

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

DOCTOR GEORGE MELLIS DOUGLAS

A recall of his distinguished medical career
which began with practice in Gaspesia and his
co-partnership with Robert Wilie Fitton of
New Carlisle.

KEN ANNETT

DOCTOR GEORGE MELLIS DOUGLASFOREWORD

A number of the previous articles in this GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY series have recalled members of the medical profession who served Gaspésians in earlier times. Among these Doctors were the following :

<u>DOCTOR</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Dr. George Longmore who came to New Carlisle in 1784 on the order of Governor Haldimand to serve the new Loyalist settlement in Bay Chaleur.	SPEC 14 Aug. 1984
Dr. Anthony von Iffland who came to the District of Gaspé in 1821 to vaccinate against smallpox.	SPEC 15 Aug. 1977
Dr. Stewart, medical officer with the party of Governor-General, Lord Aylmer on a visit to Gaspesia in 1831. Supplied medicines to the sick of Douglstown and area.	SPEC 27 Feb. 1978
Dr. Felton of New Carlisle who was visited by Lieut. Baddeley, R.E. on his visit to Gaspesia in 1833 and described as - " the only medical practitioner of the time in Bay Chaleur".	No.#67 "MEET SOME GASPESIANS OF 150 YEARS AGO."
Dr. Pierre Fortin whose medical skill often complemented his pioneering role as Overseer of the Fisheries in the Gulf and Bay Chaleur.	SPEC 21 Jan. 1981
Doctors Theodore and Louis Robitaille who served New Carlisle and area in the mid 19th century.	SPEC 12 Aug. 1981

FOREWORD

(ctd)

DOCTORREFERENCE

Dr. William Wakeham whose medical practice extended to the Gaspé Bay region from his base at "ONE ASH", Gaspé Basin.

SPEC 13 May 1981

Much work needs to be done in order to have a more complete and definitive record of those who provided medical service to Gaspésians in earlier times. As example, the life of Dr. Charles LaBillois, a native of Brittany, France, and surgeon in the Napoleonic era, should be recalled in more detail than is to be found in Mrs. Margaret MacWhirter's book, "TREASURE TROVE IN GASPE AND THE BAIE DES CHALEURS". In addition to professionally trained doctors, so scarce in early Gaspesia, many a community had one or more persons with medical skills that were called upon in the case of illness or accident. Their contribution to the heritage of Gaspesia deserves to be recorded.

DOCTOR GEORGE MELLIS DOUGLASFAMILY BACKGROUND

The family name of DOUGLAS, linked to Doctors James and George Douglas of Québec City, is perpetuated in Québec in a number of ways. The Douglas Hospital Centre of Verdun, Douglas Hall of McGill University and the Douglas Fund of the Québec Literary and Historical Society serve as examples.

The parents of James and George Mellis Douglas were the Rev. George and Mary Mellis Douglas of Aberdeen, Scotland. Their first child, son James, was born in 1800; his younger brother, George Mellis in 1809. Both sons chose careers in medicine. James began an apprenticeship with Dr. Thomas Law of Penrith, Cumberland at the early age of thirteen years and went on to study in the medical faculty of the University of Edinburgh. At age twenty he had completed successfully the exams for admission to the Edinburgh and London Colleges of Surgeons. After practice in India, Spitzbergen, Greenland and Honduras he settled for a time at Utica, New York. From there he sent for his younger brother, George Mellis Douglas to come and be his medical apprentice. Obligated to flee in haste from Utica to avoid arrest as a result of public indignation over dissection of cadavers he reached Montreal, where he had friends, and was advised to set up in practice in Québec City. This he did in the Spring of 1826. The following year, 1827, George Mellis Douglas was granted his License to practice medicine after petition to the Governor, Lord Dalhousie.

PRACTICE IN GASPEZIA

It appears from the Notarial Deed of Copartnership below that Dr. George Mellis Douglas began his medical practice in Gaspesia shortly after he was licensed as a doctor in 1827. The above-mentioned Deed, dated 8th July 1833, states:

"...Whereas the said George Mellis Douglas for several years last past hath exercised and carried on in this District of Gaspé the profession, occupation and calling of a Physician and Surgeon..."

PRACTICE IN GASPESIA(ctd)

It may be of interest to note, from the pages of the 1833 QUEBEC ALMANACH the names of Gaspesians who were active and prominent at the time and many of whom Dr. George Mellis Douglas undoubtedly knew personally:

Grand Voyer	Farquhar McRae
Commissioners.....	Philip Robin; Hugh Munro; Daniel McPherson; Theophilus Fox; James Crawford.
Commissioners for the Repair of Churches, etc.	Charles Cavanagh; Robert Sherar; Hypolite Landry.
Commissioners to meet with those of New Brunswick to regulate the Restigouche River fishery.	Hypolite Landry ; James Crawford.
Provincial Court for the Inferior District of Gaspé:	
Provincial Judge.....	J.G.Thompson
Clerk of the Court.....	Amasa Beebe
Sheriff.....	Ferguson Winter
Coroner.....	Robert Sherar
Justices of the Peace.....	Henry O'Hara (Gaspé Basin); Charles Davis (L'Anse aux Cousins); John Le Boutillier (Percé); John Gosset (Paspebiac); John Baker Blondin; John Cavanagh (Bonaventure) ; George Mellis Douglas (New Carlisle); Robert Caldwell and Duncan Hay (New Carlisle); Jean Landry and Hilaire Michaud (Carleton); Hugh Aiken (Restigouche); William Cuthbert (New Richmond)
Lawyers.....	Edouard Thibodeau (M.L.A. Gaspé 1830-36 Joseph-Francois Deblois.
Notary Public.....	Martin Sheppard
Surveyor.....	Alexander McNeil
Doctor.....	George Mellis Douglas (New Carlisle)

PRACTICE IN GASPEZIActd.

Post Masters..... For Gaspé - Henry Johnston
 For Baie Chaleurs- James Crawford.

Protestant Clergy..... For Gaspé and Percé - Rev.W.Arnold
 For Baie Chaleurs - Rev.L.Doolittle

Catholic Clergy..... For Restigouche, Carleton, New Richmond:
 Rev. Stanislas Malo

For Bonaventure, Paspébiac:
 Rev. Antoine Gosselin

For Percé, Douglastown:
 Rev. John McMahon

Militia Battalion of Gaspé Co... Lieut.-Col. Henry O'Hara
 Major John D.McConnell
 Adjutant Louis Philippe Bechervaise.

MARTIN SHEPPARD

No.427 8th July 1833 COPARTNERSHIP AND AGREEMENT BETWEEN GEORGE
M.DOUGLAS AND ROBERT W.FITTON

On the Eighth day of July in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty three, Before me, the undersigned Martin Sheppard, Notary Public, duly admitted and sworn for the Province of Lower Canada, and in the presence of the Witnesses hereinafter named and hereunto subscribing, all residing and being at New Carlisle in the County of Bonaventure, in the District of Gaspé, in the said Province, Personally came and appeared George Mellis Douglas of New Carlisle aforesaid, Physician and Surgeon, of the one Part and Robert Wilie Fitton of the same place, also Physician and Surgeon, of the other Part -

Which said parties for themselves and their respective heirs and assigns did, and by these presents do covenant, conclude, declare and agree to and with the other of them, in manner following, that is to say -

Whereas the said George Mellis Douglas for several years last

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past hath exercised and carried on in this District of Gaspé the profession, occupation and calling of a Physician and Surgeon and during the above period both acquired and secured a valuable and extensive practice in his said profession;

And Whereas they, the said George Mellis Douglas and Robert Willie Fitton have agreed to become and continue Copartners in the said profession, occupation and calling of Physicians and Surgeons, in this said District only and not elsewhere, on the terms and conditions following, that is to say -

That the said Copartnership shall exist and continue for and until the term and expiration of Five years from the date hereof or shall be sooner ended and discontinued six months after any or either of the said Copartners shall have made known, in writing, to the other party his intention of withdrawing from the present Copartnership previous to the expiration of the said Five years limited for the term of the present Copartnership; That if either party bring Capital, drugs or other effects, or leave his share of the profits in the trade, the Capital stock shall be liable to make good the same; that either of the parties may borrow money for the use of the said trade with the consent of the other party previously obtained; that each party shall have a separate estate in the Capital stock and the proceeds thereof; that the Copartnership stock shall be employed solely for the joint trade; that the profits and loss thereof shall be borne by each of the parties in proportion to his Capital therein; that all expenses and casual losses shall be borne by the parties in proportion to their respective interests; that neither parties shall take apprentices or clerks without the consent of the other; that entries shall be made in proper books of all the Copartnership transactions and affairs; that the Copartnership books shall be kept at the Office where the business is carried on and shall be open for the inspection of all the said parties and shall not be removed from thence except to be produced in Court; that the surplus of the proceeds after payments of expenses shall be divided between the parties in the month of July in each and every year, commencing in the month of July now next ensuing, in proportion to their respective interests; that the said parties shall as much as in their power diligently employ

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themselves in the business of the joint trade and in forwarding the interests thereof; that neither of the parties shall employ the monies which may be deposited in the said Copartnership to his own use; that neither party shall suffer the Copartnership estate to be charged with their own private debts; that neither party shall accept or give Bills of Exchange or other security but in regular course of trade; that neither party shall lend or give credit, nor compound or release debts, nor become bail, nor engage in speculative enterprises without the consent of the other; that if either party conduct himself contrary to the provisions herein contained, this partnership shall be void; that either party shall have the liberty to quit the present partnership on giving six months Notice, in writing, of his intentions so to do; that at the expiration of this Copartnership each of the parties in turn shall have the refusal of the stock at a valuation, and if both parties refuse, it shall be sold by Auction; that credits given after the end of this partnership shall be at the risk of the person crediting; that disputes shall be referred to arbitration; and also that each party will execute further assurances if required; and it is hereby agreed and declared between the said parties that the present Copartnership shall only extend to this District and not elsewhere, anything herein before contained to the contrary thereof notwithstanding-

And for the execution of these presents the said parties hereto do hereby reciprocally accept hereof and do hereby promise and oblige themselves faithfully to execute and perform the same -

THUS DONE AND PASSED at New Carlisle aforesaid in the Office of the said Notary on the say and in the month and year herein first above w itten. IN FAITH AND TESTIMONY WHEREOF the said Heorge Mellis Douglas and Robert Wilie Fitton, parties hereto as aforesaid, have hereunto set and subscribed their respective names and signatures in the presence of Thomas White, Advocate and Henry O'Hara, Sub-Collector of His Majesty's Customs at the outport of New Carlisle, both of New Carlisle aforesaid, Esquires, Witnesses to the due execution hereof, hereunto severally subscribing, and in the presence of me the said Notary also hereunto subscribing - these presents first being duly read.

(SIGNATURES)	Thomas White	G.M.Douglas
	H.O'Hara	R.W.Fitton

M.Sheppard, N.P.

EPIDEMIC AND
QUARANTINE

For shipping in-bound to the St.Lawrence from Europe the ports of Gaspesia had provided a convenient land-fall from the time of Jacques Cartier. Not infrequently had disease, aggravated by long trans-ocean voyages and primitive shipboard conditions, come to the District of Gaspé in this way. An example, recalled by Dr. Anthony von Iffland on his visit to Gaspé, was that of the ship "ROYAL EDWARD" that came into the Port of Gaspé in 1818 with a number of her immigrant passengers suffering from a contagious fever. Major Hugh O'Hara, one of the sons of the Gaspé Basin pioneer, Felix O'Hara, had spared no effort to help these unfortunate sick persons. From them he caught the fever and was dead within the month - a loss universally mourned in Gaspesia.

In the year 1832 the dreaded disease of cholera, coming via ships from Europe, began an epidemic of new, monumental and tragic proportions to Lower Canada. Moving to meet this major health threat the Government of Québec established a Provincial Health Bureau and moved swiftly to create Quarantine stations for in-bound ships at Gaspé and at the Island of Grosse-Ile in the St.Lawrence just East of the City of Québec. Dr. George Mellis Douglas was appointed as the Superintendent of the Gaspé Station - a posting that may have brought an end to his copartnership with R.W.Fitton described above. In 1836 the Superintendent of the Grosse-Ile station, Dr. Poole, resigned and Dr. George Mellis Douglas left Gaspesia to take his place. He would serve as Superintendent of the Grosse-Ile Quarantine Station for the next twenty-eight years.

CONTINUING CONCERN

That his move from Gaspesia did not end his interest and concern for the many friends he had made there is reflected in his ACT OF FAITH AND HOMAGE FOR THE PABOS DEIGNIORY made before the Governor at Québec in 1836. The story of the seigniorship has been told by GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY in NO. 100 "THE SEIGNIORY OF PABOS" and it is from thence that the following extract has been taken -

ACT OF FAITH AND HOMAGE of George Mellis Douglas,
Doctor, of Québec, on behalf of Felix Stewart of
Gaspé, Annabella O'Hara and Martha Sophia O'Hara

CONTINUING CONCERN

ctd.

of major age and issue of the marriage of Annabella Stewart with the late Oliver O'Hara, and heiresses of the late Felix O'Hara, their brother, also one of the children issue of the marriage of Jane Baird O'Hara, wife of John Douglas McConnell, sole legatee of the late Felix O'Hara (son of Hugh O'Hara) her brotherfor the Fief and Seigniori of Grand Pabos.

It is most likely that Dr.Douglas knew of the Pabos Seigniori and its links with the O'Hara and Stewart families from the Widow Annabella Stewart O'Hara who lived at New Carlisle after the death of her husband until she died in August, 1847. Annabella was the sister of Matthew Stewart of Shoolbred, Dugald Stewart of Dalhousie and James Stewart of Gaspé Basin.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

The dramatic and tragic story of the cholera epidemics and the history of the Grosse-Ile Quarantine Station where Dr.George Mellis Douglas served with such devotion over many years, is beyond the scope of the GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY series. That story, however, has been recorded in great detail in books and scholarly articles and continues to interest contemporary historians. It does seem appropriate, however, to conclude this account with some brief, personal notes regarding Dr.Douglas. His first wife, Charlotte Saxton Campbell, daughter of the prominent Quebec City Notary Public* bore five children before her early death in 1852 at the age of 32 years. Subsequently, Dr.Douglas remarried in England with Susan Cleghorn but she died in 1860 leaving a son only two weeks old. The careers of the Douglas off-spring took quite different paths:

* ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL, N.P.

- . The eldest son, Campbell Mellis Douglas graduated as a doctor, joined the medical staff of the British Army, was posted to the Far East where he won the Victoria Cross for singular bravery in an action in the Andaman Islands. He rose to be Lieut.-Colonel in the Medical Service and on retirement practiced medicine in Canada. The Reil Rebellion brought him out of retirement and he served again with the Army until 1902 with the rank of Brigadier Surgeon.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

(ctd)

- . Another son, Archibald, chose a naval career. As a Naval Lieut. on H.M.S. AURORA he was in the Port of Quebec in 1866 when a great fire devastated two wards of the city and was wounded in fighting that conflagration. He rose to become Admiral Sir Archibald Douglas of the British Navy.
- . His brother, Charles, chose mechanical engineering as his career.
- . George Prescott Douglas, son of the second marriage, was brought up in England by the family of his late mother. He emigrated to South Africa where he died in 1903.
- . Justyn Douglas followed his father's profession as a doctor but practiced in England
- . Daughter, Agnes, married and lived in England.

VALE-FAREWELL

The life of Dr. George Mellis Douglas came to a sad and tragic end on the 2nd of June, 1864. From the beginning of that year his health had deteriorated progressively and suffering had increased. On June 1st he went to his country home on Ile-aux-Reaux and there, on the following day he took his own life. His remains rest near those of his elder brother, Dr. James Douglas, in the Mount Hermon Cemetery of Sillery overlooking the majestic St. Lawrence that he knew so well in life.