

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

COASTING WITH THE "COURIER"

Captain John Baker of Cape Cove, Master
Mariner and Master of the COURIER and
members of his crew recall experiences
with autumn storms from Percé to
Paspebiac in 1840.

KEN ANNETT

COASTING WITH THE "COURIER"FOREWORD

Among the Gaspesian seafarers of earlier generations members of the BAKER families of the Cape Cove-Percé and Gaspé Bay areas were prominent. In GASPE OF YESTERDAY article #126, "THE CASE OF THE CUT CABLE" reference was made to Captain William Baker of the Gaspé schooner "SEA FLOWER" in 1825. Article # 30, "THE GASPE WHALERS" referred to the whaling schooner "RAMBLER" of Gaspé, William Baker and Company and to the schooner "LORD DOUGLAS", James Baker, Master.

The Baker family of Cape Cove was linked with the Ferguson family. Of the family of John and Mary Ferguson Baker were sons John, Josiah, William and Daniel. Daughters of the family, Jane, Margaret and Mary married, respectively George Redman, Hugh Mahan and William Ferguson.

The following Deed of Protest of Martin Sheppard, N.P. is a reminder of the vital role played by the Gaspé schooners in the transport of food and supplies prior to the building of roads and the railway. The product of the summer fishery had to be shipped to markets in the autumn when storm conditions could be expected. The relatively isolated Gaspesian communities depended on supplies arriving by sea before winter made shipping difficult or impossible. Many a Gaspé schooner Master fought wind and wave as did Captain Baker in the account which follows.

PROTEST BY CAPT. JOHN BAKER, MASTER OF THE SCHOONER "COURIER":NOVEMBER 3rd., 1840.RECORDS OF MARTIN SHEPPARD, N.P.

By this Public Instrument and Declaration of Protest Be It Known and Made Manifest unto all to whom the said presents shall come or to whom the same may in any way concern, that on this third day of November in this year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty, Before the undersigned Martin Sheppard, Notary Public, duly admitted and sworn for the Province of Lower Canada and residing at New Carlisle in the County of Bonaventure and the District of Gaspé in the said Province, being at present at Paspébiac in the County, District and Province aforesaid, and in the presence of the Witnesses hereinafter named and hereunto subscribing, personally came and appeared and were present John Baker of Cape Cove in the County of Gaspé in the District of Gaspé in the said Province, Master Mariner and Master of the Schooner or Vessel called the COURIER of Percé of the burthen of fifty-four tons or thereabouts, register measure, now lying stranded on the beach of Paspébiac aforesaid, and Jean Baptiste Thibeault, Mate and Narcisse Chabotte, Seaman, of and on board the said vessel.

Which said John Baker, Jean-Baptiste Thibeault and Narcisse Chabotte being duly and severally sworn on the Holy Evangelists in the presence of the said Notary and subscribing Witnesses, of their own free will and voluntary accord did, and by these presents do, jointly and severally, allege, affirm, declare, protest and say -

That the said schooner or vessel called the COURIER, being tight, staunch and strong, well and sufficiently manned, provided, equipped and furnished with all things needful and necessary for the voyage hereinafter mentioned, and her hatches well and sufficiently caulked and covered, they the said appearers and the rest of the crew of the said vessel set sail on board of the said vessel from the Port of Quebec in this Province on Saturday the tenth day of October then instant and now last, loaded with a cargo of provisions, on a trading voyage to Percé. Mal Bay and other places in the said District.

That the said appearers and the rest of the crew proceeded on with the said vessel on the said voyage without experiencing anything particular or extraordinary and arrived in safety and came to an

anchor in the Roadsted of Percé on the fifteenth day of the said month of October last and discharged part of her cargo thereat and proceeded from there to Mal Bay where they discharged the remainder of her cargo on the next day, the sixteenth of the same month of October last.

That these appearers, after discharging the cargo of their vessel at Mal Bay as aforesaid, left the latter place for Percé aforesaid and after remaining there some short time for orders proceded from thence with their said vessel for Grand River in the said District where they arrived on the nineteenth of the same month of October and came to anchor in the Roadsted of the latter place. Remained at anchor with their vessel taking in cargo of green codfish without anything particular occuring until Saturday the twenty-fourth day of the said month of October last, at about the hour of eight in the forenoon (A.M.) when a strong breeze from the West South West sprung up on a sudden, which continued to blow with uncommon violence, accompanied with such a heavy swell that their vessel laboured greatly at her anchorage, broke her chain cable and the anchor appended thereto, which, with the greater proportion of the said chain cable were lost. Made sail on their said vessel and proceeded from Grand River to Cape Cove for shelter and arrived at about eleven o'clock A.M. at the anchorage of the latter place and came to in about seven fathoms of water with their small bower anchor and chain cable. Remained riding at anchor at Cape Cove aforesaid until the next day, Sunday, the twenty-fifth day of October last.

At about ten of the clock P.M. it came on to blow with great violence from the East North East in a direction towards the shore on which the said appearers were apprehensive their said vessel would be driven as she already begun to drive from her anchorage. Weighed anchor and got under way and in so doing broke the stock of their small anchor which became entirely useless.

And these appearers and the rest of the crew, seeing the impossibility of remaining longer at Cape Cove after the loss of both the anchors and chain cable belonging to the said vessel as aforesaid, consulted together as to the better course to be pursued. Then they unanimously determined to proceed to Paspebiac as the nearest and safest port and in order to replace the two anchors lost by their said vessel as aforesaid, which they accordingly did do, arrived in safety at Paspebiac

aforesaid and came to an anchor in the Roadsted of that place on the next day, the twenty-sixth of October last. Procured anchors from Messrs Charles Robin and Company, Merchants at Paspebiac (the only place where anchors could be procured along the Coast). Remained at anchor at the latter place until three of the clock P.M. of the same day when the weather which before had been moderate, but obscure and lowering, settled in a strong gale from the South Westward, which blew all that day with such extraordinary violence, with such a heavy sea running, that it was impossible to get their said vessel underway and consequently obliged them to remain at anchor. Tried the pumps occasionally as heretofore but their vessel remained free and made no water.

But on the same day, Monday, the twenty-sixth day of October last their vessel parted from both her anchors and drove towards the beach in despite of the unremitting exertions of these appearers and of the crew to prevent the same, and on which she grounded and beat and struck with great violence, strained exceedingly and made considerably of water, and the sea all this time running very high and making a clear break over their said vessel. Sounded the pumps and found that their said vessel had three feet of water in her hold. And these appearers and the rest of the crew, seeing no prospect at the time of extricating their said vessel from the dangerous and perilous situation in which she then lay, thought it time to consult their own safety and after great exertions succeeded in saving themselves with difficulty, drenched with wet and stiffened with cold.

That on Tuesday the twenty-seventh day of October last the said appearers and the rest of the crew, with assistance from the shore, succeeded in hauling and placing their said vessel into a place of safety for the winter on the beach of Paspebiac, where she now remains, in order that the damage their said vessel had sustained may be examined and repaired.

And the said appearers do further jointly and severally allege, affirm, declare, protest and say that all and singular the injuries, losses, damage and detriments which have already happened to or may be sustained by the said schooner or vessel called the COURIER or her cargo on board or to either of them, were in no way owing to or occasioned by any unseamanship, mismanagement or neglect on the part of them, the said appearers, or of any of the rest of the crew of the

said vessel but solely and entirely to the causes, accidents, and perils before mentioned and that during the said time they, the said appearers and the remainder of the crew of the said vessel used their utmost endeavours and exertions to preserve the said vessel and her cargo from damage.

To the Truth of all which said several matters and things herein before alleged and declared they, the said appearers, have duly and severally made Oath on the Holy Evangelists before us, the said Notary and subscribing Witnesses. Now therefore that these presents may enjoy full force and effect, I, the said Notary, accompanied as aforesaid at the request of the said John Baker, did protest and by these presents do most solemnly protest against all and every person and persons whom the same doth, shall or may in any wise concern and do declare that all damages, losses and detriments which have happened to the said vessel and the cargo therein laden are and ought to be borne by the Merchants and Freighters interested or the Underwriters on the same or whomsoever else it shall or may in any wise concern, the same having occurred, as before mentioned, and not by or through insufficiency of the said vessel or neglect of the said John Baker, his Officers, or any of his mariners, or any of them: all which matters and things were declared and affirmed as aforesaid is set forth in the presence of us, the said Notary and subscribing Witnesses.

Thus Done, Protested and Sworn to at Paspebiac in the County of Bonaventure in the District and Province aforesaid (where no stamps are used) on the day, month and year first above written.

In Faith and Testimony Whereof the said John Baker, Master, and Jean Baptiste Thibeault, Mate, have hereunto set and subscribed their names and signatures and affixed their respective seal - the said Narcisse Chabotte, seaman, having declared not to know how to write or sign demanded thereof by us duly made hath made his ordinary mark (being a Cross) and affixed his seal, the whole in the presence of Messieurs Philip Duval, residing near New Carlisle aforesaid, Carpenter and Farmer and William Bragg of New Carlisle aforesaid, Trader and Tavern Keeper, Witnesses called for and present at the due execution of these presents, hereunto severally subscribing, and in the presence of and with me, the said Notary, who have also

hereunto set and subscribed my name and signature and affixed my Seal of Office - these presents having been first duly read and explained to the said parties to their entire satisfaction, according to Law.

SIGNATURES

John Baker

Jean Batis Thibeault

Narcisse X Chabotte

M. Sheppard, N.P.

Philip Duval

W. Bragg



PASPEBIAC POINT