

QUEBEC HERITAGE NEWS

MAY 2001

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4

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Charles Robins -- and the codfish -- helped the Gaspé grow

By Betty Le Maistre

It is no exaggeration to say that 90 per cent of more of the population of the Gaspé have Channel Islands blood coursing through their veins. Why so many? Why in the Gaspé? Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Herm and Jethou; I learned the names of the channel islands at a very early age. My father came to the Gaspé from Jersey in 1908 to work as an apprentice clerk for the firm of Le Boutillier Bros. He was 14 years old. He was assigned to the Paspebiac Beach store, and aside from a short visit after the Armistice in 1919 he never went back to Jersey.

His story was typical of many: a second son, he could not expect much of an inheritance under the laws of primogeniture then in effect in his home island, so he had to make his own way in the world. Like scores of his fellow Channel Islanders he chose to emigrate to the Gaspé coast. There was a certain element of adventure in it, too.

Jersey men and Guernsey men had been involved in the cod fishery of Newfoundland for centuries, but by the middle of the 18th century they realized that this area was becoming overcrowded. French, Basque, Breton, Irish, Portuguese and many other European fishermen had discovered the riches that were there for the taking. An enterprising Jerseyman, Charles Robin, had been involved for a number of years, then remembered former French fishing grounds along the coast of the Baie des Chaleurs that had been abandoned after the villages were destroyed by Wolfe's men in 1758. In 1765 he set out to find a suitable spot for his establishment.



Strategically situated on the English channel, but closer to France than England, the Channel Islands have been British for centuries, going back to the time when the English king held lands in France. In 1204, these possessions, which included the Channel Islands, reverted to France, and the people of the Islands were given the choice of remaining British or returning to the French crown. They held a referendum and decided to stay with the status quo and maintain their allegiance to the English king.

The population remained mainly French-speaking until the middle years of the 20th century,

conversing in the old Norman French dialect among themselves and learning English and standard French at school. English increasingly became a necessity for business and banking. With the Reformation the Islanders became staunchly Protestant, attracting French Calvinist preachers from Switzerland to their churches. Charles Robin considered himself British, was trained in British business practices, and was fluent in English and French -- a perfect match in Quebec. Most importantly, his timing was good, for he arrived on the coast of the Baie des Chaleurs after all the treaties had been signed and British rule was well established in Lower Canada. In 1776 with the backing of his family, he founded a company of fish merchants which still exists today under the name of Robin, Jones and Whitman Limited. It is one of the very oldest Canadian companies.

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President's Message

Some tough choices for conference delegates

This issue of Quebec Heritage News is heavily oriented toward the upcoming conference at Macdonald College Campus, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, on June 15-17. Conference information has been posted on our web site and mailed out to all on our mailing list.

We are pleased at the readiness with which some very promising speakers and workshop presenters accepted our invitations to contribute to our conference. We will present some very tough choices for delegates, most will probably visit more than one workshop at the same time. Time has also been provided for more socializing, networking and visiting exhibits than we managed for our start-up last year at Bishop's. Everything will be in one building and with parking nearby. This location offers great convenience.

In March, I was pleased to be a guest of the Chateaugay Valley Historical Society, enjoy an interesting "heritage" or traditional dinner and hear an interesting presentation by Philippe Decloître on the Droulars site. This is an archaeological exploration of a very large Amerindian village site in St-Anicet in southwest Quebec including the reconstruction there of longhouses using traditional techniques and materials. Mr. Decloître will present a version of this at our conference.

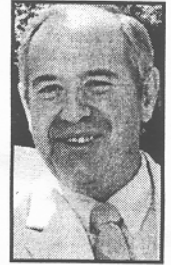
We are hoping that our Heritage Tree contest for elementary schools will provide some interesting material to put on show at our conference. At the Conference, we will be soliciting ideas for future conference topics and themes. For example we already have received some interesting ideas for a focus on military history, for a focus on national heritage and so on.

We're really looking forward to the *Patrimoine à domicile* day-long activity on Saturday the 16th. This is Quebec's equivalent of the Antiques Roadshow we see on Newsworld and US-PBS. Some of your delegates and visitors no doubt have already been to one of these.

We regret the unfortunate coincidence that our Conference and the *Congrès annuel* of *La Fédération des sociétés d'histoire du Québec* is planned for the same weekend. We now have some better dialogue with them and hope not to have a repeat another year. Of course, with June being a preferred month, the number of free weekends is restricted what with St. Jean Baptist and Canada Day celebrations.

Our year 2000 Conference Report has been out for a while now and is drawing favourable response. With charter, by-laws and all included, it is longer than future conference reports might be but we are pleased with the work Louise Abbott did in bringing it together for us.

We look forward to meeting again with many of you at the Conference.



Richard Evans

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Monique P. Nadeau, Women's Institute of Bonaventure County, Port Daniel

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Robin was young -- only 23 when he first came to the Gaspé -- and energetic. He soon set up a string of stores all along the Gaspé coast and on the north shore of New Brunswick. He was mainly interested in the cod which could be caught in abundance not far from shore, but he also traded in furs and salmon with the natives.

From his headquarters in Paspébiac Robin exported dry salt cod -- Gaspé Cure was the best to be had anywhere -- to markets in Mediterranean and Caribbean countries where religious fast days were frequent and important. His establishment on the beach at Paspébiac included a shipyard which produced 16 ships between 1792 and 1824. A triangular trade route evolved over time.

Schooners would typically leave Paspébiac in summer and fall with cargoes of dry cod for the West Indies. There they would pick up rum and sugar for Europe, returning to the Gaspé the following spring laden with manufactured goods.

In Robin's early years in the Gaspé fisheries were a seasonal activity. He would arrive in early May with a shipload of goods, and the fishermen and skilled craftsmen he needed, and then leave for Jersey in the fall. By 1783 he had built a substantial settlement on the "barachois" in Paspébiac and he began to spend the winters there. It would be 19 years before he returned to Jersey.

During the winter of 1787 Robin became alarmed at the imposition by the legislature in Quebec of an ordinance regulating the fisheries of the Gaspé. Until then he had enjoyed almost total freedom to do as he pleased, and if the government was going to impose regulations, he wanted to have his say. The only way to reach Quebec from Paspébiac during the winter was to walk, so he did just that.

It was a distance of about 300 miles and took him 20 days. He set out on January 8, 1787 and crossed the ice bridge at Quebec on February 2. After a three-week period of meetings and socializing with various government officials including Lord Dorchester, he returned to Paspébiac the same way, having made the 600-mile round trip entirely on foot. He was well satisfied with the outcome of his negotiations.

It was Robin's custom to bring out several apprentices from Jersey each spring. The majority of these young men were skilled workmen -- carpenters, coopers, men who knew how to "make" dry cod -- and clerks for his general stores. The fishermen who sold him their catch were mainly Acadians who had survived the destruction of their villages.

Trade with the fishermen was always on the truck system -- no cash changed hands. Robin supplied them with the gear and other things they needed for the season

and they brought him their catches in payment. Though it could lead to abuse, at the time this system was quite common. Robin was known as a tough but fair dealer, and he prospered.

Robin was a meticulous businessman -- not to say a packrat -- and he kept a detailed diary. He preserved every bit of paper that crossed his desk -- copies of transactions of all kinds, letters, bills, accounts. Three hundred volumes of his diaries and papers are now in the National Archives in Ottawa and with the Société Jersiaise in Saint Helier, Jersey. Researchers will be eternally grateful to him.

Over the years competitors from the Channel Islands began to set themselves up in business along the coast, men like Janvrin and Fruing in the Gaspé area, and the Le Boutillier Brothers in Paspébiac. The three brothers were from Jersey and had worked for Robin at one time, copying his business methods, and until the 1920s all of them brought out young men, mainly from Jersey and Guernsey, to staff their establishments. They settled on the coast, married local girls and produced families. The descendants of these young men are there today. In 1988 the Gaspesian Channel Islands Society (La Société gaspésienne des îles anglo-normandes), a bilingual group, was founded with the intention of bringing together people who have a family connection with the Channel Islands. At present we have more than 300 members. Our bilingual newsletter *L'Anglo-Normand*, is published three or four times a year. The Society's aims include fostering links with the Channel Islands, preserving artifacts and collecting data on the families of the Gaspé. Our annual general meeting is held in a different place each year on a weekend in August, an excuse for a party. We have twice received groups from the Channel Islands and four times organized trips to visit the islands of our ancestors, most recently in October 2000. Charles Robin would have been pleased to learn that his legacy has lived on for so long.

Sources:

1. David Lee, *The Robins in Gaspé 1766 to 1925*, Fitzhenry and Whiteside 1984
2. Marguerite Syvret, *Everyday Life on the Coast of Acadia and in the Province of Quebec, 1767-1787*, Société Jersiaise Annual Bulletin 1976.

To become a member of the Gaspesian Channel Islands Society write to: Membership secretary, P.O. box 696, New Carlisle, QC, 1Z0. Family membership \$10, single \$7.50. To contact the editor of the newsletter write to Charles J. Picot, 500 Claremont Avenue, Westmount QC, H3Y 2N5 or by e-mail to nstn1528@fox.nstn.ca. Betty Le Maistre is Vice-president of the Gaspesian Channel Islands Society, La Société Gaspésienne des îles Anglo-Normandes.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Friday, June 15, 2001

REGIONAL SHOWCASE

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome!
- 1:30 - 2:00 p.m. **Conway Jocks**, "The Mohawk Tradition of Steel-working"
- 2:15 - 2:45 p.m. **Richard Lord**, "Montreal's Black Community"
- 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. **Kevin Robinson**, Canadian Railway Museum, "Railways in Southern Quebec"
- 3:45 - 4:15 p.m. **Alan Hustak**, The Montreal Gazette, Montreal's Irish Community
- 4:30 - 5:00 p.m. **Ralph Estey**, "The History of Macdonald College"
- 5:00 - 5:45 p.m. Free Time
- 5:45 - 6:30 p.m. Cocktail (Cash Bar)
- 6:30 p.m. Banquet with guest speaker **Graeme Decarie**

Saturday, June 16, 2001

- 9:00 a.m. - 3:15 p.m. WORKSHOPS
- 9:00 - 5:00 **Patrimoine à domicile** (heirloom discovery), 3 conservators from the *Musée de la civilisation de Québec* will be on hand to examine and evaluate your heirlooms. Maximum of 3 items per person. This event is open to the general public and is free of charge.
- 10:15 - 10:45 a.m. Break
- 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Lunch
- 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Cocktail and Social Hour
- 6:00 BBQ, with local entertainers

SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

THEME I - Research

- 9:00 - 10:15 a.m. **Gary Schroder**, Quebec Family History Society, "The Maple Leaf and the Fleur-de-Lis: Little Used Resources for Family History Research in Quebec"
- 10:45 - 12:00 noon **Jim Burant**, National Archives of Canada, "Art and photographic holdings of the NAC: How they can be used for research purposes"
- 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. **Philippe de Cloître**, anthropologist, "Droulars Archaeological Site in St. Anicet: An Open Window on 15th Century Iroquoia"

THEME II - Conservation

- 9:00 - 10:15 a.m. **Denis Paquet**, Mise en marché de l'image, "Montreal's Old Painted Outdoors Advertising Signs: An Urban Heritage to Preserve"
- 10:45 - 12:00 noon **Susanne Marie Holme**, Centre de conservation du Québec, "Preserving Paper Artefacts for the Future"
- 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. **Sharon Little**, Centre de conservation du Québec, "Tourism and Textile Conservation"

THEME III - Planning

- 9:00 - 10:15 a.m. **Alain Lacoursière**, MUC Police, "Canada: One of the best countries in the world for art crimes"
- 10:45 - 12:00 noon **Fiona Clark**, Quebec Association for Adult Learners, "Surfing the Web: Connecting with Past and Future"
- 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. **Robin Molson**, Canadian Heritage of Quebec, CHQ Properties

THEME IV - Show & Tell

- 9:00 - 10:15 a.m. **Rod MacLeod**, Quebec Protestant Education Research Project, "Mount Royal Cemetery: A Living History"
- 10:45 - 12:00 noon **Alexander Reford**, Métis Gardens
- 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. **Aline Gubbay**, Westmount's History and Architecture

Sunday, June 17, 2001

- 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. Regional/Sectoral Meetings
- 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Annual General Meeting
- 12:00 noon Luncheon and Departure

For any additional questions, please contact our Communications Coordinator, **Valérie Bridger**, at 1 877 964-0409.

NEWS AND NOTES FROM AROUND QUEBEC

THE QUEBEC FARMERS ASSOCIATION IS ANNOUNCING THE WARREN GRAPES SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS. WARREN WAS A SUCCESSFUL FARMER NEAR SAWYERVILLE, QUEBEC AND A LEADER IN THE QFA AND OTHER RURAL GROUPS. AT A RELATIVELY YOUNG AGE HE SUCCUMBED TO CANCER AND IT IS FITTING HE BE REMEMBERED THIS WAY.

THE BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY IS FEATURING THE ECHENBERG COLLECTION FROM MAY 2ND TO JUNE 10TH. THIS IS AN INTERESTING SELECTION FROM A LARGE AND DIVERSE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF COMMERCIAL COLLECTIBLES DERIVED FROM THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS. FOR MANY YEARS, THE COLLECTOR, EDDIE ECHENBERG, HAS BEEN COLLECTING CALENDARS, BOTTLES, THERMOMETERS, YARD STICKS, CONTAINERS AND MANY SUCH THINGS OFFERED BY LOCAL BUSINESS AS PROMOTIONAL ITEMS, REPRESENTING SOME OF THE HISTORY OF THE AREA.

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL HAUT ST. FRANÇOIS RECENTLY FEATURED AN ARTICLE OUTLINING 6 BUILDINGS BEING DESIGNATED (CITED) HISTORICAL MONUMENTS BY THE TOWN OF EAST ANGUS. THIS AVENUE OF PROTECTION AND RECOGNITION FOR LOCAL HISTORICAL SITES IS NOT WELL-ENOUGH KNOWN OR USED AS MUCH AS IT MIGHT BE.

ONLY 10% JUST SAY NO TO HERITAGE THE SPRING 2000 ISSUE OF HERITAGE, PUBLISHED BY THE HERITAGE CANADA FOUNDATION, CITES THE ENCOURAGING POLLARA SURVEY OF CANADIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PRESERVATION OF OUR HERITAGE SITES. 61% BELIEVE PRESERVING BUILT HERITAGE IS IMPORTANT AND ONLY 29% ARE NEUTRAL. ONLY 10%

RESPONDED IT WAS OF NO IMPORTANCE TO THEM.

THE ISSUE ALSO SHOWS A STRONG NATION-WIDE SUPPORT FOR THE IDEA OF A NATIONAL TRUST. THOSE OF US FAMILIAR WITH THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NATIONAL TRUST IN ENGLAND AND WALES AND OF THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND, WILL BE HOPING THIS ATTITUDE LEADS TO THE CREATION OF A CANADIAN EQUIVALENT. WHILE WE DON'T HAVE CENTURIES OF BUILDINGS AND SITES TO PROTECT, THOSE WE DO HAVE ARE AT A HIGH RISK OF LOSS TO DEVELOPMENT AND TO GENERAL NEGLECT.

WITH MUNICIPAL MERGERS AND FUSIONS TAKING PLACE ALL OVER QUEBEC, THERE IS WIDE CONCERN ABOUT PRESERVATION OF MUNICIPAL RECORDS. THERE HAS BEEN A PLAN IN PLACE FOR SEVERAL YEARS TO ARRANGE BETTER PLANNING ON PRESERVING OF MUNICIPAL RECORDS THROUGH WORK BETWEEN THE *ARCHIVES NATIONALES DU QUÉBEC*, THE *MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES MUNICIPALES* AND MUNICIPALITIES.

WE WATCH WITH SADNESS AND CONCERN THE RAPID DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE OF TRADITIONAL RURAL BUILDINGS. WOODEN BARN AND OUTBUILDINGS ARE BEING REPLACED BY STEEL STRUCTURES, EFFICIENT BUT TOTALLY UNINTERESTING. A LOT OF WONDERFUL HISTORY HAS GONE TO DEMOLITION AND BURNED TO TURN SAP INTO MAPLE SYRUP. OUR BARN OF NEW ENGLAND AND LOCAL DESIGN ARE UNIQUE TO THIS PART OF THE WORLD. WHILE MANY ARE TRYING TO PRESERVE EMPTY CHURCHES, OLD POST OFFICES, RAILWAY STATIONS, THIS OBVIOUS AND DISTINCTIVE BUILT HERITAGE IS BEING MADE TO DISAPPEAR LIKE A FOREST BEFORE A FIRE.

THE BULLETIN OF THE QUEBEC ANGLOPHONE HERITAGE NETWORK

MORE NEWS AND NOTES FROM AROUND QUEBEC

Highlands Arts Summer Camp

For the fifth consecutive year, Steven Thorneloe of Lennoxville has organized a Highland Arts Summer Camp. This year's two-week session in late July will offer two levels of training on the bagpipes and training in highland dancing. Piping instructors for beginners will be Eric Thorneloe and for more advanced pipers Ron Sutherland.

Begun in 1997, with the aid of internationally known piping instructor George Stuart of Golspie Scotland, the project started as a plan to help build the Eastern Townships Highland pipe band based in Lennoxville student have come from across Quebec and eastern Ontario.

Former students have achieved success in organised competitions Eric Thorneloe won a gold medal in Piaborrothead at New Hampshire's Loon Mountain Games. During this past winter, Will Ridley of Orleans Ontario, a participant at all four previous camps, won the Ottawa area amateur piper competition's championship for the Ottawa area for a series of fall and winter competitions in various piping disciplines. For information contact Steven Thorneloe at (819) 565-7798.

Marion Phelps Award

QAHN has for some time considered the idea of an award recognizing outstanding long-term contribution to Anglophone heritage in Quebec. The board recently decided to initiate this at Conference 2001 giving it the name of the "Marion Phelps Award" and making the first recipient, Marion Phelps herself.

Miss Phelps, a retired teacher and long-time archivist of the Brome County Historical Society, has been highly respected by both amateur and professional historians for her research into regional history, its recording and preserving. The award will be presented at the Banquet on Friday June 15th at which time more complete details will be provided.

Recognition for Outstanding Achievement

QAHN would like, in future years, to give an annual recognition for some outstanding achievement during the year. It could be given to a society, a group or an individual and would recognize some exceptional accomplishment. It could be that in certain years, more than one recognition award could be presented. The purpose could be, not only to recognize some accomplishment from somewhere in Quebec that has advanced the preservation and communication of our heritage, but also to make more people across Quebec aware of such accomplishments. Such achievements could be hoped to inspire and give guidance to others confronted by their own challenges. Ideas and suggestions will be sought at Conference 2001.

2000 Conference Report Now On Sale

It's out! The 2000 Conference Report has been published and is available for distribution. Conference 2000 participants have received the publication through the mail and the remainder of the Reports will be sold for \$20. They will be available at the Conference at the Registration Desk.

Should you wish to receive it by mail prior to the Conference, add \$5 shipping and handling charges and get in touch with our Communications Coordinator, Valérie Bridger, by phone at 1 877 964-0409 or e-mail at home@qahn.org. If you attended last year's Conference and have not received your copy, please contact Valérie Bridger. We may not have your proper coordinates.

Heritage Tree Contest Update

Contest entries have all been received and judging is to take place during the last week of May. We are looking for retired teachers in the Lennoxville area to serve as judges. Please get in touch with Valérie Bridger (819) 564-9595 if you would like to participate. Winners will be notified by telephone by June 4th. Winning and outstanding entries will be displayed in the Exhibits section of the Conference.

Notice of Annual General Meeting Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network

The first Annual General Meeting following the 2000 Founding Meeting will take place Sunday June 17th at 10:00 a.m. in the Centennial Centre, Macdonald College of McGill University.

Business to come before voting members will include:

1. Ratification of the registered legal version of the Charter and By-Laws, pursuant to proposals presented by the Founding Conference of June 2000 (For the complete text, see the 2000 Conference Report, the website www.qahn.org or get in touch with the QAHN office. Copies will be available at the Conference.)
2. Presentation of a resolution for acceptance regarding election of directors for alternating 2-year terms
3. Financial statement for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2001
4. Approval of the fiscal year
5. Appointment of an auditor
6. Reports of committees
7. President's Report
8. Other business
9. Election of directors for half the directorships
10. Report of election of officers as chosen by the Board
11. Commentary
12. Adjournment

Notices in writing:

Please note that any proposals for business to be brought before the general meeting must be presented in writing in advance and not later than 10:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. This would include items for discussion, amendments to the by-laws, resolutions and nominations for election. Within the meeting, only amendments of clarification to wording of previously submitted written proposals will be considered.

Voting rights:

Voting rights are described in the Charter and By-Laws. Formal voting will be restricted to paid-up members in good standing as of the opening of the meeting.

Election of Certain Directors

At the Founding Conference, it was recognized that the Board would need to present proposals by which in each year half the board would be up for re-election for 2-year terms.

The proposal is that in even-numbered years, those directorships bearing an even-numbered designation on the by-laws would be up for re-election, and in odd-numbered years, odd-numbered seats would be submitted to a vote. Thus at the Annual General Meeting of June 17th, 2001, the following seats (names in brackets) will be up for re-election:

1. West and Northwest Quebec Region (**Patricia McCaffrey**)
3. Eastern Townships Region (**Ed Laberee**)
5. Central and Eastern Quebec Region (**Sharon Little**)
7. Education Sector (**Rod MacLeod**), and
9. At-Large (**Ralph Farley**).

Director Ed Laberee will be soliciting reports from each of the regions or sectors pertaining to their choice of a representative director. He will present those choices as a Nominations Committee Report at the AGM.