

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

GRAND RIVER SEIGNIORY

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Historical background and acquisition by  
Duncan Anderson and William Smith by Deed  
of Sale in 1772.

KEN ANNETT

GRAND RIVER SEIGNIORY

DEED OF SALE  
1772

Some notarial acts such as the following "DEED OF SALE OF THE SEIGNIORY OF GRAND RIVER TO DUNCAN ANDERSON AND WILLIAM SMITH IN 1772" provide a unique 'point d'appui' for a range of historical events in Gaspesia. Duncan Anderson and William Smith, associated Québec City merchants active in the Bay Chaleur fishery, were successors to the earlier firm of Moore and Finlay. William Smith had been agent for the House of Moore and Finlay in Bay Chaleur in the years immediately following the British Conquest and in 1766, the year that Charles Robin of Jersey first came to Gaspesia, Smith had formed his own fishery firm based on Bonaventure. It is of interest to note that Hugh Finlay, partner of the House of Moore and Finlay but better known as the founder of Canada's postal system, was a Gaspesian landowner of two hundred acres of land at Bonaventure. As for William Smith the "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" series has recorded additional information in article No. 45 - CORRESPONDENCE OF THE COX PERIOD (Lieutenant-Governor Major Nicholas Cox of the District of Gaspé) and article No. 138 - WILLIAM SMITH AND THE BAY CHALEUR FISHERY

In purchasing the Seigniorship of Grand River in 1772 Anderson and Smith acquired Gaspesian real estate with a long and significant history. As this Deed of Sale shows, the Fief or Seigniorship had been first granted by the famous Governor of New France, Louis de Buade, Count Frontenac, to Sieur Jacques Cochu in 1697. Upon the death of the first Seignior the grant had been confirmed for the Cochu heirs by the Marquis de la Jonquière, then Governor of New France, in 1750. The Seigniorship, centered on the estuary of the Grand River, had a frontage of six (6) kilometers along the coast of Bay Chaleur and a depth inland of eight (8) kilometers. The natural harbour at the mouth of the Grand River had long been used by the Norman, Breton and Basque fishermen who came in season to Gaspesia for cod fishing. In particular they sought shelter there in time of storm that made the more open waters off Percé and Bonaventure Island too rough for shipping. Some of these fishermen, Normans in particular, married local Indian girls and their families were the beginnings of the Grand River community.

PUT TO THE TORCH : Military and naval action during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) brought to a dramatic but tragic end the French Regime in the Seigniorship of Grand River. For after the Fall of Louisbourg a Royal Navy squadron, bearing a military force under General James Wolfe, came into Gaspé Bay with orders to lay waste the French fishing stations and settlements in Gaspesia and the Gulf. (Ref.- "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY", No.5 THE GASPEE EXPEDITION.) The author Blodwen Davies has recalled the fate of Grand River in the book, "GASPÉ - LAND OF HISTORY AND ROMANCE" as follows:

"...During the first of the eighteenth century, Grande Rivière proceeded slowly from obscurity to a very nice sort of prosperity under the lord of the manor, who combined his claims to nobility with a shrewd trading instinct. When the Seven Year's War began the seigneur was Francois Lefebvre de Bellefeuille, the royal commandant in Gaspé (Actually, Lefebvre de Bellefeuille was the Seignior of Pabos which adjoined Grand River to the West) He lived in a manor house built on a little island in the harbour, with his wife and family. It was a mansion of no little dignity and space for it had eight rooms on the ground floor. Madame de Bellefeuille ruled it thriftily, and her maids were busy at the spinning wheel and loom and in the herb garden. Sage and onions hung in pungent rows to dry. There were bins of peas dried in the sun, casks of pork in brine. Seigneur de Bellefeuille did a trade in fish and all the necessities of the fishermen and colonists. So the war was a very unwelcome diversion in the affairs of Grande Rivière and everyone went about their accustomed business in the hope that its red tides would ebb and leave the little seigneury in safety.

Indeed, they were quite unconcerned. One bright day in the autumn of 1758 they were going about their affairs as usual...Suddenly a cry of warning went up that an enemy ship had rounded Cap d'Espoir with scarlet flags flying and red coats lining her gunwales.

With a single thought for safety the French colonists fled to the woods...not a soul was left in all the village of Grande Rivière. The ship dropped anchor, the long boats

rowed ashore and out stepped (the soldiers of General James Wolfe) unopposed. Cautiously they explored the empty barns and houses. They found the seigneur's silver and linen and family keepsakes packed away in boxes ready for transport to Québec. Now if the French had stayed to meet the English their fate might have been an easier one. Wolfe's instructions had been specific,- to meet and confer with the French and win their confidence, then offer them either the opportunity to go to Québec or passage to France. But the H.M.S. KENNINGTON was the ship told off for the invasion of Grande Rivière and her Commander was a choleric captain who had small liking for the rocky coasts of Gaspé. He told the soldiers they must do their work with all speed and that he would not lie long in the vicinity of the village. Indeed, scarcely were they landed than he began signalling for them to return. The troops did not want to be stranded in hostile country and as they could see that the only way to get in touch with the French was by pursuing them to the woods, they were torn between Wolfe's explicit instructions and the KENNINGTON'S impatient signals. The Captain of the KENNINGTON had the more immediate influence and so the soldiers set the torch to everything in Grand Rivière. The manor house went up in smoke, along with barns and stores, flakes, stages and fish houses, Sixty cottages and cabins added to the size of the bonfire, two hundred chests of warm clothing among the goods of trade, sixty casks of molasses, great stores of wines and brandies and rum and eight thousand quintals of cod and the eighty fishing boats that had caught the cod, all went up in smoke...it was the funeral pyre of French power in America..."

The years that followed the burning of Grand River were marked by momentous events in North America. In 1759 General Wolfe would return to the St.Lawrence, defeat the French forces of General Montcalm at the gates of fortress Québec, but lose his life in the battle. In 1760 New France fell to British Arms and in 1763 the Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Years War and ratified British possession of North America. We can imagine that life at Grand River as a fishing station revived very slowly and that Anderson and Smith began anew when they acquired the Seigniory in 1772.

DEED OF SALE OF THE SEIGNIORY OF GRAND RIVER TO DUNCAN  
ANDERSON AND WILLIAM SMITH BY SIEURS HENRY MORIN, HIS  
WIFE AND MICHEL BOUCHARD, MAY 19, 1772

(Free translation from the original French)

Present were Sieur Henry Morin, Merchant, of Québec City, and Dame Marie-Anne Bouchard, his wife, duly authorized by her husband for the purpose of these presents, and Sieur Michel Bouchard, Merchant of Québec City; Who, by these presents, voluntarily sold, ceded, gave up, made over and abandoned, as of now and forever, with guarantee of freedom from all debts, mortgages, loans or promises, to Sieurs Duncan Anderson and William Smith, Associated Merchants, present and accepting for themselves and for their future heirs, assigns and administrators the Fief and Concession of Grand River, situated in the Bay of Chaleurs, with frontage of a league and a half and a depth of two leagues (i.e. 6 km frontage on the Bay of Chaleurs by 8 km in depth) extending from the Seigniory of Grand Pabos (on the West), formerly owned by Sieur Lefebvre Bellefeuille, in the direction of 'Cap Espoir' towards Ile Percé; with Right of hunting, fishing and trading with the Indians over all the whole Concession, and other Rights as granted in the Deeds referred to below; the said purchasers declaring themselves to be well satisfied that the Fief and Concession is as stated by the said Sieur Morin in a Deed drawn up by Notary Panet on May 6th., 1769 and that the vendors are not reserving in any way part of the said Fief of Grand River.

And that all belonged to the said vendors, to wit, two-thirds of the said Fief of Grand River to the said Sieur Henry Morin by acquisition of the Rights of Sieurs Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, Michel Rousseau and Jacques Rousseau, brothers, heirs of the late Dame Marie Magdelaine Cochu, their mother, as witnessed by a Deed of Cession drawn up by Notary Sanguinet on August 12, 1765, for one third of the Fief; another third acquired from Sieur Pierre Cochu, son and heir of the late Sieur Jacques Cochu, as witnessed by the Deed drawn up by Notary Sanguinet on July 26, 1769; and the final third of the said Fief and Concession of Grand River belonging to the three children of the late Dame Marie

Anne Cochou, widow of the Sieur André Bouchard, namely Dame Marie Anne Bouchard, wife of the said Sieur Henry Morin, Sieur Michel Bouchard and Sieur Louis Bouchard, absent, for whom the said Sieur Henry Morin is legal Curator, and for whom the said Sieur Morin, his wife, duly authorized and Michel Bouchard bear witness by these presents, solidly, the one for the other and each for all in accordance with the Renouncement of Right; guaranteeing jointly the said purchasers and representatives from all troubles by the said Sieur Louis Bouchard or his representatives by the mortgage of all their goods, present and future which is effective from today.

The said Fief and Concession of Grand River belonged to the said Sieur and Dames Marie Magdelaine, Jacques and Marie-Anne Cochou, ancestors of the said vendors, as children of the late Jacques Cochou to whom the whole was granted by Messieurs Louis de Buade (Count Frontenac) and Jean Bochart, Governor and Intendant in New France, the last day of May one thousand six hundred and ninety seven, the title and deeds thus dated in good and correct form have now been given over to the said purchasers, as well as the new deed of Concession awarded to the children of the said late Sieur Jacques Cochou by the Marquis de la Jonquiere and M. Francois Bigot, Governor et Intendant in the Country on October fifteenth, one thousand seven hundred and fifty, confirming the previous Concession, notwithstanding failure of settlement, and granting to the said Cochou heirs the said Fief and Concession of Grand River to enjoy its full possession in equal portions. With these deeds the said purchasers are satisfied and acknowledge receipt from the said vendors.

This Sale is made with the provision and requirement for the said purchasers to swear "FOI ET HOMMAGE" to His Majesty to whom the said Fief and Concession responds with respect to the Rights and Duties customary in this Colony and the execution of the other responsibilities and requirements imposed by the said deeds of Concession above-mentioned, reading of which has presently been made and which require the said purchasers to accept at their particular Risks and Profits.

This Sale is made for the price and amount of TWO THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED "LIVRES TOURNOIS" or shillings of this Province which the said purchasers oblige themselves to pay to the said vendors, or their representatives, in merchantable goods to be delivered as soon as the said purchasers have received shipment from London this year, and at the latest during the course of this year. Failing which it is agreed that the said Sieur Anderson shall give his Note in due form for the sum of two thousand two hundred "Livres" payable in the month of August in money of this Province.

The amount of this present Sale for two-thirds of the said Fief by the said Sieur Henry Morin and his wife is ONE THOUODAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND ELEVEN SHILLINGS OF THIS PROVINCE, TWO "SOLS" AND TWO "DENIERS"; and for the part of Sieur Michel Bouchard the amount of TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR SHILLINGS, EIGHT "SOLS" AND TEN "DENIERS"; and for the final part belonging to the said Sieur Louis Bouchard, absent, the same amount as his brother, Michel. As for the amount due to Sieur Louis Bouchard, absent, his brother Michel accepts to account for it to him and discharges the purchasers of this responsibility.

As SURETY for the payment of the said amount of TWO THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED SHILLINGS, the said purchasers hereby mortgage their holdings (leurs biens), especially and by preference the said Fief and Concession of Grand River, the said vendors being the mortgage holders.

Meanwhile, the said vendors agree that the said purchasers enjoy and dispose, in full right of ownership, from this time and forever, for themselves, their future heirs and assigns, the said Fief and Concession of Grand River, with Right to Fish, Hunt and Trade and with all seigniorial rights and privileges which follow upon this present Deed of Delegation and Transfer.

(SIGNATURES)

Hy Morin

Marie Anne Bouchard Morin

M. Bouchard

Dun. Anderson, for William Smith and Self.

Saillant, N.P.

Panet N.P.

ADDENDUM TO THE DEED ABOVE

Today, the afternoon of July 20th., 1772 before the undersigned Notaries, appeared and were present Sieur Henry Morin and Dame Marie-Anne Bouchard, his wife, duly authorized, vendors named in the Deed above, who recognize by these presents to have received from the said Sieurs Duncan Anderson and William Smith, purchasers, also named above, the sum of one thousand seven hundred and eleven shillings, two "sols" and two "deniers" as the price of the Rights which they sold to them by the above Deed; and also appeared Sieur Michel Bouchard who had received from the said purchasers the sum of four hundred and forty eight shillings, seventeen "sols" and eight "deniers", half on his own account and the other half as that due to Sieur Louis Bouchard, absent, concerning which he had given guarantee of responsibility. The said amounts paid to Sieur Morin, his wife and Bouchard were as merchandise delivered before these presents to their satisfaction, wherefore quittance, by which it is agreed that the Sale described above is fully settled.

Done and Passed at Québec at the home of said Sieur Morin "Quarrefour du Cul de Sac", Sworn to and Signed after having been read.

(SIGNATURES)

Marie Anne Bouchard Morin

Hy Morin

M. Bouchard

Saillant, N.P.

Panet N.P.







FISHING STATION-BAY CHALEUR