

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE SCHOONER "ESPÉRANCE"

 OF

 NEW RICHMOND

Protest of her Captain and
 crew with regard to voyage
 of November, 1827.

KEN ANNETT

THE SCHOONER "ESPERANCE" OF NEW RICHMOND.

FOREWORD

At New Richmond on March 10th.,1828, Captain Aubin Lesgouffe Master of the 45 ton schooner, ESPÉRANCE, and two members of his crew met with the only official Notary Public in the vast District of Gaspé. Martin Sheppard, to confirm and extend a PROTEST that they had made previously before John Gilker, Esq., one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said District. Sheppard, a native son of the Island of Guernsey, had trained for and been admitted as an Notary Public in Quebec City before undertaking practice in Gaspesia. In 1828 he was residing at Bonaventure in the Township of Hamilton.

Captain Lesgouffe was accompanied by the Mate of the ESPÉRANCE, Armand Sire and by Seaman Joseph Desiré Sire. Another member of the crew, Seaman Bernard Doiron, who had testified before John Gilker, Esq., was unavoidably absent for the meeting with Martin Sheppard, N.P.

Present as witnesses were Messrs William Cuthbert and Hugh Robertson. The career of Cuthbert has been sketched in the GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY article No.12, published by SPEC in the issue of May 31,1979. Reference to Hugh Robertson can be found in the volume, GENEALOGY OF THE CASCAPEDIA BAY LOYALISTS-1784/1984 published by the Cascapedia Bay Loyalist Corporation. Both William Cuthbert and Hugh Robertson were prominent citizens of the early New Richmond community.

FRIDAY, NOV. 9th., 1827.

The schooner ESPÉRANCE of New Richmond, well-manned and seaworthy in all respects sailed from the Port of Quebec on November 4th.,1827 bound for the Bay Chaleur. In her holds was a cargo of Flour, Pork, Beef and Tea. Apart from experiencing some rather "boisterous" weather the schooner had a normal November voyage down-river until the morning of November 9th when she was off Cape Chat. The wind rose suddenly to violent storm with waves that nearly buried the vessel and opened her seams so that she began to take in water. The crew laboured at the pumps without intermission to the point that they began to suffer from exhaustion. For twelve hours the ESPERANCE lay to under reefed foresail in such thick fog and snow that the land on either side of the St.Lawrence was hid from view. The foresail finally gave way and split from bottom to top by the violence of the gale.

SATURDAY, NOV. 10th.

By mid-day of Saturday, November 10th., Captain Lesgouffe and his crew saw land on the South shore of the river for the first time since the storm began and found that the wind, sea and current was carrying their schooner towards shore at a rate of two miles an hour. With much difficulty they hoisted the main sail, close reefed, and got underway to gain sea room. The first landmark seen was the Point at Magdalen River which would, much later in time, be provided with a warning lighthouse. With the pumps keeping the water level stable, the schooner proceeded on its way with strong North North West wind.

SUNDAY / MONDAY NOV. 11/12.

Noon of November 12th found the ESPÉRANCE off POINT MISCOU. There and then the wind suddenly veered round to the South West with "uncommon violence" accompanied by fog and rain. Unable to reach their destination in Bay Chaleur because of this new storm the crew put their schooner about and proceeded in the direction of Gaspé. They came to anchor at Cape Despoir in six fathoms of water where they rode out "a perfect South West gale" for the following thirty six hours.

TUESDAY, NOV. 13.

About midnight on Tuesday, Nov. 13th the wind veered round to the South South East causing a heavy swell that threatened to drive the schooner on shore. The PROTEST then stated: "...weighed anchor and succeeded with difficulty in getting underway, the weather at the time very much obscured and dark. Hoisted all sail close reef'd and made tacks to avoid the shore, but during the second tack the foresail again gave way, tore in pieces with the violence of the wind, and was rendered totally unserviceable. Again proceeded on under main sail reef'd and jib during about five hours, when the main sail of the vessel also gave way and was torn from top to bottom and the hoops of the jib were broken and the jib forced up to the top of the foremast by the force of a wave which broke over the vessel and nearly swept everything from the deck, added to the violence of the wind and the sea all this time being awful insomuch that the vessel was nearly buried in the waves, several of which broke over her ...the shore all

this time being invisible owing to a thick fog and rain, and these Appearers, seeing it impossible to continue their course veered round and proceeded towards the Bay of Chaleurs under bare poles (with the wind towards the land) at the rate of at least two miles an hour, continued under bare poles during three hours and employed mending the sails."

WEDNESDAY / THURSDAY. NOV. 14/15.

On Wednesday the fourteenth of November, having patched the sails of the ESPÉRANCE as best they could, they continued up Bay Chaleur and "...arrived opposite Petit Rocher on the South side of the Bay of Chaleurs, being the first land seen since they left Cape Despoir." The following morning at about three o'clock they arrived at New Richmond where the vessel now remained with her rigging, sails and tackle unserviceable.

SIGNATORIES TO THE DEED OF PROTEST

Substant y orst

Amard ^{his} *Sire*
mark

Jos. Desiré ^{his} *Sire*
mark

M. Sheppard
N.C.

Witnesses *William Cuthbert*
Hugh Robertson