baffled until the 27th., when four vessels were captured by an American privateer, a schooner called the CONGRESS, Samuel Hobbs, Commander. The vessels captured are the BEE with a very rich cargo of codfish, peltry and merchandise; the OTTER with fish, oil and peltry; the NORMAN with fish and the FOX with fish, salmon, oil, flour and staves...  
 ...It is a melancholy situation to see all property wrested from us at our own door, after being promised protection by the Government, in faith of which we engaged considerable outfits which the nature of the business requires...His sorrow at having to communicate the ruin of every British factory on the Gulph; his firm being the last existing..."

Contemporary accounts of the early Gaspesian fishery by Quebec authors tend to present the men who headed up the fishery firms as grasping, monopolistic entrepreneurs. Little recognition appears to be given of the political and economic context in which men like William Smith and Charles Robin operated and of the trials, tribulations and very real losses they faced.

It is precisely to give the fishery of that distant time a human dimension that GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY presents herewith the notarized accounts of William Smith as recorded in the records of Antoine Panet, N.P.

These accounts, which reflect the ever-present struggle of both the fisherman and the merchant to survive, would appear to offer a humane and cooperative approach to the essential relationship of the supplier and the supplied.



FISHERMEN AT ISLE PERCÉ AT THE MOUTH OF THE ST LAWRENCE

TODAY, THE TWENTY FOURTH OF JULY, FORENOON, ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY, BEFORE THE UNDERSIGNED NOTARIES OF QUEBEC APPEARED MESSRS DAVID SHOOLBRED, MERCHANT, AND OLIVER WHITE, CAPTAIN OF THE SCHOONER, "JULIE", BOTH RESIDENT IN THIS CITY; WHICH SAID MR.SHOOLBRED HANDED OVER TO THE SAID CAPTAIN WHITE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE UNDERSIGNED NOTARIES THE ORIGINAL BILLS OF WHICH COPIES BELOW ; MOREOVER, MR.SHOOLBRED GAVE TO THE SAID CAPTAIN WHITE THE INSTRUCTIONS OF MR. WILLIAM SMITH TO SIGN FOR HIM AND THE POWER OF ATTORNEY OF MR.DAVID SHOOLBRED REGARDING SUBSTITUTION OF POWER OF THE SAID MR.SMITH AND CAPTAIN WHITE; DECLARING AND AFFIRMING TO THE SAID CAPTAIN WHITE THAT HE COMMAND THE SAID SCHOONER, "JULIE" WITH WHICH HE SAILS TODAY BOUND FOR PERCÉ AND THE BAY CHALEUR FROM QUEBEC, WITH CARGO FOR MR. WILLIAM SMITH, AND THAT HE CARRY WITH HIM THE ORIGINAL BILLS, INSTRUCTIONS AND POWER OF ATTORNEY, DATED THIS DAY, RECORD OF WHICH WILL REMAIN IN THE STUDY OF Me.PANET, NOTARY, AS UNDERSIGNED.

THIS ACT WAS REQUIRED BY MR.DAVID SHOOLBRED OF THE UNDERSIGNED NOTARIES TO SERVE IN THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF THE SAID BILES AND INSTRUCTIONS.

DONE AT QUEBEC IN THE YEAR ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY AND SIGNED AFTER READING.

(signed) David Shoolbred  
 Oliver White  
 A, Panet, N.P.  
 A. Berthelot, N.P.

[ The spelling of the names in these accounts is that which appears in the manuscript Deed. ]

EXTRACTS FROM THE SEVERAL BILLS AND ACCOUNTS DUE TO WILLIAM SMITH,  
THE ORIGINALS OF WHICH WERE SENT TO BAY CHALEUR BY DAVID SHOOLBRED  
IN THE CARE OF CAPTAIN OLIVER WHITE. THE NOTARIAL DEED WHICH  
INCLUDES THESE ACCOUNTS CONSTITUTED DEPOSIT AND ACT OF DECLARATION.

24 JULY 1780

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<u>BILL / ACCOUNT</u>	<u>DETAILS</u>
£ 15 Jean David and Pierre Houart. Port Daniel. 11 July 1771	Witnesses- William Smith and John Blake. Promise to pay by delivery of 30 quintals of merchantable cod.
£ 24-15-2 Joseph Vautour Tracadiguiche. (Carleton) 20 October 1772	Witnesses- Marie LeBlanc and Marguerite Bourdot. Promise to pay by delivery July next of good merchant- able cod at 10 shillings per quintal. [ quintal = 112 lb.
£ 36-17-6 Mathieu Brassieur Bonaventure. 3 Sept. 1772 and	Supplies advanced included flour, butter, salt, lines, lead, knives, boots, coats, tobacco.
£ 53-14-3 Jean-Baptiste and Francois Brassieur Paspebiac. 12 May 1774	Account credited with "fish received from Mr. Robin" (Charles Robin, contemporary of William Smith in Bay Chaleur)
£ 86-8-2 Thomas Condon and John McGrath of Percé who had come to Bonaventure on the schooner, JULIA. 22 June 1777	Payment promised in good cod at Percé - price then and there prevailing.
£ 3-3-0 William Stappleton. Bonaventure 2 August 1777	Witnessed by Theophilus Fox Endorsed by Capt. Philip Journeaux.

BILL / ACCOUNT	DETAILS
E 10-15-9 Etienne Bergeron and Elias D'Amboise Bonaventure. 31 Aug.1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred (Echo of the French Regime in wording of amount as "dix Louis".
E 37-16-4 M.Parisé. Bonaventure 7 Sept.1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred Note- No unreasonable demand to be made in the event of illness or accident during the coming year.
E 48-18-6 Baptiste Albert dit Gabriel Bonaventure. 7 Sept.1778	Witness- M.Parisé Note - For my father and with consent of my mother.
E 5-6-10 Renay Bouttiller Bonaventure. 7 Sept.1778	Witness - M.Parisé
E 30-0-11 Joseph Cormier Bonaventure. 7 Sept.1778	Witness- M.Parisé
E 4-12-5 Charles Normandau Tracadiguiche. 7 Sept.1778	Witness- Wife of B. LeBlanc
E 28-6-1 William Johnson Tracadiguiche. 8 Sept, 1778	Witness- Wife of B.LeBlanc
E 19-5-7 Charles Allard Tracadiguiche. 8 Sept. 1778	Witness- Wife of B.LeBlanc Interest from Sept. 1, 1777.
E 44-7-4 Claude Arceneau Tracadiguiche. 8 Sept.1778	Witness- Wife of B. LeBlanc With interest until payment in full.
E 8-8-0 Joseph Boudrot,Jr. Tracadiguiche. 9 Sept. 1778	Witness- Wife of B. LeBlanc
E 26-10-0 Joseph Boudrot, Sr. Tracadiguiche. 9 Sept. 1778	Witness- Wife of B.LeBlanc
E 70-3-2 Benjamin LeBlanc Tracadiguiche. 12 Sept.1778	Two years granted for complete payment. Note of 29 Sept 1778- deduct from this bill "cinquante piastres" for increase of salary. He may have worked for Smith.



BILL / ACCOUNTDETAILS

£ 82-1-7	Francois Commeaur Tracadiguiche. 12 Sept.1778	With interest for past year.
£ 117-14-1	Uriah Coffin Bonaventure. 17 Sept.1778 [ A reference in subsequent account to "Sundry Goods from New London by Coffin" raises possibility that Capt. Uriah Coffin had links with P.E.I. ]	Witness- Henry Shoolbred Repayment in money, peltries, fish or staves at the rates following - Merchantable fish...11-8 Inferior fish.....10- Beaver...5/ Foxes...4/ Otter....20/ Martin..20-6 Cats.....10/
£ 11-0-10	Louis Arcenau Bonaventure. 18 Sept.1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 2-17-6	Francois Arcenau Bonaventure. 18 Sept.1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 80-0-0	Olivier Blanchard Bonaventure. 18 Sept.1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 4-1-8	William McFee Percé. 10 October 1778	Promise to repay with seven quintals of merchantable fish. Endorsed by Capt. Philip Journeaux.
£ 36-0-4	Pierre Terriour Bonaventure. 21 October 1778	Witness - Henry Shoolbred To be allowed two to three years to repay.
£ 40-2-2	Placide Bigauld Bonaventure. 28 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 28-6-9	Joseph Bourg Bonaventure. 26 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 34-4-8	Pierre Sire Bonaventure. 26 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 50-8-4	Charles Sire Bonaventure. 26 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred

BILL / ACCOUNT	DETAILS
£ 21-0-0 Louis Bernard. Bonaventure. 27 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 28-10-0 B. Lepage Bonaventure. 27 October 1778	Witness-Henry Shoolbred
£ 28-6-6 Pierre Poirier Bonaventure. 27 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 37-3-8 Amboise Babin Bonaventure. 27 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 33-19-10 Joseph Gautier Bonaventure. 27 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred Note by Wm Smith - "If I do not come to the Coast next year, Joseph Gauthier will have three years to pay this account.
£ 64-2-2 Pierre Robisheau Bonaventure. 29 October 1778	Witness - Henry Shoolbred
£ 24-15-5 Charles Bigauld Bonaventure. 29 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 84-5-2 Paul Bigauld Bonaventure 29 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 41-19-9 Madame D' Eouffle Bonaventure 30 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 5-15-0 Basil Bertrand 30 October 1778 Bonaventure	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 99-4-1 Etienne Barthelotte Bonaventure. 30 October 1778	Witness-Henry Shoolbred
£ 55-11-1 Pierre Courray Bonaventure. 30 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
£ 43-16-6 Michelle Robisheau Bonaventure. 30 October 1778	Witness-Henry Shoolbred Account reduced £ 5-7-6 for 43 days work at 2/6

BILL / ACCOUNT	DETAILS
E 51-6-0 Jean-Marie Dugay Bonaventure. 30 October 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
E 70-18-1 Francois Dugay Bonaventure. 1 November 1778	Witness- Henry Shoolbred
E 5-6-4 George Allan Bonaventure. 6 November 1778	This account bears initials D.S. and O.W. - thought to be David Shoolbred and Oliver White (Captain)
E 215-7-4 Rev. Joseph W. Bourg Bonaventure, 6 November 1778 (Ref. GASPE OF YESTERDAY- ABBE JOSEPH BOURG.)	To be paid next summer with interest. If paid sooner no interest to be charged.
E 116-11-2 Louis Duny Bonaventure. 6 November 1778	Correction of name to read clearly, Louis Duny.
E 118-12-4 Simon Henry Bonaventure. 6 November 1778	This account to be reduced for logs to be cut by Simc Henry and delivered either to the "old mill" or to schooner in Bonaventure harbour. 600 shillings.
E 58-5-7 Signed for Bertrand Derosbia by Louis Duny Bonaventure. 6 November 1778	
E 7-10-0 Michal Caton Piercy (sic) 25 Sept. 1775	Witness- Theophilus Fox Note- This man lives near St. Anne's, Quebec Endorsed by William McFee
E 1-13-4 Piercy (sic) 16 Sept. 1775 John Johnson	Promise to pay Mr. George Walker or order for value received of Mr. Fox.
E 182-16-1 Joseph Arcenau Bonaventure. 7 November 1778	alias Cointim

BILL / ACCOUNT	DETAILS
£ 114-19-17 Leon Roussy 29 September, 1779	A detailed account of two pages in which the following contemporary names appear: Roxburgh; Robin; Moignard; Arcenau; Callouette; Bonamy. To have two years to pay balance owing.
£ 37-6-9 Pierre Poirier Doeron Bonaventure. 27 October 1777	Random prices in 1777- Rum... 2 shillings. Molasses 4 shillings/gallon Nails... 2 shillings/100 Flour... 2 shillings/"quart"
£ 174-9-2 MacFee and Richardson Pierci (sic) 1 August 1777	Estate of Nipisquit £ 163-15-3 balance of their account of 1775 rendered them by Mr. Theophilus Fox.
£ 8-3-6 Joseph Laflame Piercé 1 September 1776	Amount owing Joseph Arbour for balance of account between Philip Journeaux and Joseph Laflame.
£ 9-16-10 Michael Reardon Piercé 1 October 1779	Witness- Theophilus Fox Two quintals of merchant-able fish received on account. £ 4 Halifax currency also paid on account.
£ 265-9-2 Theophilus Fox Gaspé 3 November 1779	Detailed account in which mention is made of: Mr. O'Hara(Felix) John Moriarty; Pierre Langlois Michel Poser; Alex. Taylor
£ 487-17-8 Walter Berry Quebec 20 August 1779	Evidently a fellow merchant of Quebec City.