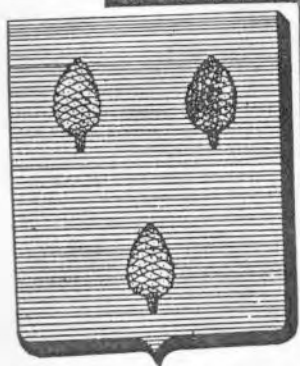


GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

JACQUES CARTIER IN GASPESIA

1534

KEN ANNETT



ARMS OF CARTIER
 Golden Pine Cones on a field of blue
 (Mailhot, Dict. of Nob. Fam I, 717)

Jacques Cartier

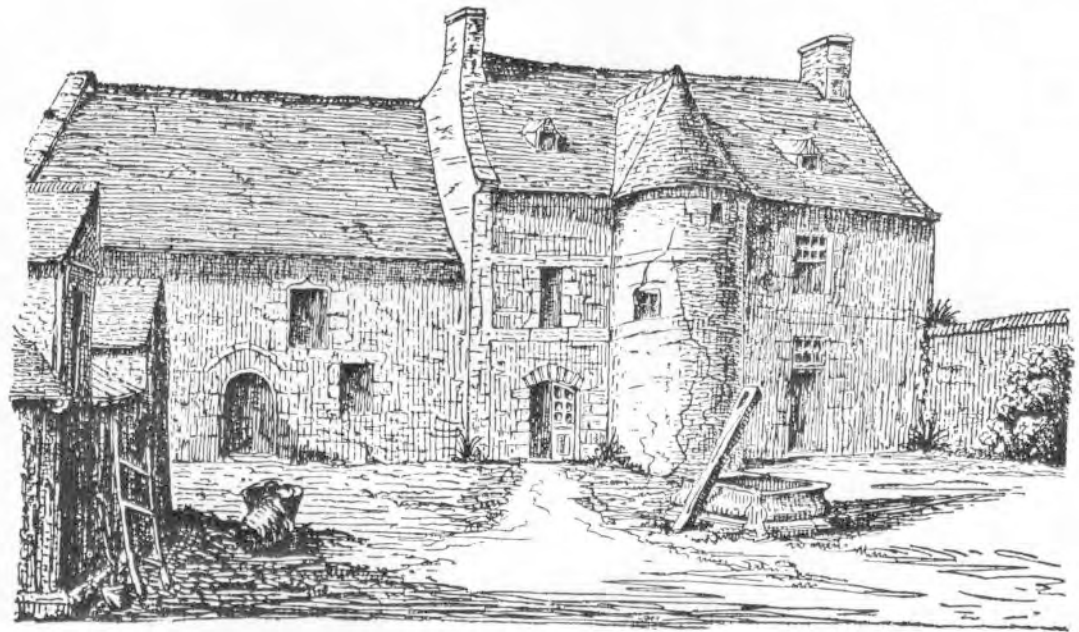
JACQUES CARTIER IN GASPEZIA - 1534PREFACE

Much earlier in the course of this GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY series, article No.47 presented the commentary of a distinguished Gaspesian, the late Frederick James Richmond of Gaspé Basin, on the topic, THE LANDING OF JACQUES CARTIER AT GASPÉ IN 1534, as published by the Canadian Historical Society.

The purpose of the present article is to place the historic visit of Jacques Cartier in the context of his first voyage of 1534. To that end relevant text of Cartier's record will be presented in translation from the volume, JACQUES CARTIER - HIS FOUR VOYAGES TO CANADA, by Hiram B. Stephens, B.C.L. It is of interest to note that Stephens translated from the identical text published in French by Judge J. Camille Pouliot in his 1934 book, LA GRANDE AVENTURE DE JACQUES CARTIER, viz., RELATION ORIGINALE DU VOYAGE DE JACQUES CARTIER AU CANADA EN 1534 published in Paris, France by H. Michelant and A. Ramé in 1867.

Jacques Cartier was born in the Brittany sea-port of St.Malo in 1491, son of Jamet Cartier and his wife, Jeffeline. Bretons had long distinguished themselves as seafarers and it was natural that Jacques Cartier went to sea at an early age. Prior to his historic voyage of 1534 he had made more than one voyage to the Newfoundland fishery and may have sailed to Brazil in Portuguese employ. In 1519 he married Catherine, daughter of the Constable of St.Malo, Jacques des Granches.

Jacques and Catherine Cartier's home, known as LIMOILOU, was located on a hill overlooking the Brittany seacoast. It was a modest home for the man who would claim for his King lands far larger in extent than France itself.



THE MANSION OF JACQUES CARTIER.

FIRST VOYAGE.

In Ramusio, edition, 1556. Vol. iii., page 435.

A Shorte and Briefe Narration of the Two Navigations and Discoveries to the Northweaste Partes called Newe France, London, 1580. Hakluyt adopted this in his edition of 1600, and it has been followed by Pinkerton and Churchill in their voyages.

Discours du Capitaine Jacques Cartier aux Terres Neuves du Canada, Norembeque, Hochelage, Labrador, et pays adjacens dite Nouvelle France, avec particulierès mœurs, langage et cérémonies des habitans d'icelle. Rouen, 1598. Chez Raphael du Petit-Val. Octavo, 64 p.

In Lescarbot, edition 1612. Lib. iii., chap. 2, page 240, *et seq.*

Relation Originale du Voyage de Jacques Cartier au Canada en 1534; Documents inédits sur Jacques Cartier et le Canada (nouvelle série) publiés par H. Michelaut et A. Ramé, accompagnés de deux portraits de Cartier et de deux vues de son manoir. Paris, Tross, 1867.

How Sir Charles de Moüy of La Mailleraye sent away two ships of St. Malo to the New Land of France, and how they reached the Harbor of Cape Bonne-Veue.

After Sir Charles de Moüy of La Mailleraye and Vice-Admiral of France had sworn the captains, mates and sailors of the ships to be well and faithfully true to the service of His Christian Majesty the King, under the authority and charge of Jacques Cartier, we set sail, the twentieth of April, 1534,

from St. Malo, with two ships, each about sixty tons, and manned with sixty-one men each; we had such good weather that on the tenth of May we arrived at Newfoundland, into which we entered by the Cape de Bonne-Veue, which is in latitude $48\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ and longitude * * On account of the large quantity of ice along the coast here, we were obliged to enter a harbor we named St. Catherine, distant about five leagues to the south-southeast. Here we stayed ten days waiting for favorable weather, and during this time we fitted up and got ready our boats.

As the sketch map shows, Cartier then sailed northward along the east coast of Newfoundland to the Strait of Belle Isle and then westward along the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence as far as Cumberland Harbour which he reached in mid-June. He then sailed southward along the western shore of Newfoundland as far as Cape Anguille. His route then lay westward to the Bird Rocks and the

Magdalen Islands in the last days of June. Crossing to the western point of Prince Edward Island he then coasted northward along the shore of New Brunswick, past Miramichi Bay to Point Miscou at the entrance of Chaleur Bay. The date was July 3rd- but at this point of entrance into Gaspesian waters let us resume the actual record of Jacques Cartier.

. . .

we were obliged to carry reefed sails till next morning, the third of July, when the wind blew from the west, and we were carried north, and discovered the land which was north-northeast of the low lands. Between these low lands and the high lands is a large gulf and opening, of fifty-five fathoms in many places and about fifteen leagues wide. On account of the depth, size and character of the land here, we had hopes of finding a passage similar to that of Castle Gulf. This gulf looks east-northeast, west-southwest. The soil on the south side is good enough and cultivable, and full of as fine prairies as we had seen, level as a lake; on the north side are high mountains, covered with trees of various kinds, amongst others fine cedars and firs fit to make masts for vessels of three hundred tons; and we saw no part here that was not covered with these woods, except two places where it was low; these were fine prairies, with two beautiful lakes. The centre of this gulf is in latitude $47\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$.

Of Cape Hope. Of Bay (staria) St. Martin; how seven canoes of the savages came to our boat, and being unwilling to go away, we frightened them by firing small cannon, so that they fled in great haste.

The cape of this land to the south was named Cape Hope, by reason of the hope we had of finding a passage. The fourth of July we went along this coast northwards to find a harbor, and went into a small place exposed to the south wind, which we thought it worth while to name St. Martin*, and we stayed here from the fourth till the twelfth. While here we went with one of our boats on Monday, the

* Port Daniel

sixth, the Feast of the Mass, after hearing Mass, to explore a cape and point of land seven or eight leagues from the west coast; to see also which way the land lies. Having come within about a half league of the point, we perceived two groups (bands) of canoes of savages going from one side to the other; and there were more than forty or fifty canoes, of which a portion reached the point and jumped ashore, with a great deal of noise, making signs to us to land, showing us skins on pieces of wood. But as we had only one boat, we were unwilling to do so, and went towards the others who were on the water. The others, seeing us fleeing, ordered two of their largest canoes to follow us, with which were gathered five of those coming from the ocean, and the seven approached our boat, making signs of joy and showing a desire for friendship, saying in their language, "*Napen tondamen assurtah*," and other unintelligible words. But as has been said we had only one boat and did not care to trust in their signs, and made them signs to go away from us, which they would not do, and came with great ado to us, so that our boat was soon surrounded with their seven canoes. And because our signs to them to retire had no effect, we fired off two small cannons over them; this astonishing them, they went back towards the point, stayed there awhile, then again began to come near us as before; so that, when near our boat, we shot two of our darts amongst them, which frightened them so much that they fled in great haste and were not willing to return.

Our traffic with the savages.

The next day some of the savages came in their canoes to the point and mouth of the bay whence our ships had gone. Knowing of their having come, we went with our boat where they were, but as soon as they saw us coming they fled, making signs they had come to trade with us, showing the skins of little value, which they wore. We likewise made them signs that we wished them no harm; and two of our men went ashore to go to them, taking knives and other iron tools, also a red cap to present to their captain. Seeing this, they landed and brought skins and began trading, showing great excitement and joy at possessing the knives and iron tools, dancing and performing antics, such as throwing themselves in the water on their heads with their hands. They gave us all they had, retaining nothing; so that they were obliged to go away perfectly naked. They made signs to us they would return next day, bringing other skins.

How some of the men went ashore with articles of trade and three hundred savages came, who were overjoyed; of the nature of the country, its products and the gulf called the Gulf (Bay) of Chaleur. *

Thursday, the eighth of the month, as the wind was not favorable for us to go out with our ships, we got ready our boats to explore the gulf and made about twenty-five leagues this day. Next day, having good weather, we sailed till noon, when we had explored the greater part of the gulf and saw that beyond the low lands there was a high mountainous district. But, as we perceived there was no passage, we coasted along, and as we sailed saw some savages on the shores of a lake in the low lands, making several fires.* We went there and found there was a channel from the sea into the lake, and we placed our boats on one of the banks of the channel. The savages approached us and brought us pieces of cooked seal, which they placed on pieces of wood and then retired, giving us to understand that they gave them to us. We sent men ashore with hatchets, knives, chaplets, and other articles, in which the savages took great delight, and they came all at once in their canoes to the shore where we were, bringing skins and other things they had to exchange for our articles, and there were more than three hundred of them—men, women and children. A number of the women had stopped, remaining in the water to their knees, dancing and singing. Others, who had come to where we were, came familiarly rubbing our arms with their hands, then raised towards heaven and danced and made signs of joy; and had so much confidence, that finally they exchanged everything they had; so that they found themselves stark naked, as they had given up all they had, which was of little value. We perceived that these people could be easily converted to our Faith. They go from one place to another, living by fishing; their country is warmer than Spain, as fine a country as one would wish to see, level and smooth, and there is no part too small for trees, even if sandy, or where there is no wild wheat, which has an ear like that of rye and the grains like oats; there are peas as thick as if sown and cultivated, red and white barberries, strawberries, red and white roses, and other flowers of sweet and delightful perfume. There are also fine prairies, fine grasses and lakes filled with salmon. They call a hatchet in their language "cochi," and a knife "bacon." We named this gulf the Gulf of Chaleur.

* Carleton

Of another tribe (natione) of savages, their customs, food and dress.

Being certain there was no passage by way of this gulf, we set sail from St. Martin on Sunday, the 12th, to explore further. We went eastward along the coast about eighteen leagues as far as Capo di Prato, where we found it shallow and a very high tide, very rough water, so that we went towards land between the cape and an island to the east about a league from the cape, and there we anchored for the night. Next morning we set sail to follow along this coast, which runs north-northeast, but a furious gale sprang up and we had to return to our anchoring place, where we stayed till next day, when we again set sail and came to a river five or six leagues from Capo di Prato; having crossed the river, the wind again became violent, and there was such a heavy fog that we had to go within the river on Wednesday, the 14th, and we stayed here till the 16th awaiting favorable weather. On Friday, the 16th, the wind blew such a gale that one of the ships lost an anchor, and we were obliged to go seven or eight leagues to a harbor* with good bottom, which we had discovered with our boats, and the bad weather kept us here till the 25th. Meanwhile we saw a large number of savages, who were mackerel fishing, which are very plentiful; there were about forty canoes of them, and more than two hundred men, women and children, who, after meeting us on shore, came familiarly (freely) to our ships with their canoes. We gave them knives, glass chaplets (beads), combs and other articles of little value, which greatly pleased them; they lifted their hands to heaven as they sang and danced in their canoes. They can with truth be called savages, as there are no people poorer than these in the world, and I believe they do not possess anything to the value of five pennies, apart from their canoes and nets. Their whole clothing consists of a small skin, with which they cover their loins (le parti vergognose); they also put other old skins above and across their bodies. They have not the same nature (character, disposition), nor language as the first ones we had seen. They have their heads completely shaven, except a lock of hair on the top of the head which they allow to grow as long as a horse's tail; they tie it to their heads with small leather cords. Their dwellings are their canoes, which they turn upside down and lie down under them on the bare ground.

* Harbour of Gaspé



They eat their meat almost raw, merely warming it over coals; the same with fish. We went, the Day of the Magdalen, with our boats where they were, and landed freely amongst them, which pleased them, and all the men danced and sang in two or three bands (groups), making great signs of joy at our coming. They had sent away into the forest all the young women except two or three who had remained with them, to each one of whom we gave a comb and a tin bell, which pleased them, and they rubbed the arms and chest of our captain, as they thanked him. The savages, noticing we had given presents to the women who remained, caused the others to come out of the forest, so that they might

also receive some as well as the others. There were about twenty women who threw themselves in a heap on our captain, touching and stroking him, their method of caressing. He gave each of them a tin bell of little value, and they immediately began to dance, singing several songs. We found here a large quantity of mackerel that they had caught near this shore with nets made expressly for the purpose of the fibre of hemp, which grows in the district where they usually live: they do not go to sea except when it is favorable for fishing, as I have been informed. Likewise there grows also in the same district a kind of grain large as peas, similar to what grows in Spain; this they eat in place of bread; they have an abundance of it; they call it in their language *Kapaige*. They have also plums, which they dry as we do for the winter; they call them *Honesta*. They have figs also, nuts, apples and other fruits, and beans which they call *Sahu*; the nuts, *Cahehya*; figs. * * *; apples, * * * If we showed them an article they did not have and did not know what it was, shaking their heads, they would reply *Nohda*, which means they have none and do not know what it is. They showed us by signs how they prepared the things (foods, etc.), they have and how they grow. They will not eat anything that is salted; are great thieves and steal all they can.

How we erected a large cross on the point at the entrance to the harbor, and the chief of the savages made a long speech. Our captain secured two of the chief's sons to go with us.

On the twenty-fourth we made a large cross, thirty feet high; this was made in the presence of some of the savages at the point at the entrance of the harbor, on the middle of which cross we put a shield (escutcheon) in relief with three fleur-de-lys, above which was cut in large letters:

“VIVE LE ROY DE FRANCE,”

and we erected it in their presence on the point, and

they looked at it keenly, both when we were making it and while erecting it. Having erected it we all joined hands and knelt down in adoration of it before their eyes, and we made signs to them, looking and pointing to heaven, that in this was our salvation. This astonished them greatly; they turned to each other and looked at the cross. Having gone back to our ships, their captain (chief) came to us in a canoe, wearing an old black bearskin, with his three daughters and his brother; they did not come as close as usual. The chief made a long speech, pointing to the cross and making a representation of it with his two fingers. Then he pointed to the district round us, as if to say it was all his, and that we should not have erected the cross without his permission. Having finished we showed him a ring or hatchet. (*manara*), as if we wished to exchange it for his bearskin, which attracted him, and he gradually came close to our ships. One of our sailors who was in the ship's boat laid his hand on the canoe, and instantly jumped into it with two or three more, and obliged them to go on board ship, at which they were much astonished. But our captain at once assured them they would receive no hurt, making signs of friendship to them, welcoming them to eat and drink. After this, we gave them to understand by signs that the cross was placed there as a guide and mark

to enter the harbor, and that we wished to return here shortly and that we would bring iron tools and other things, and that we wished to take with us two of his sons and that we would return again to this harbor. And we dressed each of the sons in a shift, a colored sack (waist), and a red capo, and we placed a brass chain around the neck of each, which pleased them immensely. They gave their old clothes (?) to those who returned. We gave a hatchet and some knives to each one of the three we sent back; these having reached shore and related what had passed to the others, about noon-time six of their canoes, with five or six men in each, came to the ships, bringing fish to the chief's daughters and bid them adieu, and said some words to them which we could not understand. They made signs that they would not remove the cross.

How we left the harbor, making our way ahead, and leaving this coast behind us, we set out for a land west-northwest.

Next day, the twenty-fifth, there was a good wind, and we left the above harbor.* Being outside, we sailed to east-northeast,

* At Gaspé July 16th to 25th.

POSTSCRIPT

Across centuries Gaspé Bay has been the scene of historic and dramatic events. From time immemorial Indians had come to its shores in summer to camp on the beaches and fish its waters. The Bay may well have witnessed the swift "dragon" ships of those intrepid Norse seamen - the Vikings. More surely, Basque fishermen and whalers, the vanguard of Europeans in the Gulf region, found haven there in time of storm.

But the arrival in Gaspé Bay of Jacques Cartier and his crews in July of 1534 was most significant in that Europeans would learn of Gaspesia from the written records of that great voyage of discovery.

As Cartier and the men of St.Malo sailed out of Gaspé Bay that July day of 1534 the long isolation of Gaspesia had ended and a new page turned in Gaspesian history,