

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

134

HARRISON
OF
MATANE

Recalling Samuel Harrison
who came to Matane from the
American Colony of Maryland
to establish in Gaspesia the
"famille Harrisson" of his
descendants.

KEN ANNETT

HARRISON OF MATANEFOREWORD

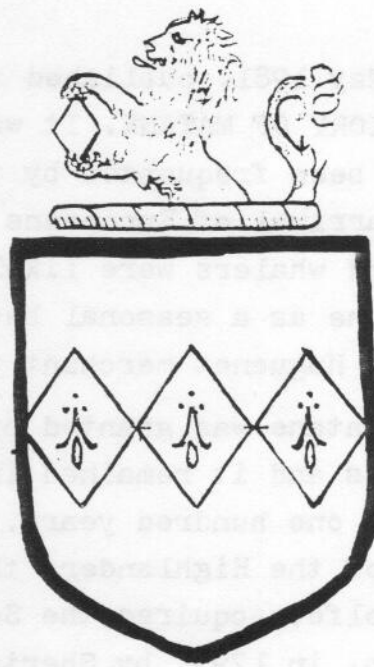
SPEC, in its issue of 27 May 1981, published the GASPE OF YESTERDAY article, THE SEIGNIORY OF MATANE. It was recalled by this article that Matane had been frequented by the Micmac Indians of Gaspesia long before the arrival of Europeans in the Saint Lawrence. Basque fishermen and whalers were likely the first overseas voyagers to use Matane as a seasonal base and they were followed by early French Huguenot merchant traders.

In 1672 the Seigniorship of Matane was granted by the Colony of New France to Mathieu D'Amours and it remained in the hands of his descendants for more than one hundred years. In 1781, Donald McKinnon, a veteran officer of the Highlanders that fought at Québec under General James Wolfe, acquired the Seigniorship of Matane from the D'Amours heirs. Then, in 1793, by Sheriff's Sale, Simon Fraser Jr., seafaring son of Augustin Fraser of Beaumont, became the Seigneur of Matane. Though Simon Fraser Jr. died in 1805 his widow, Jane McCallum Fraser, Seignioress until her death in 1843, promoted the growth and prosperity of Matane.

By seigniorial rule and custom it was the responsibility of the Seigneur to provide a mill for the grinding of the grain of the community. In search of a competent miller, Simon Fraser Jr. met Samuel Harrison of Maryland while on a voyage to the American colonies and brought him back to Matane to be the operator of the seigniorial mill.

On the occasion of the Tercentenary of the founding of the Seigniorship of Matane descendants of Samuel Harrison celebrated the arrival of their ancestor. The account which follows is a translation of the text prepared on that occasion.

HARRISON



Extracts from - NEW ENGLAND FAMILY COATS
OF ARMS. By A.F.Donnell.

- . The name signifies son of Harris.
- . John Harrison appeared in the records of Salisbury, Mass. in 1640. He moved to Boston, Mass. in 1643.
- . Richard Harrison arrived at New Haven circa 1643. His descendants moved to Newark.
- . Mark Harrison signed a petition to the General Court of Mass. in 1654.
- . Rev. Thomas Harrison, brother of Richard of New Haven, was born in England and settled at New Haven in 1654. He later moved to Brandford, Conn.
- . The marriage of Isaac Harrison is on record at Hadley, Mass. in 1671.
- . Nicholas Harrison was living at Dover, N.H. from 1673 to 1707

- . Peter Harrison was the architect for the King's Chapel of Boston in 1749. He also planned the Redwood Library of Newport, R.I.

LA FAMILLE HARRISSON

The Harrisson family is among the first to settle at Matane. Its origins in Gaspesia go back to the early years of the 19th century. The founder, Samuel Harrison, from the American colony of Maryland, was Protestant in faith. He left Maryland circa 1806 in reaction to the military service that had claimed the lives of two of his brothers. He was at Matane by 1808 when his name was listed as the miller of the seigniory.

Simon Fraser, Jr., the seafaring Seignior of Matane, recruited Samuel Harrison and brought him to Matane as miller. At that time the agricultural development of the seigniory was being promoted after years of neglect. Every Seignior was required by law and custom to provide a flour mill for his tenants. At Matane the first mill was built at Petit Matane, near the river and on the brook that is known today as Ruisseau de la Gouèche but the as the Ruisseau du Vieux Moulin.

Samuel Harrison received from Fraser the grant of several lots of land to the East of the mill - lots still held by his descendants. Being young and single on his arrival at Matane married in 1812 on the occasion of a visit to Matane of the Bishop of Québec. The record stated: "Samuel Harrison, protestant, y a épousé devant témoins, Marguerite Fournier, catholique"

Of this marriage six children were born : Oliver, Augustin, Guillaume, Jean, Samuel, Marguerite

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[NOTE - With reference to the marriage of Samuel Harrison and Marguerite Fournier of Matane it is of interest to know that the RECORD OF PROTESTANT MARRIAGES FOR LEVIS COUNTY show that the couple were married in 1836]

Tradition holds that Samuel's wife, Marguerite Fournier, distinguished herself by a singular act of bravery. She succeeded, rifle at her shoulder, in convincing an American frigate that had anchored off their house at Petit Matane to capture Samuel and take him back to the United States, to leave without accomplishing its mission. If Marguerite had not succeeded in guarding her husband from capture one may well ask if there would have been Harrissons in the region today.

SAMUEL'S PERSONALITY

We have some knowledge of the character and personality of our Harrison ancestor. Imbued with a protestant, even puritan, mentality it is said that he insisted that his wife cook the food for Sunday on Sarurday and that he would never accept maney from anyone on Sunday. He was a man who imposed on himself strict rules of living . He had a hunting camp at the place known today as Les Méchins, on the brook that has always been known as the Ruisseau-â-Sam (pronounced Sem) in his honour. One day he found at this hunting camp a young shipwrecked lad of 14 years of age who had sought refuge there. The exhausted youth, unable to walk along the rough path of the time, was carried to Petit Matane on Samuel's back, and looked after for a year. Thus the parents of the young man recovered their lost son.

DEFENCE OF MATANE

Though he had left his native Maryland to avoid army service, Samuel Harrison served, together with his son, Samuel Jr. in the Matane Militia commanded by the Seignior Fraser. Many other communities raised militia at this time when the British authorities feared American invasion and wished that all have a minimum of military training. Actually the habitants had very

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little time to spare for military training being so occupied with their land and crops for survival.

IMPROVED MILL

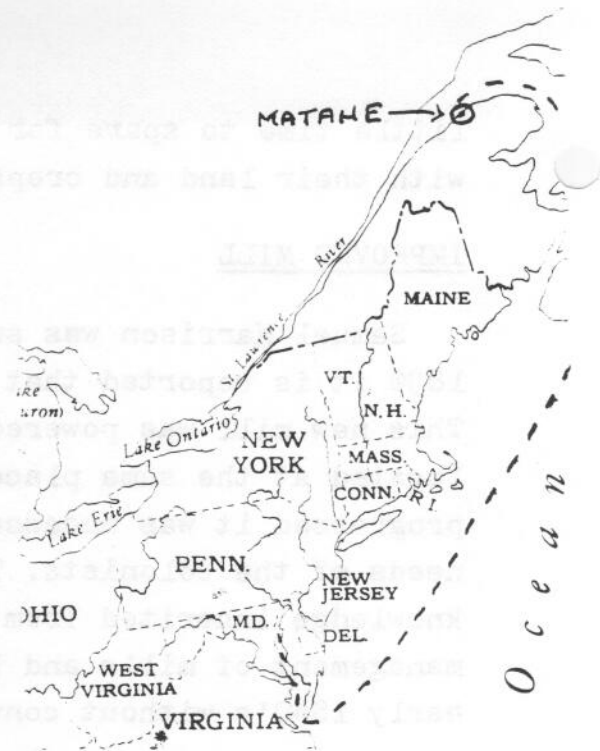
Samuel Harrison was successful in his work as miller. About 1830 it is reported that he rebuilt or improved the banal mill. This new mill was powered by a turbine and was, without doubt, located at the same place as the former mill. As colonization progressed it was necessary to be better prepared to meet the needs of the colonists. The Harrison family long retained the knowledge inherited from the founder with respect to the management of mills and businesses. Samuel Harrison died in the early 1840's without converting to Roman Catholicism.

DESCENDANTS

Notwithstanding the death of Samuel, the special relationship of the Harrison family with that of the Frasers continued. About 1860 a "saline" (a building for the salting of fish) was built for the Seigneur by Samuel Jr. (who married Angèle Gagnon in 1830) on a seaside lot; this building was used to dry and prepare cod and mackerel for shipment to England. The descendants of Samuel Sr. continued to operate mills. In 1903 Georges Harrisson built a saw mill near the site of the old flour mill. After some years its machinery was moved to another mill built by Georges on his land near the river. On Range 2, on the Petit Matane River, the Harrissons operated for some time a turbine driven saw mill. Now, nearby, there is a model sugar bush operated by Raymond Harrisson - one of the best and most frequented of the region. It is reached by the SAMUEL HARRISON ROAD - a road named by the municipality of Petit Matane in honour of the pioneer.

Descendants of the pioneer Harrison are dispersed throughout the district : Petit Matane, Matane, St-Luc, Ste-Félicité, St-Anselme, Grosses-Roches, Les Méchins, etc. The family is deeply rooted in the Matane countryside. Several members are very active in business and are found heading up commercial and trading firms. Thus they reflect the spirit of initiative of their Harrison ancestors.

SAMUEL HARRISON SR.
LEFT HIS NATIVE MARYLAND
TO SETTLE AT MATANE AS
MILLER OF THE SEIGNIORY.



A TYPICAL, EARLY FLOUR
MILL POWERED BY A WATER
WHEEL WHICH DREW ITS
WATER FROM AN ADJACENT
BROOK.

