

Chapter 8
New Leaders

An Irish-born clergyman from Ontario and an American clergyman were on their way to Gaspé soon after Mr. Arnold's death. These two men were to influence the lives of the people around the Bay, as one wrote to the other some years later, "through all succeeding ages".

The Irishman was the Reverend Matthew Ker, appointed to look after the United Missions of Gaspé Basin and Sandy Beach. (Actually, much of the time he was in Sandy Beach only.) The burial record of his mother in Sandy Beach reads as follows:

"Esther Weld, widow of the Reverend James Adam Ker of Listerlin, County of Kilkenny, Ireland died on August 21 and was buried August 23, 1867 in the eighty-seventh year of her age

*By me Frederick A. Smith
Minister of St. Paul's Gaspé Basin
Present Matt^w Ker (Clerk) Son
R. Short Clerk "*

Mr. Ker came in 1858. His first entry in the church registers was the baptism of Laura Christina Ascah on July 11, 1858, and his last was the baptism of another baby girl, Sarah Caroline Gallichan, September 3, 1882.

The American was the Reverend Isaac Tallman who arrived in the fall of 1859 to become the first resident Methodist minister in the Gaspé area. My belief that he was an American stems from two things, his comparison of the scenery here to that of the Blue Ridge Mountains and Alleghenies of the States in his first letter to the "Christian Guardian", February 8, 1860, and from the fact that when he finally left Gaspé he went to the United States. He was in Gaspé from 1859 to 1863 and returned in 1866 to stay until 1869. In 1861, he married Felicia H. Shaw of Gaspé Basin. She was the daughter of Joseph Shaw who had come from Lower Granville, Nova Scotia, and operated a mill in the Basin for some years.

I was fortunate in being able to obtain from the United Church Archives in Toronto copies of annual reports and letters written by the early Methodist ministers who served in Gaspé and also some reports of

the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church. As these reports and letters, many of which were published in the Methodist weekly "The Christian Guardian", give a very clear and interesting picture of life in Gaspé, I wish space permitted me to quote them in their entirety. However, excerpts will prove that we should be very grateful to these early ministers for recording their experiences and their thoughts as fully as they did.

Mr. Tallman's first letter was written from Cap des Rosiers where a number of Methodists then lived. Besides extolling the beauty of the scenery, in this letter he describes the harbour, mentions the Gulf Port steamers then calling at Gaspé, deplores the scarcity of roads, discusses the farming ("we saw a swedish turnip...weighed fifteen pounds") and the fishing ("...a great number go over every summer to the north shore to the seven islands, Sheldrake, Thunder River...and the Labrador coast"). In 1861, he mentions the erection of three churches but does not name them. (Owing to the details about the slow development of church building given in subsequent ministers' reports, I think they were only planned, not erected.) The following year, from Gaspé Basin, he wrote "This mission is gradually increasing in interest and importance" and said a house was ready for preaching in. In this report, he also mentions the group of Norwegian immigrants which had come to Barachois or Mal Bay. The Methodist register shows the strange names of these people. The Church of England people in Mal Bay also took an interest in them. In "One Hundred Years by the Sea", Mr. Apps indicates that diphtheria carried off the little colony, but the Methodist reports say they moved to the United States. Probably there is truth in both accounts.

Mr. Tallman's last report for his first spell in Gaspé states that he had dedicated one new church and that three others were underway. He writes:

"We have deeded eight church lots and have the deeds all registered; among which is one for Gaspé Basin, the headquarters of the Mission. It is a beautiful lot in exactly the right place, according to our judgement, is worth \$120; a nice donation."

A report in the "Christian Guardian, for June 10, 1863, says that an address was given the Reverend and Mrs. Tallman in both English

and French at a farewell tea meeting, and a money presentation was made. Appreciation was expressed for his labours which involved travelling on foot a circuit of 150 miles.

The next Methodist minister was the Reverend David Jennings. He was more specific than Mr. Tallman about the location of the churches and parsonage under construction. In a letter dated April 6, 1864, he wrote:

"The floor of the church at Roseville has been laid, and the boards are ready for seating, and it is expected the church at Jersey Cove will be fit for worship by the 1st of May -----We are building a parsonage at little Cape Bruly (Cap aux Os had many spellings over the years before the present spelling was adopted.) on the North Shore of Gaspé Bay. As the North Shore must eventually become one Mission, this will be the most central place..... Cape Bruly will be very convenient for wood and water, a very great advantage on this Coast (as my wood is costing me about three dollars a cord). Mr. Abraham LeHuquet has given about two acres of land joining the two he gave before for the church. This house is to be twenty-eight by twenty-four, two stories; the frame of which is hewed or nearly so.....Since I came to the mission I have preached from three to four times a week and travelled from twenty to thirty miles, as much as ever my strength will allow, but not as much as the mission needsOur people are poor and cannot do much. Next week we have a Bazaar at the Basin for the Church in that place."

The next year Mr. Jennings wrote:

"The church at the northwest (Roseville, present day Rose-Bridge) has been underpinned with stone, and the walls ceiled inside. The church at Jersey Cove has been finished outside."

Improvements had been made in both the St. George's Cove and the Indian Cove Churches. From reading the Methodist registers I found that some of the Methodist people living in Jersey Cove were Philip Thoreau, Francis Sorsoleil, John Edouard LeHuquet, Edward Touet, and William Philip Carswell.

S.E. Maudsley reported to the Missionary Society next (1865-1866). He wrote:

"Travelling so much by water to the several appointments around the Bay and in the Gulf, tests pretty sharply the physical health of the preacherfrequently head winds and calms cause chilling journeys."

He said two Missionaries were needed, one for each side of the Bay.

Someone who signed only as J.S. or J.F. wrote in the "Christian Guardian" on May 16, 1866:

".... the ladies - all praise to them - the other day got up a little tea meeting in the Parsonage; and, although the day of assembling was stormy and travelling bad, the handsome sum of \$133 was raised and presented to the Building Committee to assist in furnishing said Parsonage."

In the Missionary Society Report of 1866-1867, Mr. Tallman, who had returned to Gaspé, wrote:

"It will require not a little exertion and effort to build a church at Gaspé Basin, as we only have a membership there of eight persons, but three male members; but it is, and must be, the headquarters of the Mission. It is the port and is likely soon to become the county town, and it and its surroundings, contain the largest Protestant population on the Gaspé Bay, and we frequently have a congregation of 100 persons there, so, by the blessing of the Lord, we must have a church..."

The following year, he wrote about the progress in building the Basin church:

"We had a heavy job grading the ground, which was a slope, but we finished it, and built a good stone foundation, on which we have raised our frame 30 x 50, and covered it with inch boards, tongued and grooved, and we have the boards on the roof; but not the shingles. We have the shingles, however, on hand, and the windows made, and we are now engaged in fencing the ground with a good picket fence.....We have likewise finished the work of ceiling inside our Roseville Church."

Since I first read the above words of Mr. Tallman, I have stood on the site of this Gaspé church. It is the narrow ^{field} fied adjoining the Anglican cemetery on the west side and it is empty now except for the graves in the north section of it. It is a beautiful location and one can picture the few people working there building the church.

Times were bad then as Mr. Tallman mentions a failure in the fisheries and even a failure in the hay crop. The next year (1869) he wrote these words which sound rather familiar to us over a hundred years later:

"The partial failure of the fisheries for the past few years has left our people very poor, and many have left the coast. Some are in Port Hope, some in Cobourg, some in Carlisle on the Waterdown Circuit, and some have gone off to the West."

He said they had spent about \$1000 on the Gothic style Church in the Basin and it would cost a total of \$1500 or \$1600. He was leaving Gaspé again, this time permanently, and he wrote:

"As far as my own labors are concerned, I think I have labored about to the extent of my mental and physical ability during the year."

It was at this time that Mr. Ker wrote a farewell letter to Mr. Tallman, in which he expressed a high regard for the Methodist minister and closed with the words, "I doubt not but that the fruits of that labour will be seen through all succeeding ages."

Perhaps we cannot yet judge the truth of Mr. Ker's prophecy, but in the decade between Mr. Tallman's arrival in Gaspé and his final departure, Methodism expanded greatly around the Bay. Three new churches were in use or nearly so: Jersey Cove, Roseville and Gaspé Basin; and the Cap aux Os parsonage was built. He did not state in his reports, as some of successors did, how many conversions he made, but I know from references to him made by old people, such as my father who had heard his elders talk, that he gained the respect and friendship of many people, Methodist and non-Methodist, carrying on the harmonious interdependence among the faiths which appears to have characterized the years prior to his coming. There was undoubtedly some rivalry between the two Protestant groups, but, except for one reference by a Methodist clergyman who visited Gaspé briefly one summer, to the "snobbery and superciliousness" of the "Episcopalians", none of the ministers' comments which I have read, either Methodist or Church of England, show any bitterness or unfriendliness. On occasions when the Church of England clergyman could not reach this side of the Bay because of weather or road or Bay conditions or some other reason, the Methodist minister sometimes performed whatever services were required. For example, I found the following record of the burial of my great-grandfather in the register of the Methodist Church for the year 1879.

"This is to certify that David Phillips of the Township of Gaspé Bay North of Gaspé, Province of Quebec was born in the Town of Kinghorn, County of Fife, Scotland, on the thirty-first Day of March 1804 and died at his residence in Peninsula on the First day of December 1879 and was buried on the Third day of December in the same year in

the presence of the under-signed witnesses.

*John G. Brick
Methodist Minister*

*Charles Phillips
John Phillips*

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In a letter, dated March 31, 1875, to the "Christian Guardian", Charles Esnouf, Recording Steward, wrote:

"Our thanks are also due to our many friends of the Episcopal Church at the Basin, for the zeal and interest they have manifested in helping us get up a tea meeting which has wiped off the last cent of debt, paid the running expenses of the church for the year, leaving an overplus of \$9.72..."

Chapter 9

"Ten Shillings for the Minister"

My mother, Mrs. Thornber Phillips (née Margaret Miller), has a little black notebook in which her grandfather and father made entries from time to time for a period of over thirty years. William Miller, her grandfather, who was the first warden for Peninsula at St. John's Church, Sandy Beach, and evidently warden again in the 1860s, recorded money he handled for the church; he seems to have been treasurer for the school board, too, and noted down amounts handed him or bills paid for the school. He and my mother's father, Wyndham Miller, used the notebook also for salmon records and memoranda of various other matters. The earliest church records in it are for 1859 and indicate that three Peninsula men paid towards the church in three ways: for pew rent, for insurance, and for the minister's salary. On October 8th, probably 1865, the notation shows the following:

Rec'd from Wm. Ascah Jr.	10/ for the minister
Chas. Ascah	10/ for the minister 1/3 for pew rent & 1/3 for Insurance
Thos. Baker	for the minister 15/ for pew rent 2/6 for insurance 1/11
Wm. Miller	5/ for M. Paid in 3/9 pew rent

One of the last entries concerning the church gives 1866 church collections at Peninsula for January, February, March, and April as £0 5/6, £0 3/6, £0 4/2, and £0 4/4 respectively.

The year 1866 is the earliest year shown in another important little book. This is a hardcovered brown book about 5 inches by 3 inches with "Church Book" neatly written on the cover and is the earliest "official" account book which I have found for the Peninsula congregation. Continuous records in it do not start until the 1870s and then they link up with the next account book and the next and continue unbroken to the present. In 1866 and 1867 the total collection came to £2 3/12-1/4. The small disbursements for the year 1866-67 were for such things as cotton, wine, stovepolish, and a chair. As I have already shown, evening services were held sometimes in the schoolhouse in Peninsula; therefore the purchases were probably to fit the school for services.

In general, however, through the 1860s the Peninsula people continued to attend the Sandy Beach church. Mr. Ker no doubt went to Little Gaspé whenever he could make the journey.

In the old church records there is many a reference to the private baptism of an infant. Unfortunately, all too often this entry is followed by the record of its death and also of the death of the mother. One cannot but be moved as one imagines the long, often cold, trip across the Bay to get the minister, and his discomfort on the long trip to the home, only to become a part of the tragedy of early death. In the twenty-four years of his stay in Gaspé, Mr. Ker must have crossed the Bay in all seasons, day and night, hundreds of times, for hurried baptisms and for funerals. The year 1862 was a particularly tragic one as diphtheria raged through many of the settlements. In the Gaspé Basin register, no fewer than twenty-nine burials of children were recorded that year, as well as of several adults. They included William Clark and six of his children.

The clergy in the 1860s, as in earlier days, were assisted by their wardens and other lay people. In Sandy Beach, one of the wardens for several years was Nicholas Bailey. As he had no sons (he brought up a boy called Alfred Lelievre), the name Bailey disappeared, but in his time he was a prominent citizen. Mr. George Ascah, whose description I have mentioned previously, refers to him as the builder of the Sandy Beach church and says that he lived just east of the church. Mr. Ascah writes that Bailey was postmaster of the only post office between Gaspé Basin and Douglstown and would bring the mail to church and distribute it after service.

In Peninsula, the school teacher for a time was Thomas Cole. He appears to have been active in church work, performing burials on several occasions. He himself died in 1863 at the age of 59. He was buried by Mr. Ker, and Church Wardens Nicholas Bailey and David Phillips signed as witnesses.

Another layman of some local prominence was Philip LeMesurier. He had moved up from Grande Grève and settled in the vicinity of where Mr. Richard Fortin lives today (Lot 37). I was told by my father and

other old people that he built a little "church" on his land and held services in it for a time. There is a story that a young Tommy Coffin caught cold while working on the church and died. Mr. Richmond recorded the burial of "Thomas Coffin aged 31 of Farewell Cove" on January 2, 1868. This burial record could, therefore, establish the time of Mr. LeMesurier's church.

In 1867, the Reverend John Pettner Richmond came to Gaspé Basin as an S.P.G. Missionary and began a ministry there and around the Bay which was to last for thirty-six years. He was born in England, the son of a clergyman, and was educated at St. Augustine College, Canterbury. Like Mr. Arnold and Mr. Ker, he must have come to know almost all the families in every community around the Bay. He and all the clergy of the Diocese of Quebec were now working under a new bishop, Bishop James William Williams, who succeeded Bishop Mountain in 1863.

During Mr. Ker's early years here, the Roman Catholics were experiencing certain developments. Mgr. Paul Joncas writing in the "Revue d'Histoire de la Gaspésie" Janvier - Mars, 1972, mentions a projected chapel at Cap aux Os. He says:

"...le missionnaire E. Fafard, résident à Douglastown, demande la construction d'une chapelle à Cap aux Os (12 Nov. 1859)."

The Catholic Year Book of 1973 indicates that St. Patrick's Parish in Douglastown was founded in 1860. A resident priest had been there for fifteen years but now the parish was actually formed. Great hardship must have been experienced in Douglastown in the 1850s. The second chapel burned and was replaced by a fine large church in 1855. It in turn burned. A fourth church was completed for use in 1859. A few years later, 1866, at St. Georges-de-Malbaie, formerly called Chien Blanc, "Le Reverend M. Damase Morriset, curé de Malbaie, construit la première chapelle".¹

One denomination represented in Gaspé from early times but one which built no place of worship was that of the Jewish faith. In Mr. Cusack's letter of 1840, he mentions baptizing two children of Mr. Leggo's daughter (Mr. Leggo, he says, was the only Protestant between

1. "Revue d'Histoire de la Gaspésie" Vol. VI, No. 2 and 3, 1968.

Douglastown and Point St. Peter). This daughter was a Mrs. Davis "the widow of a Jew". No doubt other individual Jews lived here. However, the most prominent Jewish family was that of William Hyman who founded the fish firm William Hyman and Sons at Grande Grève in 1844. Isaac Hyman was the son who carried on the business in Grande Grève after his father's death. He and his wife and family were very much integrated into the social, as well as the business, life of the community, but I believe they adhered to their faith through links with the Jewish community elsewhere. The last of Mr. Isaac Hyman's family living here, Mr. Percy Hyman, died very recently.

I have now reached the time when the Peninsula people began to build their own church. The rest of my story will be concerned chiefly with its development, but I shall also outline major changes in the other denominations.