

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE GASPÉ SCHOOL SITUATION  
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1859-1860  
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School Inspector Béchard's first reports on  
the schools of Gaspé County on his visits  
of some 125 years ago.

KEN ANNETT

THE GASPÉ SCHOOL SITUATION -1859-60

FOREWORD

As this article is one of a series recalling earlier education in Gaspesia, it takes its place with those articles that preceded it:

- #10 BENJAMIN HOBSON - PIONEER GASPESIAN SCHOOLMASTER.  
Published by SPEC, March 23,1979.
- #56 EARLY SCHOOLS IN GASPESIA.  
Published by SPEC, January 6,1982.
- #70 GASPESIA'S FIRST SCHOOL INSPECTOR. (Peter Winter)  
Published by SPEC, January 3,1984.
- #103 JOSEPH MEAGHER, INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS - 1855-1865  
As yet unpublished.

In addition, references to early schools and teachers have been made in the following articles:

- #51 THE 1847 JOURNAL OF THE REV.GEORGE MILNE,M.A.  
As yet unpublished.
- #94 THE LOYALIST CASS FAMILY. (Josiah Cass,Sr.)  
Published by SPEC, April 24,1984.
- #109 THE TUZO FAMILY (Joseph Stowe Tuzo)  
Published by SPEC January 8, 1985.

The following official report of Inspector Béchard for the years 1859-1860 indicates that there was still much room for improvement in Gaspesian schools and in public attitudes to education.

INSPECTOR BÉCHARD'S REPORT FOR 1859.

Mr. Béchard says that no Inspection District presents greater difficulties to the discharge of the duties of the Inspector than the district of Gaspé. In the first place, he had to travel nearly eighty leagues through parts very far from affording easy means of communication, one-third of the circuit being without any kind of road. In going from Rivière-au-Renard to Cape Chatte by land, he had to follow the shore, sometimes journeying 20 or 25 miles without

seeing a human habitation. Thus, the Inspector, a stick in his hand and a travelling bag over his shoulders, has to proceed on his tour, sometimes over boulders which weeds thrown up by the sea render so exceedingly slippery that he may consider himself very lucky if he escape without a broken limb; or he has to plod ankledeep through loose sand, and possibly when these laborious exertions have thrown him into a state of profuse perspiration he is compelled to ford some of the numerous streams which cross his path, perhaps going into the water up to his waist. But he has no alternative, the sun is sinking fast below the horizon, and he has still several long miles to walk before he can reach the nearest fisherman's cabin. Even that humble accommodation is frequently denied him, and he is left to take shelter beneath a tree and to pass the night as he can.

In other parts a road has been made by Government, but it is so intersected by rivers, streams and mountains that at certain seasons of the year it is impossible for the traveller to proceed except on foot. Yet these difficulties are light compared with the obstacles which the people themselves almost everywhere throw in the way of the Inspector.

In his last Report, Inspector Bourgeois says " he sees no longer any of those ignoble beings so appropriately designated extinguishers (éteignoirs) who in some parishes were continually appealing to the popular prejudices, preaching ignorance and inciting rate-payers to quarrel, in short doing all in their power to deprive their children of the benefits of education". But unfortunately Mr. Bédard still meets with some of these éteignoirs in his district. He says: " I can understand how men who do not themselves enjoy the benefits of education, or how a population traditionally opposed to all taxation, such as the Irish and the Acadians, will confound the school-rate with ordinary taxes and resist its collection; but I cannot conceive how men enjoying the advantages of a good education can, through sordid motives, apply themselves to exciting and strengthening the popular antipathy." But they pretend, continues Inspector Bédard, that they wish for schools and are only opposed to being compelled by law to pay for having their children educated. Still, when left to themselves, and uncoerced, they will do nothing, but allow almost all the schools to be closed up; and instead of keeping pace with the rest of the

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country in the gradual advance, they will be actually retrograding. Under the voluntary system the same persons have always had to pay for keeping up the schools, so that it is very reasonable to suppose that their generosity and patience should be exhausted. These serious obstacles in the way of education should be removed at once as they keep this part of the country in a backward state. All the paying situations, from that of the humble bailiff upwards, are, with very few exceptions, in the hands of strangers. There is not a single school in the whole county kept by a native of Gaspé.

Convinced that it was absolutely necessary to have the assessment levied throughout the district, he set to work energetically, though in the face of such a determined and threatening opposition, that he sometimes felt disheartened and almost disposed to abandon the enterprise. He was employed the whole summer in visiting, for the first time, the municipalities under his supervision; everywhere he exerted himself in reconciling the inhabitants to the school tax, the municipality of Grande Riviere being the only one in which he met with no opposition. In some places he was insulted and in others would, it appears, have met with worse treatment, had not some generous persons interposed in his behalf. They imagined that in ridding themselves of the inspector they would also get rid of the law. Indeed it may be said that all who aim at promoting education in this district only court unpopularity, hatred and disappointment.

But there are, however, some redeeming facts to set against these drawbacks. As in other places where the School Acts have been opposed, Gaspé can claim men who have devoted themselves to the cause of education, and who have resisted the popular prejudices, although by so doing they have incurred the risk of becoming very unpopular, and, in some cases of losing very material advantages. To the missionaries, who here, as elsewhere, have ever been ready to forward all enterprises that bear on the interests of religion and education, the country is indebted for the good example set by them; and Mr. Béchard says that his thanks are due to these zealous promoters of the cause, as also to Rev. Mr. Ker, for the moral support they afforded him on all occasions.

[ Significant references to the Rev. Ker, are to be found in the fine book by Miss Dorothy Phillips of Peninsula, Gaspé, ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, PENINSULA. 1979. ]

He is also much indebted to other persons whose names will be found below, for their co-operation in the work. "In my Report for the ensuing year", he continues, "I trust I shall be enabled to convey the intelligence that all the schools in Gaspé have been put under legal control. This important result will have been obtained through the praiseworthy efforts of those enlightened and generous men, and through the Superintendent, who never fails to give his support to all who apply to him, and who so ably attends to the duties of his office"

[ for more than 100 years from the time of this Report Québec had no Minister of Education. The Department of Education was headed up by a Superintendent - a Civil Servant of high rank.]

Opposition to the law was of course the main obstacle to be overcome, but other causes combined to produce the state of things already described, which are thus commented upon in the Report:

- 1st. The ignorance, in several municipalities, of the school commissioners. Parliament should pass a law by which no person should be eligible as school commissioner, who did not know, at least, how to read and write.
- 2nd. The almost total absence of books, maps and other necessaries in school, and the want of school-houses in some parts.
- 3rd. The unpardonable apathy shown by the commissioners in not visiting the schools under their control. If we except the **members of the clergy**, there are not two commissioners in fifteen who have visited the schools; some who had been seven or eight years in office had not made even a single visit. The curé was almost the only one who accompanied the inspector in his visits to the schools; and in several places, where no clergyman resided, the inspector had to make his visits and attend to examinations unassisted, as no one would for a moment be diverted from his usual occupations.
- 4th. Irregular attendance at school, especially during the fishing season, is a very serious evil and on which, together with that of the voluntary contribution, will be most difficult to remedy. In the Spring, children between the ages of from 9 to 16 years are either kept away from school or attend very irregularly. In consequence they often forget during summer what they had learned

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4th. during the winter. Most of the fishermen are poor, and many  
 ctd. may be excused on this account, as they no doubt require the  
 assistance of their children: but they are far from being all  
 justifiable.

5th. The incapacity and neglect of those who fill the office of  
 secretary-treasurer frequently cause great embarrassment in  
 the district; and the importance of this office is not  
 sufficiently understood; if the incumbent is active and intelligent  
 he can render great service; if he is ignorant or negligent he  
 greatly impedes the progress of affairs. But it was expected  
 they would become better informed; as their duties and those  
 of the commissioners are clearly explained in the circulars  
 which the Superintendent has forwarded for distribution. Copies  
 of the School Acts, with notes written by Mr. Béchard, pointing  
 out the clauses amended or repealed, were also distributed  
 throughout the district. He believed much good must result from  
 these distributions.

6th. Another unfavorable circumstance, - the last enumerated -  
 was the want of respect shown to the teacher by the parents.  
 In several of the municipalities of this district the calling  
 of the teacher is not held in that high estimation which it  
 deserves, and he does not himself meet with all the gratitude  
 and respect to which he is entitled. Unkind words, and even  
 abusive language are not infrequently addressed to him in  
 presence of his pupils. On this subject Mr. Béchard quotes -  
 as embodying a full expression of his own views - the  
 following extract from, "THE TEACHER AND THE PARENT", by  
 Mr. Charles Northend:

" I have thus far spoken of the teacher  
 in relation to awakening an interest on the part of his pupils,  
 and now propose to designate one or two particulars in which he  
 may awaken parental interest, and secure parental co-operation.  
 In passing, however, it may be observed that whatever tends to  
 interest the children will, most surely, have a favorable  
 influence upon the parents; and we may, indeed, say it is  
 impossible to obtain a right feeling on the part of the pupils  
 without securing a corresponding one on the part of parents.

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"It is equally true that whatever may incite the parents to judicious feeling and right action will surely cause a better state of feeling with the pupils. Hence, whatever may be suggested as promotive of the interest of either party, will be, in a certain sense, beneficial to all concerned."

"I wish", adds Mr. Béchard, "these fine sentiments were deeply impressed on the minds of every father and mother in my district of inspection".

"The volumes which you have placed at my disposal as prizes for the pupils have uniformly produced a good effect upon the children and their parents. In these trophies - awarded to merit alone - the vanquished saw incentives strong enough to stimulate their ambition; and in some localities they helped to secure a more regular attendance at school. According, I aimed at giving the best prizes to such as had proved the most assiduous - a fact easily ascertained from the register kept by the master."

Each municipality is then noticed separately.

#### PABOS AND NEWPORT.

This municipality contains three districts. Until last summer its school affairs were in a wretched condition. It had then but one school, situated in the District of Newport and kept by Miss Jeanne Ahier, who was not competent to teach even an elementary school, and of course had no diploma. I desired the commissioners to dismiss her, and they did so a few weeks afterwards. In the other districts, - those of Grand and Little Pabos - the schools were closed, but reopened in October; the first by Mr. Louis Ruel, the other by Mr. Joseph Barette, a pupil of the Jacques Cartier Normal School. Mr. Léandre Dagneault now conducts the school at Newport in the room of Miss Ahier. I have not visited these schools since September last, but I have every reason to believe that these teachers (the two last especially, whom I have engaged myself) will acquit themselves of their task with zeal and success. In this municipality, two thirds of whose population are Irish, the assessment has been levied, but is not well received, especially in the two Pabos. Many of the rate-payers had persistently refused to pay the rate, until at last legal

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proceedings had to be resorted to. I had also to apply to Capt. Fortin who, with some of his men, protected the bailiff charged with the writs of execution. This example had a good effect.

[ The reference to Capt. Fortin is to Dr. Pierre Fortin, Stipendiary Magistrate and Overseer of the Fisheries for the Lower River and Gulf of St. Lawrence. His distinguished career was recalled by the GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY article, DR. PIERRE FORTIN, published by SPEC January 21, 1981.]

#### GRANDE-RIVIÈRE

There were two districts in this municipality, each provided with a good school, but a third school was much needed, and Rev. Mr. Desjardins, the curé, a zealous friend to the cause of education, proposed soon to establish a model school near the church, when those already existing, which were too near each other, would be removed towards the extremities of the parish. This would be the first model school ever established in the extensive county of Gaspé. The teachers, Messrs. Thomas Tremblay and Trefle Côté, had diplomas. The school taught by the first was unquestionably the best conducted and most advanced of all the schools in this district of inspection; and in both the children were most conspicuous for their application, good conduct or progress obtained. Each week an honorary medal, which being worn on Sundays before the parishioners, served to distinguish the meritorious. Mr. Béchard saw many of these youths looking as proud of the distinction as a soldier decorated on the field of battle by the hand of an Emperor ! The assessment, so unwelcome everywhere else, was paid regularly and without murmur by the people of this municipality, though they were, in general, poor. The accounts were kept in a satisfactory manner,

#### PERCÉ

This place, the chef-lieu of the county, was the strong-hold of the éteignoirs, who were numerous and powerful, and had many friends among the wealthy and well educated. In the beginning of November the discontent was at its height, and such were the threatenings to hang or burn the inspector that he was once more obliged to seek the assistance of Capt. Fortin whose vessel, LA CANADIENNE, proved very serviceable, though its presence at the time was quite accidental.



Protection was as before, promptly afforded. Rev. Mr. Guilmet, the Curé, did all in his power to support his schools, but was rewarded for his pains with the ingratitude of the parents. The inspector was also indebted to L.G. Harper, Esq., for his advice and moral support amidst the existing difficulties. The village school was kept by Mr. Elzéar Dagneault, who had no diploma, and the results obtained were not very satisfactory. The school in District No. Two (in rear of Percé, a place known as Irish Town) was still less promising. The first time he visited this school 4 pupils attended; the second time, 9. In such case there could be no progress. In District No. Three (Cape Cove) the school was kept by Mr. Philippe Jean Bisson, a native of Jersey, who was possessed of a good commercial education, but whose class, nevertheless, was not conducted with proper regard to order. The English examinations were satisfactory but the French not so. In District No. Four there has been no school for several years, but there was a schoolhouse, with its ground, well situated. Judging from the state in which this building was suffered to remain, he should think the inhabitants of this district were not very favorably disposed toward education. The tables and benches were dilapidated and thrown together in confusion; the rain and snow beat in through the broken door, and loose animals had free access to the school-room; all the glass in the windows was also broken. The accounts of this municipality were badly kept and could not be made out.

#### BONAVENTURE ISLAND

This municipality had but one school district embracing the whole island. Here, no schools had been opened for three years; and there was no prospect of establishing any school so long as the people did not relinquish the system of voluntary contributions. The population of the island was composed of settlers from Jersey, Cuernsey and Ireland.

#### MALBAIE

The school concerns of this municipality were far from being in a prosperous state. The first step taken by Mr. Bécharde was to have the secretary-treasurer dismissed, and replaced by Mr. Patrick Enright, in whose ability and integrity he had full confidence. There were four districts, but only one school was kept open. This he visited in

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company with the Curé, Rev. Mr. Fafard, but finding it was only attended by four pupils, he deemed an examination unnecessary. A few days after this the school was closed, but another opened at the same time in Barre-à-Choir, or District No. One, under the management of Mr. Abraham Fiton, a teacher of experience and merit; though neither he nor Mr. Godfrey had any diploma. The books for this school were furnished by the Curé, the first examination made by the inspector was very satisfactory.

#### DOUGLAS

There were two districts in this municipality, and one school, kept by Miss Gall (? Gaul ?) The examination here was satisfactory in almost every branch to which it extended. Little zeal was shown in Douglas for education; the law was not regularly carried out, and that there was any school at all was due to the exertions of the Curé. It must however be borne in mind that the inhabitants of this municipality were poor, and had, within the space of a few years, taxed themselves heavily to build three churches, which were successively destroyed by fire.

#### YORK AND HALDIMAND (SANDY BEACH)

There had been no school in this municipality for some years. The inspector relied upon Rev. Mr. Kerr's zeal and influence for establishing a school, which he hoped would soon be opened. Here the assessment met with opposition.

#### GASPE BAY SOUTH (GASPE BASIN)

School affairs were in a very sad condition. There had been no election of school commissioners for years; no schools were open, and the assessment met a determined opposition.

#### GASPE BAY NORTH (PENINSULA)

Here everything was in the greatest confusion; no school commissioners had been elected for several years, the municipality had no books in which to keep its accounts, not even a register for its proceedings. One school was open, kept by Mr. Thomas Cole, a native of Guernsey, and an experienced and able English teacher, whose salary was not one fourth of what he was entitled to. His school was one of the best in the

whole district of inspection, ranking next to the school taught by Mr. Tremblay. Yet, owing to the apathy of parents it was poorly attended. The voluntary contribution obtained a decided preference here; and that nothing had been contributed to improve the schools under the existing circumstances was not to be wondered at. It would be difficult to establish the assessment in this place.

#### CAPE DES ROSIERS

This municipality was divided into three districts; one school, a very poor one, was kept in one of the Grande Grave districts by Mr. Wm. Carswell, a teacher without a diploma and not possessed even of the learning necessary to conduct an elementary school. Mr. Béchard adds that, at the time of his visit, he found the school attended by only seven children, and the examination unsatisfactory. Here, as in Percé, there was a decided and systematic opposition to the school law, openly encouraged by the traders of the place; Wm. Hyman, Esq., was an exception in the case, as he had largely contributed towards supporting the schools.

#### RIVIÈRE-AU-RENARD AND ANSE-À-GRISFONDS.

This municipality, which is 7 leagues in extent from Anse-du-Moulin to Anse-à-Vaul'Eau, should be divided into two. It had but one school, which, when the inspector made his visit, was kept temporarily by an able and zealous teacher, Mr. Pierre Blouin. None of the fishing establishments, found scattered over a space of 30 leagues between Rivière-au-Renard and Anse-des-Monts, can support a school, excepting, however, Mont-Louis, where the population being greater, Mr. Béchard would try to open a school in the following Spring.

#### ST. ANNE DES MONTS AND CAPE CHATTE.

A good deal had to be done in both these places before any school could be opened. They had been two years without schools, as those which were in existence at the time of the death of Dr. Lespérance, the former inspector, had been closed a few months after that event. Here, however, there were many children, and ignorance reigned supreme. It was expected, nevertheless, that two schools might be opened the following year through the co-operation of the Curé, Rev. Mr. Michaud,

and Messrs. Perrée and Roy.

In concluding his Report, Mr. Béchard gives the names of the following retired teachers whom he met with during his visits: Messrs Henry Dalton and Louis Boucher, both of Grand River; Mr. Wm. Tilly, Cape Cove; Mr. Jeremiah O'Shea, Percé and Mr. Matthew O'Mara, Gaspé Bay. The first two mentioned had taught school for many years and one of them (Mr. Dalton) had contracted, from exposure in the sheds - then the only schoolhouses to be found here - the seeds of an illness which deprived him of the use of his lower extremities during several years, and afterwards extended to all his limbs. Mr. Boucher, whose health had been more robust, supported better the fatigues and hardships of his noble but ungrateful calling. All these teachers had rendered great services at a time when the schoolmaster was little considered and ill rewarded.

INSPECTOR BÉCHARD'S REPORT FOR  
1860

Mr. Béchard says in his second Report that he is happy to notice some progress in the Gaspé District of Inspection during the year 1860, and that a new era seemed to have dawned for education in that distant part of the country, as the following summary of the results will show: - Several schools were opened during the year; several new localities were erected into school municipalities; a much larger number of children attended the schools; greater sums were paid by the ratepayers; the assessment, formerly so unpopular, was levied in seven municipalities; more eligible candidates for the office of secretary-treasurer were appointed in certain places where an improvement in this respect was much needed, and security was given by a number of these functionaries: uncertified teachers, illiterate and not unimpeachable in their morals, were superseded by the appointment of others more competent and worthy of recommendation. Such in substance was the progress made during the year, - a progress that will be more apparent when compared with results obtained in preceding years.

There were 12 municipalities in this District of Inspection in 1859: this number increased to 17 in 1860, - with 18 teachers, male and female, against 11 in 1859. Of these 6 had diplomas - 2 for Model Schools and 4 Elementary. In 1859 the number of children attending school was 456 only, it had increased, in 1860, to 731 - difference in favor of latter period, 275. In the branches taught there was also a marked progress; and the improvement in the finances of the municipalities was still greater. Against \$1134.73 contributed in 1859 by the ratepayers, the amount in 1860 increased by \$361.24 to \$1495.97. There were just grounds for anticipating a further augmentation under this head in 1861 as the collection of assessments would be made in several municipalities with less difficulty and probably without any legal prosecutions.

The difficulties mentioned in the last Report as retarding the advance of education during previous years still operated in the same manner, although many obstacles had since been overcome. A serious drawback, commented upon in that Report, was the want of uniformity in the books used in the schools; but happily this will soon be remedied, as the Council of Public Instruction has prescribed the text-books which

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shall be exclusively used in public schools; before the Report was published Mr. Bédard had already been informed by an official communication from the Superintendent of Education that measures had been adopted by the Council for securing a series of uniform Readers adapted to the wants of the country - a course which he thinks will be attended with the most beneficial results.

The opposition to the assessment was not so strong as it had been twelve months before, although it was still manifested in some municipalities with continued energy. All impediments would however soon disappear; in a few years the inhabitants of Gaspé would be able to appreciate the importance of education; the school, which had hitherto been wanting, was the only means by which they might hope to attain the position which they should occupy among their fellow-countrymen.

The following municipalities are noticed separately in the Report:-

1. NEWPORT.

This locality, formerly a part of Pabos, was constituted a school municipality last autumn; it had but one district and one school. This school had been taught successfully by Mr. Léandre Dagneault of St. Michel, who was provided with a diploma and under whose management the pupils had made rapid progress. This teacher had retired some weeks before the Inspector's last visit and Mr. Adolphe Magnan, a pupil-teacher of the Jacques Cartier Normal School was appointed to fill the vacancy. Mr. Bédard had every reason to believe that Mr. Magnan would successfully continue the work so well commenced by the former teacher. School affairs had suffered from the want of a good understanding between the Commissioners of this municipality; but since the late elections things have been better managed under the control of the Chairman, Mr. Philippe Hamon, who was actuated by a proper spirit. The inhabitants, with few exceptions, paid the rates most willingly, and though they were poor would tax themselves to the utmost rather than forego the benefits conferred by the school. It was expected that they would soon be in a position to raise the necessary means to build a school-house. The school had hitherto been kept in a house rented for the purpose.

2. PABOS

There were two schools in this municipality, one in each district;

## 2. PABOS (ctd)

that situated at Grand Pabos, and which had been conducted by Mr. Joseph Barrette, was kept by Mr. Joseph Foucault, a pupil of the Jacques Cartier Normal School, holding an Elementary diploma. (He obtained a Model School diploma a few months after Mr. Bédard's Report had been made.)

This teacher, under whose management the school had been placed in a very satisfactory position, was active in the discharge of his duties, and teaching was a vocation for which he was very well fitted; his behaviour was exemplary and he was in every respect an honor to the Institution that had trained him. The other school, situated at Little Pabos, was kept by Mr. Louis Ruel of St. Gervais, who had a few months since obtained an Elementary diploma. This school was greatly inferior to the last.

The Commissioners of Pabos were well disposed, and their Secretary-Treasurer, Mr. Thomas Rémon, discharged the duties of his office with all the ability and punctuality that could be desired. The collection of the assessment which had been formerly attended with so much trouble was now effected without any complaint being made by the ratepayers. The arrears in 1860 amounted to a trifle compared with those of former years. The legal proceedings instituted against delinquents in 1859 and the prompt assistance given by Capt. Fortin to the officers of Justice had produced the best effect: no one dared openly resist the law.

3. GRANDE RIVIÈRE.

This municipality contained two districts, No. 1 on the eastern side of the river, No. 2 on the western. The school in the first district had been, up to the 1st June last, taught by Mr. Trefflé Côté, a pupil of the Laval Normal School, now engaged in teaching at the village of Percé. No 1 had been taught since the 1st October by Mr. Léandre Dagneault, formerly of Newport. In the interval from June to October Mr. Bédard had himself taken charge of the school lest the pupils should forget during so long a vacation any part of what they had learned. In the course of those three months the school had been honored with a visit from a sincere friend to the cause of public instruction - Mr. J. C. Taché, K. L. H.

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3. GRANDE RIVIÈRE (ctd)

School No.2 had been taught five years by Mr. Thomas Tremblay of Eboulements, Côte du Nord [ Mr. Tremblay was appointed Inspector last autumn] This school was unquestionably one of the best in the Inspection district. The teacher had a superior method of teaching; and his assiduity, regularity and application were deserving of the greatest praise. He had moreover the talent, but too seldom met with, of winning the love and respect of his scholars, and of securing their obedience without having recourse to corporal punishments, which brutalize children instead of making them better. Several of his pupils were capable of conducting an elementary school - a result due to the Lancasterian system adopted by Mr. Tremblay, through which they acquired the method of teaching at the same time that they pursued their own studies. The school was attended by 60 pupils and the examinations were most satisfactory.

The Commissioners of Grande-Riviere, who freely availed themselves of the valuable assistance of their chairman, Rev. Mr. Desjardins, the curé, fulfilled their duties conformably to the requirements of the law. The ratepayers paid the taxes so promptly that not a single suit was brought against them; and nothing was due in arrears. The accounts were also in perfect order.

4. PERCÉ

Here some progress had also been made. Owing to the energy and firmness displayed by the chairman of the Commissioners, Rev. Ed. Guilmet, the curé, the assessment was levied in this parish, which at one time was the very stronghold of the opponents of taxation. The rates paid amounted to nearly \$500 and legal proceedings were instituted against 15 of the most obstinate among those who opposed the tax. The Inspector reports that Mr. Robin, a wealthy trader of the place, deserves great praise for the alacrity with which he paid his share of the assessment, amounting to about \$134. He had offered a vigorous opposition during the year preceding, but on this occasion was one of the first to pay, and his example was not without influence on the fishermen generally.

There were 4 schools in operation in this municipality. No.1, at



4. PERCÉ (ctd)

the village had been kept until about the middle of the summer past by Mr. Elzéar Dagneault: it had been indifferently attended, as at that time efforts were made to enforce the assessment, and as prosecutions were threatened, parents kept their children at home, thinking this would save them from the obligations imposed by the law. Under such circumstances much progress could not be expected. This school, having been unused for some time, was reopened under the management of Mr. Trefflé Côté, heretofore of Grande-Riviere, who appeared to enjoy the esteem of both parents and pupils, and whose success was greater than at the last mentioned place. It was now regularly attended. The school in district No. 2, or Irishtown, was still kept by Mr. Michael Furlong; the progress was slight, this teacher having no diploma and the school not being well attended.

At some distance from this place, on the sea-side, is Cap-Blanc, a newly formed district. Here the Commissioners intended to put up a school-house as soon as they had the means - a part of the necessary timber being already on the spot.

At Beau-Fils Cove, another district nearly four miles distant from the last, the school-house was nearly finished, and a teacher would soon be engaged.

The school at Cap-des-Espoirs Cove, District No. 3, was kept by Mr. F. J. Bisson, under whose management it had continued during three years; there was little order observed in this school, as Mr. Béchard had had occasion to remark during former visits; and the pupils appeared to be under no restraint; still, as far as English was taught, the progress was pretty fair. But, adds the Report, few parents of French origin sent their children to this school as Mr. Bisson did not teach French, although the Inspector had advised him to teach it. Mr. Bisson had no diploma.

No. 4 District school in the Municipality of Percé is situated at Little River, east, twelve miles distant from the village of Percé. The building in which it was kept had been in a wretched condition but it was repaired and made tenantable. The teacher was not well qualified for his situation and had no diploma. This school was attended by 63 pupils.

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4. PERCÉ (ctd)

With regard to the accounts, which at the time of the last report were badly kept, the Inspector says he is happy to notice that things have improved in this as in every other department. Dr. Connick, the Secretary-Treasurer, had nobly performed his part when the assessment came to be levied and collected, giving valuable assistance to the commissioners in the execution of this difficult duty; the firmness and zeal displayed by him on these occasions deserved the greatest praise.

It was in that part of the district of inspection, including the four municipalities previously mentioned, that the most important progress had been made. Here the assessment was levied; 9 teachers were employed - 6 had diplomas, of which 2 were for model schools; the higher branches of elementary instruction, as compound arithmetic, book-keeping, grammar, vocal music, etc., were taught in some of these schools; and it was also in these municipalities that the attendance was most regular. The number of pupils in the whole district was 731; of this number, 358 or nearly one-half, belonged to these municipalities - 373 being from others, which, we may add, are thirteen in number. The former also paid the highest salaries to the teachers - 3 of whom were from the Jacques Cartier and Laval Normal schools. Such facts as these speak volumes in favor of the system of assessment, which Mr. Béchard believes to be the only good system for maintaining the schools permanently and effectively. Some progress had also been made in the 13 municipalities situated between Percé and Cap Chatte, especially at Rivière-au-Renard and St. Anne des Monts, where the assessment was levied, and the condition of school affairs rivaled in prosperity that of the four municipalities mentioned above. This tendency to improvement was due mainly to the fact that the rate was in force in these localities, and to the great efforts of the clergy, to whom the cause of education is so much indebted.

5. BONAVENTURE ISLAND

Here a school had been opened, but it had not yet been visited; its establishment was due to the efforts of M. Guilmet, curé of Percé; the assessment met with opposition in this small municipality.

6. MALBAIE

School concerns were in a very bad state in this place. There had been only one school in operation during the previous year, kept in the district of Parre-a-Choir; but it was closed last Spring, owing to opposition, and also to the ill-treatment which M. Piton, the teacher, had received at the hands of a great number of the ratepayers. This was much to be regretted as the pupils of this teacher made rapid progress while under his care. Judging from past occurrences, any attempt to levy the assessment in this municipality would be met with violence. It would be necessary to resort to legal proceedings which would probably not be effective without the presence of Capt. Fortin. The district known as that of Chien Blanc was an exception as its inhabitants had ever shown themselves in favor of the school system. Finding they could not agree with the 'éteiny noirs' of Malbaie they obtained a separation and at the time of the visit formed a distinct municipality for school purposes under the name of "St. George of Malbaie". Prior to this they had, in common with the other ratepayers, built a schoolhouse and procured the services of Mr. Dagneault, heretofore of Percé; this teacher was more successful here than he had been in his former situation. Mr. Patrick Enright, the secretary-treasurer, fulfilled his duty to the satisfaction of the commissioners.

7. DOUGLAS

The assessment had not been levied here though the Inspector and M. Fafard, the curé, did all in their power to have it adopted. There had been no school in operation since the month of July when Miss Galt (sic) left, having taught one year with much application and some success. The Inspector, in his visit during the winter preceding, succeeded in making a late secretary-treasurer refund the sum of \$24 which he had always refused to account for.

8. YORK AND HALDIMAND

The Rev. Mr. Ker was perhaps the only person in this locality who desired sincerely to see the schools opened. He had done all in his power to attain this end, but hitherto without success. Thus

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8. YORK AND HALDIMAND (ctd.)

Thus the place had been several years without any school, and opposition was persisted in. It would be necessary to prosecute the commissioners, or nothing would be done in the premises.

9. SOUTH GASPE BAY.

There was no school kept here; and both the commissioners and ratepayers opposed the assessment. The former were to be prosecuted for wilful neglect, as it became absolutely necessary to make an example.

10. GASPE BAY NORTH (PENINSULA)

Some change for the better had taken place in this municipality since the previous report. The assessment was levied. The teacher who, under the system of voluntary contribution had received so little for his services was now allowed a salary of \$160 per annum - and this he hoped to see increased to \$200 next year. The school kept here was still taught by Mr. Cole. All the examinations had been very satisfactory; the pupils were very clever, especially in arithmetic and geography. Mr. Cole had ability and experience, and would be a very effective instructor were his classes kept more orderly and his authority more felt. The commissioners had the courage to enforce the assessment, but failed in its collection; and considerable arrears were due. The accounts of the secretary-treasurer were well kept.

11. GRANDE GRAVE

In this place, formerly a part of Cape des Rosiers, but since last September a separate municipality, there were two schools which the Inspector had recently visited. The school in District No. 1 (within Little Gaspé) was taught by Miss Julia Kinsela, of Guernsey, who had no diploma - results were not very satisfactory. The school in District No. 2 was kept by Mr. Simon, also of Guernsey, (aged 30 years) and without a diploma. It had not been attended by a single scholar for several weeks; and the teacher, whom the Inspector accidentally met, told him that it had never been attended by more than seven pupils. This was owing to the opposition manifested

11. GRANDE GRAVE (ctd)

towards the school, as the people thought they would avoid the tax by not sending their children. The commissioners, either through weakness of fear of making themselves unpopular in the locality, were very remiss in the discharge of the duties that devolved upon them. Instead of at once adopting the legal proceedings to recover the rates, they had lost so much time in procrastination that the arrears due had reached the sum of \$368.67. The Inspector remained several days in this municipality urging the commissioners to take immediate steps to vindicate the law. Four among the most refractory (including the wealthy firm of Fruing and Co. who had often shown their antagonism both to the tax and to the schools) were sued; and a few days after judgment had been rendered against them, they paid the rate. This had the desired effect on the other ratepayers; more than half the amount of arrears had been paid already.

The Commissioners of Grande Grave never visited the school. The greatest praise was due William Hyman, Esq., the secretary-treasurer, for the zeal with which he labored (sometimes to his personal inconvenience and loss) to promote the cause of Education.

12. CAMP DES ROSIERS

No school had been established as yet in this recently formed municipality. On the advice of the Inspector, the commissioners had resolved to impose a special tax on all rateable property for the purpose of building a schoolhouse; and they intended to obtain the services of a teacher during the month of August or September following, as it was hoped the building would be completed by that time.

13. ANSE-A-GRIFOND

No school had been established in this place though its erection into a municipality, distinct from that of Riviere-au-Renard had been effected during the Spring. The inhabitants were generally poor, and as they had been called upon to contribute towards the building of a chapel, they could not find the means to pay for any other enterprise without inconvenience to themselves and their families. They had, however, commenced to build a schoolhouse,

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13. ANSE-À-GRISFOND (ctd)

using for this purpose the wood of the old chapel. The commissioners, through apathy, would have done very little to promote the educational interests of the municipality had they not been stimulated by the advice and example afforded them by the Rev. J. B. Blouin, a missionary whose devoted and zealous co-operation in the good work of education was above all praise.

14. RIVIÈRE-AU-RENARD

There were now two excellent schools in this municipality - one of the municipalities in which the greatest progress has been made during the preceding twelve months. This was due to the efforts of the Rev. M. Blouin, the curé. The assessment of 3 shillings per £ 100, formerly levied, had now risen to 8 shillings 4 pence per £ 100. This increase, recommended during the preceding year by Mr. Béchard had enabled the commissioners to open another school, and also to build a schoolhouse (measuring 28 feet by 24 feet).

School No 1, situated on the western bank of the river had been conducted with success during twelve months by Mr. Paul Blouin, brother of the curé - the pupils making rapid progress while under his care, as the examinations amply proved; but this teacher left the district to take charge of the new school on the other side of the river, and he was replaced in the former by his brother, Mr. Fr. Xavier Blouin, late professor at the college of St. Michel. The inspector had convinced himself from a recent visit to the school now under the care of this teacher, that he fully deserved the reputation which his ability and experience had won for him. The commissioners, guided by the curé's advice in all matters related to school management, discharged their duties with scrupulous care. The same is due to the secretary-treasurer, Mr. Jacques Bond, who had also given the security required by the school act.

15. MONTS-LOUIS

This place is one of the oldest fishing stations on the coast, yet it had only been formed into a school municipality in the month of September preceding; it was, next to Bonaventure Island, the least populous municipality and the poorest in all the District of Inspection.

15. MONTS-LOUIS (ctd)

Without the aid of the Department of Public Instruction it would be difficult, under the circumstances, to support a good school here. The inhabitants have always been favorably disposed towards education; and this the Inspector, during a two weeks' stay among them in July last ascertained to be the case. They had no school whatever; and as matters stood none could be established before the summer. Here, as at St. Anne-des-Monts and Cape Chatte, it is sometimes found impossible to obtain teachers at the proper time, owing to the isolated situation of these localities and the imperfect means of communication. This was much to be regretted, as the establishment of a school would be an inestimable blessing to people who could derive spiritual comforts but four times in the year and who were left to rear their children in ignorance the most profound.

16. STE-ANNE-DES-MONTS

This municipality, detached from Cape Chatte in the month of March had been without a school after the death of Inspector Lespérance; but there was one now, conducted by Miss Gracieuse Lepage of Rimouski, who received a salary of \$112 per annum. The school was not in operation at the time of the visit, but the Inspector had been informed subsequently by persons in whom he placed much confidence, that it was well managed and attended by 42 pupils. The spacious schoolhouse in course of construction during the preceding year had been finished. The Rev. E. Michaud and Jean Perrée, Esq., had zealously contributed to the success of the schools; and their valuable advice had also materially assisted Mr. Béchard in the discharge of his duties.

17. CAPE CHATTE

In this municipality there was but one school in operation; it was situated on the west side of the river, and kept by Madame Lespérance, widow of the late Inspector. The classes had met about the middle of the month of July, in the year preceding. The teacher, who received a stipend of \$100 per annum, discharged her duty to the satisfaction of both the commissioners and the parents. It had not been found possible to levy the assessment in Cape Chatte in

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## 17. CAPE CHATTE (ctd)

that year as great distress prevailed in consequence of the failure of the fisheries and the loss of seed-grain by fire. The system of voluntary contribution would be soon replaced by the assessment. The commissioners and the secretary-treasurer, Mr. Louis Roy, discharged the duties of their respective trusts with zeal and punctuality.

IN CONCLUSION

In concluding his report, Mr. Béchard remarks that there were still ten municipalities in which the assessment was not yet levied; and he states that he will use his best endeavors to place this District of Inspection on a proper footing as regards this important matter.