

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

WRECK OF THE SCHOONER "CHERUB"

Seeking shelter from violent storm in the
harbour of Newport, the schooner "CHERUB"
ends up a total wreck on the Bay Chaleur
shore near Pabos.

KEN ANNETT

THE WRECK OF THE SCHOONER "CHERUB"PREFACE

The background of this story of the wreck of the schooner "CHERUB" on the shore of Bay Chaleur is a Gaspesia of some 160 years ago. With no road, railway or airline to provide for the transportation of people and goods, the Gaspesian communities looked to the sea and to the schooners of traders for supplies. This story concerns the tragic fate of one such trading vessel, the 59 ton schooner, "CHERUB", of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, on a voyage to the ports of Bay Chaleur with a cargo of Rum, Flour and Dry Goods.

The story of "CHERUB" was recounted on July 20th., 1832 in the New Carlisle office of Martin Sheppard, Notary Public, by her late Master, Captain John Magray, Master Mariner, his Mate, Joseph Durkee, and two Seamen of the crew, Richard Ackerly and Levi Rogers, all of whom counted themselves fortunate to have survived shipwreck,

Present to witness their DEED OF PROTEST were two prominent men of New Carlisle, Thomas Morris, Gentleman, and Matthew Caldwell, Merchant. Previously, a REPORT OF SURVEY had been made and signed by three shipping experts, John Vibert and John Hamon, Ship Owners and Isaac Edward Man, Shipwright.

Let us imagine that we were present that July day in 1832 to hear the testimony that follows.

EXTRACT FROM DEED OF PROTEST. NO.388 FILE OF MARTIN SHEPPARD.20th JULY, 1832

Set sail on board of the schooner "CHERUB" from the Port of Yarmouth in the Province of Nova Scotia in North America on the nineteenth day of the month of May last past loaded with a cargo of Rum, Flour and Dry Goods on a trading voyage to the Bay des Chaleurs and the District of Gaspé.

That the said vessel, after leaving the said Port of Yarmouth proceeded on her said voyage and arrived in the Bay des Chaleurs on Wednesday the thirteenth day of June last past and afterwards proceeded to various Ports of the said District to dispose of the cargo laden on board of the said vessel and for other trade and traffic, without anything particular or extraordinary occurring.

OFF LITTLE RIVER

On Tuesday, the tenth day of this present month of July, then lying at anchor off Little River in the County and District of Gaspé, under their best bower anchor, and having greatly lightened their said vessel by disposing a considerable portion of the cargo, when it came on to blow a heavy gale from the South Eastward, with thick, hazy weather and rain, at about mid-day with a heavy sea running in a direction towards the shore. Tried the pumps repeatedly but their said vessel continued free and made no water. Paid out the best bower cable with a long scope which greatly eased the said vessel and enabled her to ride with apparent safety.

ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 11th.

On Wednesday the eleventh day of July instant remained at anchor at Little River aforesaid with the wind still blowing strong from the South Eastward with thick weather, rain and a heavy sea until about twelve of the clock or mid-day of this same day, when the gale, on a sudden, blew with uncommon violence from the South Eastward and shortly afterwards increased to a perfect hurricane. At eight o'clock P.M. of this day, the gale still continuing unabated, the bower cable gave way and broke at about three fathoms from the anchor, and their vessel drove rapidly towards the shore from the violence of the gale and heavy sea setting in that direction. Immediately made sail and got underway and proceeded under double reefed sails towards the nearest safe harbour called Newport which affords shelter from South Easterly winds, their said vessel not being capable of weathering the gale at sea owing to the goods taken from her cargo which rendered the vessel too light to remain at that time at sea with safety.

SUNKEN SAND BAR OFF PABOS.

On the next day, the twelfth day of July instant, at about one of the clock in the morning, the weather being greatly overcast and cloudy, the said vessel, when proceeding from Little River to Newport aforesaid, struck with great violence on a sunken sand bar or flats off Pabos, extending four hundred yards or thereabouts from the shore, and beat with such force thereon that the rudder of their said vessel uncased and was lost, and otherwise caused considerable damage to the said vessel. Tried the pumps and then first perceived that the vessel had strained considerably and made a lot of water. Paid out the small bower anchor and chain cable, at which time the sea broke with violence over the vessel, caused her to strain and take in considerably, damaged the goods on board of her and drove the said vessel against the

rocks near the shore upon which she struck with great violence and after beating thereon some time bulged and opened on one side.

UNREMITTED LABOUR AND EXERTIONS IN VAIN.

At about twelve of the clock or mid-day the wind and sea moderated some. Tried to extricate the vessel from the perilous situation in which she lay but the Appearers and the rest of the crew, in despite of their unremitted labour and exertions found all their efforts to that end useless and of no avail, the vessel being embedded in sand to a depth of at least four feet. Perceived at a distance from the shore there being but one tenanted habitation near the place where the vessel lay.

At five o'clock P.M., the wind increased considerably and at six o'clock P.M. blew a strong gale from the North Eastward, with a heavy sea breaking on and over their vessel. At ten o'clock P.M. the vessel canted and fell over on her side, the sea all the time making a clear break over her. Cut away the masts as their only chance left of safety and preservation of the crew and cargo on board of the said vessel.

ABANDON SHIP :

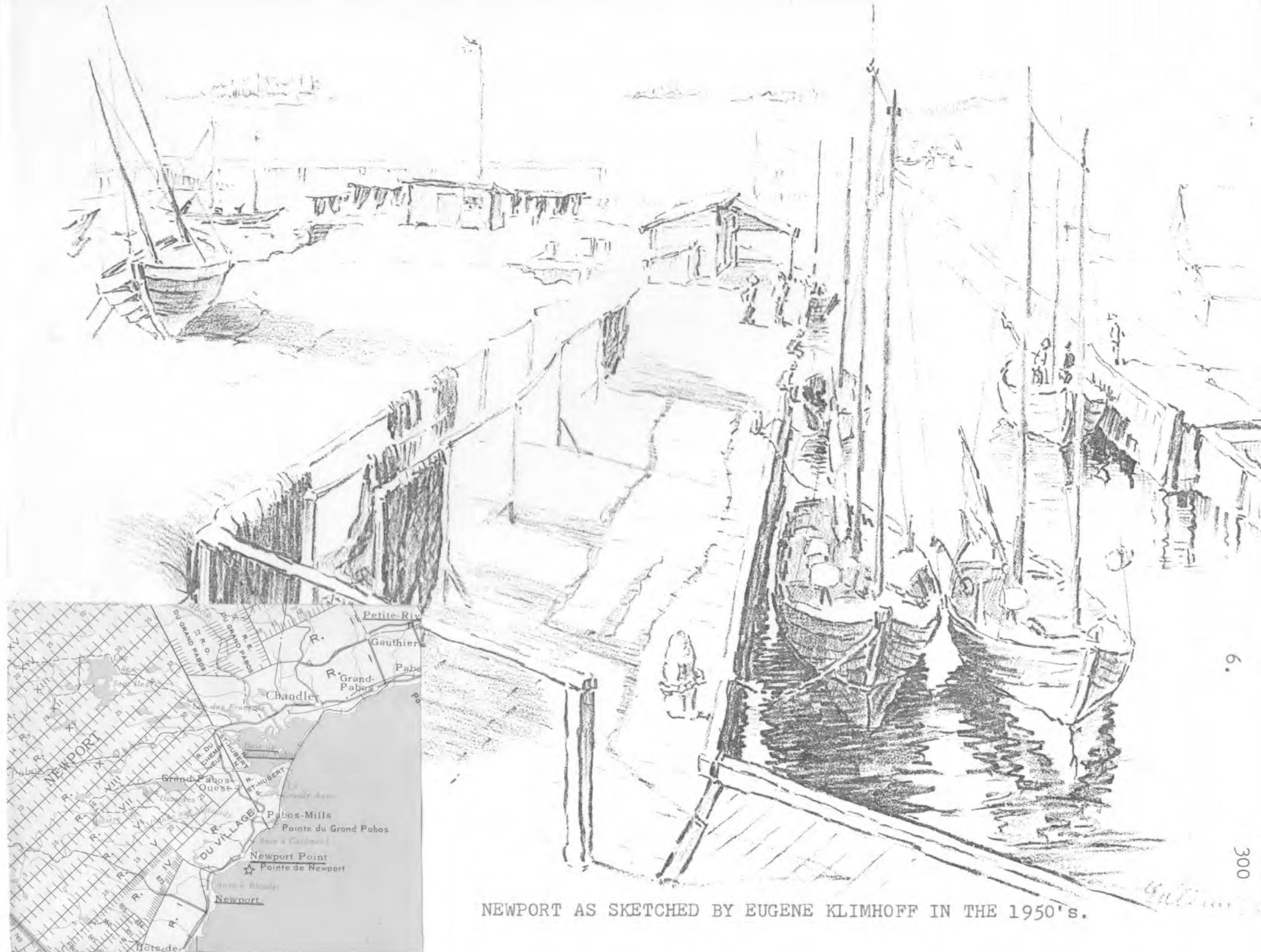
The said Appearers and the rest of the crew of the said vessel, seeing their lives in jeopardy and danger, consulted together as to the best course to be pursued and unanimously determined that no time was to be lost but each person on board should provide for his individual safety and leave their vessel, lying as it were like a log on the water, bulged and a complete wreck with the water flowing in and out of her the same as on the outside, and no longer subject themselves to the fury of the elements in a situation in which the most strenuous and unremitted efforts and exertions proved unavailing. Which they accordingly did do and after great danger and difficulty succeeded in reaching the shore in safety.

SALVAGE EFFORTS

At daylight of Thursday the thirteenth day of July instant, left the shore to go on board of the vessel and with difficulty succeeded. Found their said vessel in the same situation as before stated, with all the goods of her cargo wet and damaged with sea water, a part of which was brought on shore and saved by these Appearers and the rest of the crew. Dispatched the only person inhabiting near the place where the wreck ;ay as a messenger in quest of competent persons to survey and exams the said vessel and cargo and report their opinion thereon.

SURVEY AND EXAMINATION

The next day, the fourteenth day of July instant, a number of persons from Grand River, Cape Cove and Newport visited the wreck, when John Vibert and John Hamon, ship owners and Master Mariners and Isaac Edward Man, Shipwright, persons of respectability, gave it as their unanimous and decided opinion that the said vessel was not in a situation ever to be got off or repaired, except at an expense far from commensurate with the value of the said vessel, and did further recommend and advise that the said vessel and her cargo be sold, as the most prudent proceeding, for the benefit of all concerned or interested, which counsel was consequently pursued as will appear in the several documents and papers transmitted herewith for the information and gratification of all whom it may concern.



NEWPORT AS SKETCHED BY EUGENE KLIMHOFF IN THE 1950's.