

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

RECORDS OF MARITIME DISTRESS
IN GASPESIA

From the notarial files of Joseph G. LeBel,
Notary Public, testimony of sea captains
and crew members.

KEN ANNETT

RECORDS OF MARITIME DISTRESS IN GASPESIAPREFACE

The notarial records of Martin Sheppard which begin for Gaspesia in 1825 and continue until 1879, together with those of Joseph Guillaume LeBel which run from 1833 to 1886 are a unique and remarkable source of information on the past in Gaspesia. Hundreds of handwritten Deeds, many with marginal notations, testify to the experiences of our Gaspesian ancestors and numerous visitors to our shores.

For that time, when the sailing ship was the main link between the communities of Gaspesia and between our shores and the outside world, these formal statements by sea captains, crew members, merchants, ship carpenters and others have a very special interest and fascination. For behind the faded pages of these Deeds we catch a glimpse of colourful foreign seaports, of varied and valuable cargoes, of the awesome fury of wind and wave in violent storms and of the skill and competence of master mariners.

With the poet Alfred Tennyson's verse we can relate:

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play !
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay !

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still !

RECORDS OF MARITIME DISTRESS

Joseph Guillaume LeBel
Notary Public

DATE- November 23,1835

VESSEL- The schooner ELIZABETH of Miramichi.

WITNESSES- Captain Thomas Henry Verge
Hippolite Gagné,Pilot

TESTIMONY- The ELIZABETH had sailed from Halifax on October 14, 1835, with a cargo of goods consigned to Messrs Verge, Merchants of Carleton, and Messrs Stewart, Merchants of Dalhousie.
A gale of East wind and heavy seas had driven the schooner ashore on Shipigan Island near the entrance of Bay Chaleur. Some cargo had been salvaged by Capt. Robichaud, Master of the schooner, TROIS FRERES.

PRESENT- Pierre Winter
Hilary Michaud, J.P.

DATE- May 9,1846

VESSEL- The schooner DOLPHIN. 40 tons.

WITNESSES- Captain Isaac Bernard
First Mate Zoel Bernard

TESTIMONY- The DOLPHIN had sailed from Dalhousie, N.B. in Bay Chaleur, on April 27,1846, with a cargo of cedar shingles, bound for Halifax, N.S. En route a solid field of ice was encountered opposite Prince Edward Island. A violent storm arose and drove DOLPHIN against the ice. The schooner broke up as a total loss opposite Grand Etang on the Magdalen Islands.

3.

DATE- 16 November, 1853

VESSEL- The "HARMONY" of Irvine, Scotland. 256 tons.

WITNESSES- Captain Joseph McLean
First Mate William Dick
Second Mate John McKay

TESTIMONY- The HARMONY had loaded with hardwood logs, pine timber, deals and lathwood at Dalhousie, N.B. in Bay Chaleur and sailed for the Port of Troon in Scotland on November 14, 1853. She was overtaken by a "violent storm and gale of wind from the west and rainy weather" and driven ashore about four miles below Caplan River, Bonaventure County.

PRESENT- William McClellan
..... Boissonault

DATE- 2 November 1853

VESSEL- The "GRENVILLE" of Jersey. 164 tons.

WITNESSES- Captain Philip De Faye
Second Mate Francis Hepburn
Mariner Peter Malzard

TESTIMONY- The GRENVILLE, with a full cargo of codfish bound for the Island of Mauritius was safely anchored and moored at Blanc Sablon on the coast of Labrador on October 25, 1853, along with several other vessels. In a violent storm and gale of wind the GRENVILLE was driven ashore along with the schooners, ALERT, NAUTILUS, PABOS and MARY ANN. Her anchors and chains were lost. Only by discharging part of her cargo did the Captain and crew get GRENVILLE afloat on Nov. 1st.

PRESENT- Alfred P. LeBoutillier
Philip Mourant

4.

DATE- 30 October, 1857.

VESSEL- The schooner, "HIGHLAND JANE" of Gaspé. 65 tons.

WITNESS- Captain John Ascah.

TESTIMONY- The schooner, HIGHLAND JANE, had sailed from the Port of Quebec on October 18, 1857 bound for Miramichi, N.B. with a cargo of pork and flour. By October 28th., while at anchor in Malbay, there arose a heavy gale from the East South East. To save his schooner, Capt. Ascah had to let slip his best bower anchor with some forty fathoms of anchor chain and run before the gale for Paspebiac where the Point provided some shelter from easterly storms. He protested that any and all loss and damage to the HIGHLAND JANE and her cargo was due to circumstances beyond her Captain and crew.

PRESENT- Samuel Christie
Hugh Christie

DATE- 30 September, 1859

VESSEL- The schooner, "MARY JANE" of New Carlisle. 63 tons.

WITNESSES- Captain Fabien Fougère
First Mate Gilbert Quessy
Second Mate Alexis Fougère

TESTIMONY- The schooner, MARY JANE, had been employed on the North Shore of the St. Lawrence, near the King's Post called MINGAN, in collecting codfish for the PANDORA, a Le Boutillier Bos. ship, Capt. John Bubert, Master. On 15 September, 1859 the Mary Jane had been safely at anchor at Indian Harbour with a partial cargo of 310 quintals of codfish. She was overtaken there by a violent storm. Despite two anchors out the schooner was driven ashore on the rocks with total loss of the ship and her cargo.

5.

DATE- 22 November, 1859

VESSEL- The "JESSIE" of Jersey. 138 tons.

WITNESSES- Captain Charles Perchard
First Mate Charles Langlois
Second Mate Henry Ireland

TESTIMONY- The JESSIE sailed from the Port of New York bound for Paspébiac in Bay Chaleur on October 27, 1859. Proceeding to the open sea the ship grounded on the Point called "Sandy Hook". The Captain sent for a Steam Tug to get her off but prior to the arrival of a tug the crew succeeded, by backing the vessel's sails, in getting her afloat. The JESSIE continued on her intended voyage, arriving at Bonaventure Island on November 18 and reaching Paspébiac on November 19. Protest was filed to protect against possible damage from the grounding.

DATE- 12 June, 1861

VESSEL- The schooner "STE.ANNE" of New Carlisle.

WITNESSES- Captain John Romeril
First Mate Charles LeBoutillier
Second Mate Peter LeGresley

TESTIMONY- On June 1st., 1861 the STE.ANNE left Paspébiac on a voyage to Long Point on the North Shore with passengers and stores for the Fishery. She called at the Free Port of Gaspé for Customs Entry. At midnight of June 8th the Jessie collided with the ship, PANDORA, of the LeBoutillier Bros.firm about 25 miles off the West Point of Anticosti. Struck on the Port bow, the STE.ANNE's foremast was carried away and she was holed down below the water line. The passengers and crew got on board the PANDORA before the STE.ANNE filled and sank.

PRESENT- E.(Elias) Briard
E.(Elias) Romeril

6.

DATE- 15 November, 1861

VESSEL- The schooner "MARIE ALERT".

WITNESSES- Captain Johnston Garrett
Mate Charles Garrett

TESTIMONY- The schooner, MARIE ALERT, laden with oysters, oil and grindstones, sailed from Buctouche, N.B. on November 5, 1861, enroute to the Port of Quebec. At three A.M. of November 7th the schooner was beset by a violent storm and gale of North East wind, with very heavy seas. She was obliged to run for Paspebiac Harbour to seek shelter. Sailing thence on November 9th., the MARIE ALERT was overtaken by another violent storm. With her rigging damaged she was obliged to return to Paspebiac Harbour for shelter and repairs. On her third try the schooner left on November 15th and had only reached Port Daniel before a third violent storm forced her return to Paspebiac.

PRESENT- Thomas Blackhall, Supercargo.

DATE- 19 May, 1862

VESSEL- The ship "C.T.SUTTON" of Jersey. 193 tons.

WITNESS- Captain Francis John Auley.

TESTIMONY- Laden with salt and dry goods, the C.T.SUTTON sailed from Jersey for Paspebiac on April 8, 1862. She reached Bonaventure Island without incident and called there for Orders. On leaving the Island the wind failed and the ship was driven on an offshore reef. Some 25 tons of salt were jettisoned before the vessel came free. As the ship was making water there was evident damage to her hull.

PRESENT- Alfred P. LeBoutillier
D. (Daniel) Carcaud

7.

DATE- 28 May, 1862

VESSEL- The schooner, "MARY MARTHA". 66 tons.

WITNESS- John Thomas Moriarty of Percé - Owner of the above vessel then at anchor on the Roadstead of Maria, Bonaventure County.

TESTIMONY- That Joseph O. Porlier of Maria, Sailing Master for the schooner, MARY MARTHA, had been directed by the owner to proceed to the Port of Bathurst at the opening of navigation to deliver goods shipped on board the schooner at Quebec in the Fall of 1861. For reasons unknown to the owner and to his great loss and damage, the Sailing Master had left his post, the schooner remained in port and her cargo remained undelivered. The owner filed formal PROTEST against the action of the Sailing Master.

DATE- 25 July, 1862

VESSEL- The ship "HEBE". 236 tons.

WITNESSES- Captain John Frederick Cozens
First Mate Henry Soady

TESTIMONY- The HEBE sailed from the Port of Cadiz, Spain laden with salt bound for Paspebiac in Bay Chaleur on June 23, 1862. She called at the Free Port of Gaspé for Customs Entry and arrived at her mooring off of Bonaventure Island on July 23rd. A strong wind arose from the West South West, driving the ship towards the shore of the Point. Set the jib and top sail and had to slip the anchor and chain cable of 45 fathoms for the safety of the ship. Reached Paspebiac July 25th and proceeded to New Carlisle to lodge Protest with the Agent of Messrs LeBoutillier, Mr. Alfred Carcaud.