

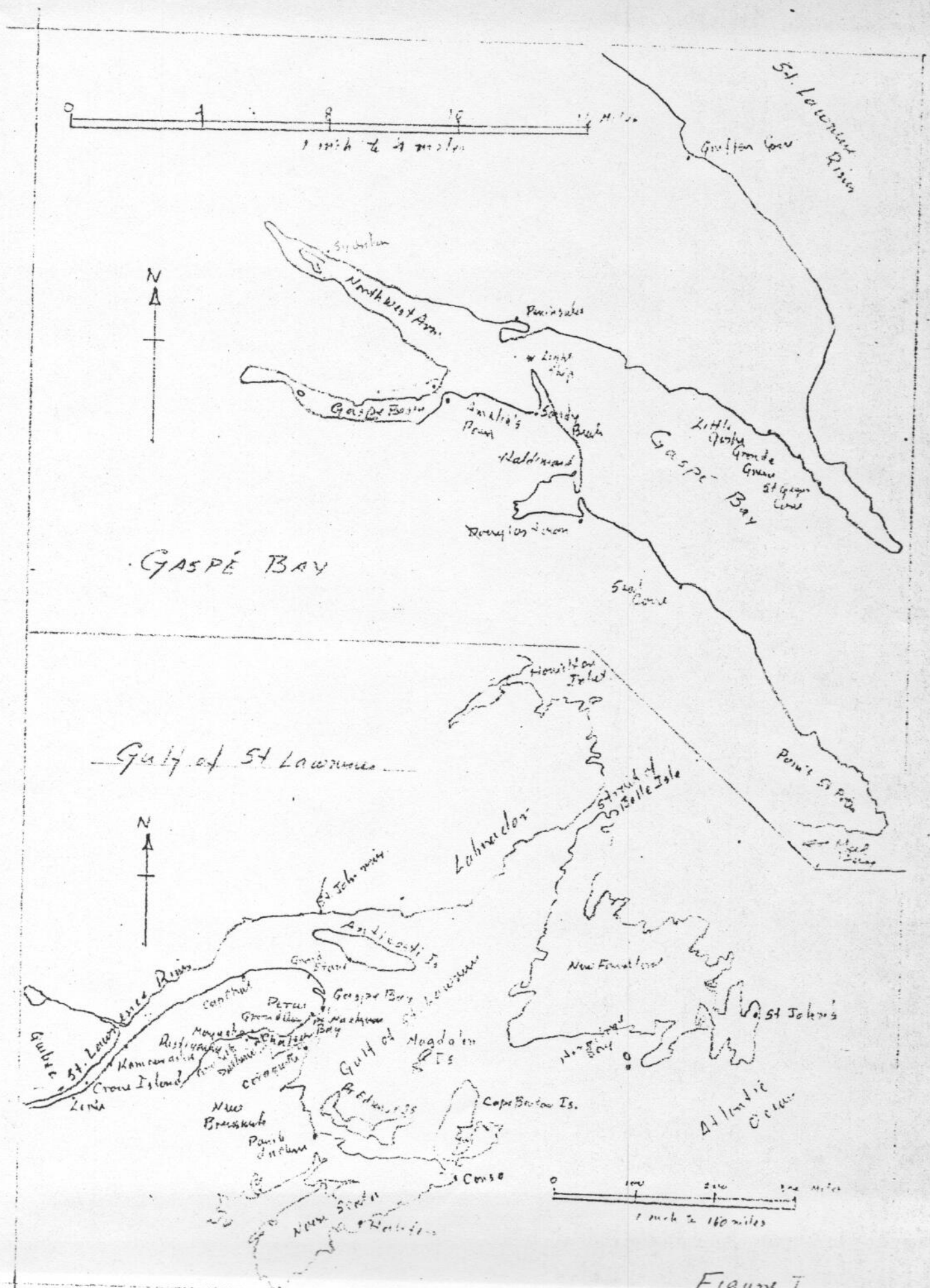
Ship Builders, Master Mariners and Whalers
of Gaspé Bay in the 1800's

by

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The Shipbuilders, Whalers and Master Mariners
of Gaspé Bay in the 1800's

Historical accounts of the Gaspé coast can often be summarized in a few stereotyped phrases: "the impoverished cod fishermen"; "the Jersey fish merchants"; "the iniquitous truck system"; and, at times, a statement of the uniquely "quebecois" characteristics of the district. As might be expected, these are part truths, as are many of the implications which have been drawn from them. This paper will examine some of the activities of residents of Gaspé Bay during the 1800's which demonstrate that there is another, largely unwritten, history. Although it will not be discussed here, this is also the case for several other parts of the Gaspé peninsula.

The recorded history of Gaspé Bay began when Jacques Cartier sheltered there from a storm in the course of his first voyage of exploration of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534. For the following two centuries there was no permanent settlement on the Bay although it was used as a point of arrival and departure for French vessels making Atlantic crossings. If the Percé seigneurie held briefly by Pierre Denys (1674-c.1690) is excepted, the nearest seigneuries were at Grande Etang and Grande Riviere, both of which were granted in 1697. In between them, about one hundred and twenty miles of coastline which included Gaspé Bay, was reserved for the exclusive use of seasonal fishermen from both France and the seigneuries in the vicinity of Kamouraska, 300 miles up the St. Lawrence river. (Figure I). A small French settlement on Gaspé Bay, which was established in 1742 was destroyed sixteen years later in 1758 by British military forces clearing the way for the assault on Quebec. At the time of the raid, the settlement was reported to have had a population of about 300 (most of whom were repatriated to France) but the sparse records do not make it clear how many were permanent settlers and how many were transient fishermen.

Following the final British victories in Canada in 1760, the French fisheries in the Gulf of St. Lawrence began to be taken over by the British and Americans. After the Peace of Paris in 1763, the new government in Quebec gave active encouragement to settlement in Gaspé and numbers of English-speaking fishermen were added to the seasonal arrival of "Canadien" fishermen on the Gaspé coast. One aspect of this new influx appeared in the form of petitions for land grants on the Bays of Gaspé and Chaleur, often by partnerships of two or more men. Their intentions often seem to have been to have one member of the partnership established on the coast while the other remained in Quebec as the agent for the sale of their fish. Some of the partners were British merchants with considerable commercial resources, while others were discharged Scottish and English soldiers, apparently with little to back them except their wits and brawn. Only a few petitioners are known to have become settlers and fewer still remained permanently. Small numbers of settlers, most of whom were Americans, continued to arrive throughout the 1700's but the Quebec Act of 1774 put a temporary end to land grants and damages to property by American privateers during the American Revolutionary War drove some of the earlier settlers away. Following the war, American Loyalists and discharged soldiers, sailors and militiamen increased the population of Gaspé Bay and other settlements on the Gaspé coast but within fifteen years many of these had also gone elsewhere. As a result of these successive depopulations the number of men, women and children permanently settled around Gaspé Bay remained small. The total at the start of the 1800's can be approximated at about 400 (by interpolation from the 1819 census figure of 535).

During the last forty years of the XVIII century there were several attempts by merchants to establish themselves on Gaspé Bay, few of which were successful. There were some exceptions, the earliest of which were the Guernseymen,

Nicholas LeMeasurier and Helier Bonamy, who had a fishery at Grande Greve from sometime in the 1760's to probably as late as the 1790's. They were succeeded by the Jersey firm of F. and P. Janvrin who had arrived there after apparently having been requested to quit the Magdelain Islands by agents of Admiral Isaac Coffin. A third was Daniel McPherson, a Scot and a Loyalist, who had come to the newly established community of Douglastown in 1785. He retired to his seigneurie at Ile aux Grues (Crane Island) in 1802 but the business continued to be carried on at Point St. Peter by his Johnston descendants until 1846. It might be argued that Felix O'Hara, who arrived at Gaspé Bay in 1764 and died there forty years later, should be included in a list of of merchants. Although he may have started with that in mind, he quickly became what elsewhere might be described as a member of the squirearchy. Besides being a large land holder, he held the posts of justice of the peace, customs officer, land surveyor, judge, member of the local Land Board, etc., and a number of his sons followed in his footsteps by acquiring appointive and elective posts.

In sharp contrast to what can be variously construed as lack of enterprise; lack of opportunity; or lack of records during the late 1700's, the early years of the 1800's was marked by a burst of maritime entrepreneurial activity by members of several Gaspé Bay families. No obvious reason has been found for this apparently abrupt development and the only feature which seems to be common is that all of them were second or third generation Gaspesians. To expand the doubtful analogy of the O'Hara's being part of a squirearchy, most of these men might be described as part of a yeomanry, although the peculiarities of Lower Canada laws made the ownership of the properties they occupied very uncertain. With one or two exceptions, the ways in which these families had previously made their living are almost entirely a matter of speculation.

Ship Building

The almost simultaneous start of ship building and whaling by local men produced the first records of their new activity. Wooden sailing vessels had been built on Gaspé Bay prior to 1800 and the first to be registered was a 30 2/3 ton schooner called the "Industry" which was built in 1786 and registered at Quebec in 1787. The 29 3/4 ton schooner "Justina" built in 1787 and registered at Sydney, Cape Breton Island, and the 38 72/94 ton schooner "Snipe" built in 1793 and registered at Carleton, Lower Canada in 1796, were also noted to have been built at Gaspé but this does not necessarily mean that they were built at Gaspé Bay. In early ship registries and records of arrivals and departures at ports other than in Lower Canada, it could mean anywhere on the Gaspé coast. The early Quebec ship registrations sometimes gave a specific name to a building site, but frequently only made a distinction between Gaspé and the Bay of Chaleur, and in such cases "Gaspé" could mean any place east of Point Macquereau. Sparse records assembled from a variety of sources indicate that at least forty-one vessels were built on the coasts of the Gaspé peninsula before 1800, mainly on the Bay of Chaleur. However, registration was not compulsory before 1786; instances have been found of vessels which were first registered at British ports; some early registries are lost; and vessels used exclusively for fishing were rarely registered (particularly those under 20 tons during the 1700's and under 30 tons during the 1800's); so that others must have been built for which there is no record. The first vessel which can be satisfactorily identified as having been built on Gaspé Bay in the XIX century was the 45 ton pink-sterned schooner "Trial" which was built and owned by the Annett brothers of Peninsula in 1805. Wooden sailing vessels, the largest of which was 375 tons, continued to be built at Gaspé Bay throughout most of the XIX century and the final one to be registered was the 18.57 ton schooner "Emma", built in 1890 by Thomas Adams. Although it was a

very small vessel it had the distinction of being the last of the Gaspé Bay lightships and was replaced by a lighthouse in 1904.

Ship arrivals and departures and other pieces of information (such as where vessels were sold or wrecked) show that during the greater part of the XIX century, many of the schooners which were registered as having been built at "Gaspé" and Gaspé Bay were mainly used for carrying goods of all kinds to settlements along the Gaspé coast; to and from Quebec City; and to and from ports throughout the present day Atlantic Provinces. The main axis of this coasting trade appears to have been about 500 miles southwest to Quebec City and about 500 miles southeast to Halifax. There does not seem to have been any clear cut upper and lower limits to the size of vessels used in this trade but 50 to 70 ton schooners may have been the most efficient for the purpose. A number of schooners were used for whaling but few of the registered Gaspé Bay vessels appear to have been used exclusively for fishing (only five were noted in the ship registries to have been the property of fishermen, most of whom are also known to have been either mariners or whalers). In general, the schooners were in a distinctly different category to the typical Gaspé coast fishing boats which were generally small, undecked and frequently had stepable masts. Square-rigged vessels were mainly used for carrying fish on the longer voyages to Portugal, Spain, the Mediterranean, the West Indies and South America, but schooners were also used on these routes.

Up to the time of writing a total of 386 vessels have been identified as having been built on the coasts of the Gaspé peninsula between Cap Chat and the Restigouche river during the century and a third from 1762 to 1895. Some were brigantines, snows, brigs, barks and ships, but by far the greater number were two masted schooners. Of the total about 30% were built at "Gaspé" or at locations around Gaspé Bay and nearly half of this number were built between 1833 and 1866. Several of the foregoing statements as well as some

less obvious features can be illustrated graphically using some of the data on these vessels. (Figure II). For those under 150 tons, histograms of the number of vessels versus tonnages, for the whole period of 1762 to 1895, both for the total and for "Gaspé"-Gaspé Bay alone, have median values at about 50 tons indicating that this was the size in greatest demand. In almost all the histograms, vessels of more than 100 tons (mostly but not exclusively square-rigged) appear as separate populations, apparently reflecting the two different kinds of demands for coasting and deep sea vessels.

There are two features to the data used in constructing the histograms which should be noted. Firstly, changes in the procedures for admeasurement in 1836 and 1855 generally served to reduce measured tonnages (by averages of about 30% in 1836 and 5% in 1855). The post 1835 histograms are therefore shifted to the left relative to the earlier ones and may have skewed the histogram for 1762-1895 by an undetermined amount. Secondly, it is very probable that a number of vessels (both square and schooner rigged) of somewhat more than 100 tons were registered at tonnages of less than that amount. Partial confirmation of this is that none of either the square rigged vessels or schooners built anywhere on the Gaspé coast between 1814 and 1858 were in the 100-109 ton range. The only two Gaspé Bay vessels of this tonnage were schooners built by Collas and Company in 1860 and 1875 respectively. The reason is said to have been that coasting "papers" rather than master mariners "papers" were required for vessels of less than 100 tons and some Gaspé vessels were therefore built with a false keelson which could be removed after the vessel had been measured and registered. Rough calculations suggest that such a method of construction could have reduced the measured tonnage by as much as 25% (for example a 110 ton vessel could have been registered as 85.5 tons). Comparison of ship building records for the Gaspé coast and Cape Breton suggest that this was not the practice everywhere. Probability plots (Figure III) show two apparent populations for Cape Breton with a small angular inflection between them and two clearly

defined populations for the Gaspé coast with a sharp inflection which may reflect a third from 70 to 99 tons.

The principal sources of the following list of ship builders have been the ship registers of the ports of Quebec and Gaspé, censuses of Gaspé Bay, registers of Anglican churches scattered around the Bay and some additional minor sources. One of the limitations encountered in preparing the list is that in the ship registers, builders names were only recorded with regularity between 1830 and 1855 and are almost completely lacking after 1855. The names are arranged in chronological order of their first appearance and the figures are the years in which an individual was referred to, in some fashion, as a ship builder.

John Annett:	1805,1812,1825
William Annett:	1805,1808
George Annett:	1805,1808,1812,1816
Richard Annett:	1805,1811,1818
John Boyle:	1811,1818
George Boyle	1811,1818
Thomas Boyle,	1811,
James Baker:	1812
William Baker:	1812,1839,1840
Robert Ascah:	1816,1821
James Boyle:	1818
Felix Boyle:	1818,1828
William Miller:	1819,1823,1846
	1847,1854,1861
Philip Bechervaise:	1821,1828,1834,
	1840,1861
George Brown:	1830
(also built a vessel at New Richmond, 1833)	
William McArthur:	1830
James Stewart McArthur:	1830
Charles Methot:	1831
James Collas:	1831
William Annett:	1833,1843
(nephew of Wm. Annett above)	
Peter Bronard (Broward, Brouard):	1833
Neil Ascah:	1834
Joseph Marin:	1834
Wm. Murray Brown:	1836
Philip Vautier:	1837
Pierre Dumas:	1838
(probably at Bonaventure)	
Louis Lemieux:	1838
(probably at Mal Bay)	
Charles Arthur:	1838
Thomas English:	1839,1845,1849,
	1854,1855,1861
(also built a vessel at Griffin Cove, 1848)	
Philip Vibert:	1841
Thomas Touzel	
(Le Touzel)	1844,1854
Benjamin Patterson:	1841
William McBirnie:	1845,1851
Thomas Suddard:	1845
John Adams:	1854,1855,1858
Collas & Company	1855,1859,1860,1864,
	1865,1872,1874,1875
Joshua Falle:	1861,1871
Robert Baird:	1861
John Briand:	1861
Frederick Miller:	1861
Edward Quigley,	1863,1876,1883
Thomas Adams:	1880,1890
Peter Briard:	1894

At various times during the 1800's there were ship yards at St. Georges Cove (Bronard); Peninsula (Annett, Ascah and Miller): Gaspé Basin (Bechervaise); Douglastown: and Point St. Peter (Collas and Company). Vessels were also reported to have been built at Gaspé Bay, Little Gaspé, Sydenham, North West Arm, Amelia's Point, Sandy Beach, Haldimand and Seal Cove, while "Gaspé" was perhaps the most common designation of the building site. (Figure I). In the last instance, the names of the builder and/or owner may at times give some indication of whether or not a vessel was built on Gaspé Bay. With some doubtful exceptions, the names of men who usually built vessels at places other than Gaspé Bay have not been listed when the site was shown as "Gaspé".

The Annetts, Boyles, Bakers, Ascahs, Millers and Pattersons were the sons and grandsons of men who settled on Gaspé Bay from about 1765 to 1794 and were almost always the owners or part owners of the vessels they built. The one exception was William Miller who, during the later part of his career built vessels to order. Thomas English, the son of a later settler and the Jerseymen - Bechervaise, Collas, Vautier, Vibert, LeTouzel, Falle and Briand - who had arrived from about 1820 onwards, built vessels for customers other than themselves. Peter Bronard, a Guernseyman, had been a resident from about 1802. Most of the Channel Islanders probably learned their trade in Jersey or Guernsey, the one known exception being Bechervaise who had been apprenticed to a ship builder in Newfoundland. It is not known where members of the early Gaspé Bay families learned ship building but some may have worked at Paspébiac or New Carlisle where ship yards were established in the 1790's (members of the Annett, Ascah and Boyle families married daughters of New Carlisle ship carpenters). Most of the remaining names are of men who built vessels for their own account and only rarely for others. The owners of the greater number of the schooners these men built were either residents of Gaspé

Bay or (until the Port of Gaspé Ship Register began in 1842) Quebec City merchants. Most of the square-rigged vessels were transferred to ports in England, Scotland, Ireland or the Channel Islands shortly after they were built, and a few had Certificates of British Registry when they were completed. Some of the schooners were also transferred to Jersey registry and were sometimes surprisingly small to have made Atlantic crossings. The only merchants who are known to have had a ship yard on Gaspé Bay for their own vessels was the Jersey house of Collas and Company, the successors to the Johnston firm at Point St. Peter.

By the beginning of the final third of the last century, steam-powered vessels on regular runs from Quebec City and the Maritime Provinces had begun to eliminate some of the need for schooners, and other technological and economic factors had begun, or shortly would begin, to completely change the established maritime economy of Gaspé Bay. One of these was the Intercolonial Railway which served Gaspé Bay via a regular steam boat service, first from Point du Chêne and later from Dalhousie and Campbellton in New Brunswick. The railway was completed from the Maritimes to Levis opposite Quebec City in 1876 and a spur line ultimately reached Gaspé Bay a quarter century after it had been begun in 1886. Other factors were the termination of the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States in 1866 which brought an end to the Free Port of Gaspé; the replacement of whale oil by petroleum products; and the great depression of the 1870's, '80's and '90's. Taken together they foreshadowed the end of wooden sailing ships and the need for men to build them.

Whalers

The first whalers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence were Spanish Basques, who may have been there before Cartier's explorations, and left their mark in many place names derivative from their language. They were reported to have been using the Magdelain Islands as a whaling base in 1591, but by 1650 they had transferred all of their whaling activities to the waters of Greenland and Spitzbergen.

The French in New France do not appear to have given whaling a very high priority, but some whaling, mainly by French Basques, was done in the estuary of the St. Lawrence from about 1690 to at least 1747. In contrast, the British were encouraging whaling at Newfoundland by 1700 and American whalers were operating out of Canso by 1732. In 1761, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Straits of Belle Isle were opened to British Colonial fishermen which brought American whalers in great numbers over the next few years. They were discouraged to some extent by the rigid enforcement of fishing regulations on the Newfoundland and Labrador coasts from 1766 onwards but were still whaling in the Gulf up to the time of the American Revolutionary War. British and American merchants at Quebec equipped a few whaling sloops about 1765 and exported some whalebone to Great Britain in 1768 and 1769. During the American Revolution, Charles Robin shipped whale bone and oil to England (presumably from the Gaspé coast), and in 1780, Peter Fraser, who had been cod-fishing at Percé three years earlier, was operating a whaling vessel out of Quebec. However, few if any whalers from Great Britain ever appear to have operated within the Gulf. Following the American Revolution, American whalers reappeared in the estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Straits of Belle Isle and off the southern coasts of Newfoundland, but after 1798 their numbers were reported to have been negligible.

Whaling by residents of Gaspé Bay began about 1804 (less reliably in 1798) and continued until October 1893. The surviving fragments of the Port of Quebec ship arrivals of the time include a notation of a schooner from Chaleur Bay with a cargo of blubber and oil early in 1807, but the first documentary evidence of whaling at Gaspé Bay was dated in 1809. It lists the names of Matthew Stewart, John Boyle and brothers (presumably George, Thomas and James), John Annett and brothers (presumably William, Richard and George) and John Patterson. The following year Richard Miller, John Ascah,

Robert Ascah, Benjamin Coffin, James Thompson and Thomas Thompson began a court action against the Jersey merchants, Francis and Philip Janvrin for the recovery of a whale they had killed. With the exception of Matthew Stewart, who was a merchant, ship builder and owner of the Shoolbred seigneurie at Magausha near the mouth of the Restigouche river, all these men were residents of Gaspé Bay.

There are a number of ambiguous aspects to the history of whaling out of Gaspé Bay. The tradition is that the local men were taught to whale by Abraham Coffin (the father of Benjamin Coffin), who had arrived there from Nantucket a year or so before 1780. This seems to be partially contradicted in an 1834 report by John McConnell, the Gaspé Bay customs officer who, although he mentioned a Nantucket whaler as the instructor and was acquainted with members of the Coffin family, did not link them. In 1809, about equal numbers of whales were reported to have been taken with whale boats (presumably within the confines of the Bay) and from schooners (presumably in the Gulf). Most descriptions of the start of whaling by local populations include a fairly long period of whaling from the shore in small boats, but no other references have been found to shore whaling and schooners appear to have been used almost from the beginning. The first of these was probably an unnamed vessel used by the Boyles and the second was Annett's "Trial". Building and outfitting a whaling schooner presupposes some financial resources and this may have been provided initially by Matthew Stewart, possibly in conjunction with his merchant brother, James, who had moved from the Bay of Chaleur to Gaspé Bay in 1798. Much later, in 1836, Abbé Ferland, mentioned in passing that the only outfitters (armateurs) of whalers in Lower Canada were the Scots (les ecossais) of Gaspé Bay. Presumably at that time the "Scots" could have been either Henry Bisset

Johnston at Point St. Peter or James Stewart's sons. However, the only whaling schooners known to have been active at that time were owned by Felix Boyle, William Annett and the Miller family, none of whom are known to have any claim to Scottish origins. Both before and after that time there is not much evidence of Gaspé Bay whaling schooners being financed through outside sources. What little is known about the borrowing patterns of both the whalers and mariners engaged in coasting is that the usual reason vessels were mortgaged was when money was needed to carry the owners through bad years. Until the 1860's most of the mortgagees (and purchasers when mortgages could not be paid) were Quebec City merchants. The only local merchant from whom they are known to have borrowed money was the Jerseyman, John LeBoutillier. In an 1852 report there is a one sentence reference to Jersey firms outfitting whalers, but who was meant is unknown. The overall implications seem to be that the Gaspé Bay whalers usually built and equipped their schooners out of their own and their relatives pockets. A further unresolved question is the extent to which they may have been in competition with other whalers for the available whales. A report in 1842 implies that Americans were whaling in the vicinity of the Magdelain Islands. In 1858, most of the Gaspé Bay whalers raised a formal objection to the use of rockets and bombs which wounded but did not kill immediately. By tradition at least, they only used harpoons and lances so that other whalers with more up-to-date equipment must have been operating in the Gulf. Finally, when the legend of the "burning ship of the Bay of Chaleur" is stripped of its most improbable aspects, there is a very good likelihood that its appearances were mirages of square-rigged whalers trying out oil beyond the horizon of the Gulf. It may be significant that the superstitious folk who had seen the "burning ship" were reported in 1919 to have done so fifty years or more before (i.e. at about the time of the Reciprocity Treaty when Americans had unrestricted access to the Gulf.

During the eighty-nine years from 1804 to 1893 that whalers operated out of Gaspé Bay, the numbers of vessels which were in use at any one time fluctuated considerably. The information which has been assembled is somewhat fragmentary and for some years consists only of casual observations by visitors to the district, but if it is plotted in conjunction with the yearly American price for whale oil, there is a close coincidence between the two graphs. (Figure IV). It would thus appear that the number of whaling schooners reflected North American economic conditions rather than other factors such as the availability of whales. In constructing the graph of whaling vessels, some pieces of information were not included. In 1819, two additional whalers were reported to have been based on Percé and another eight at Paspébiac, but nothing further is known about these vessels. The post-Napoleonic War depression of the 1820's brought a virtual end to whaling out of Gaspé Bay for a few years so that from about 1825 to 1830 a number of men who usually made their living from whaling appear in various records as "traders". Much later, in 1866, an enthusiastically written book about the Gaspé coast mentioned "about a dozen Gaspé Bay whaling schooners", which is substantially more than were noted in the Fisheries reports of the time.

Their whaling grounds were as far west as Kamouraska in the estuary of the St. Lawrence river; around Anticosti Island; through the Straits of Belle Isle; north along the Labrador coast to the mouth of Hamilton Inlet; south and east throughout the Gulf of St. Lawrence; and along the southern coast of Newfoundland. Information on the amounts of oil produced have only been found for about a quarter of the nearly nine decades of whaling (mainly between 1853 and 1865) with an overall average of nearly 750 barrels of oil per year. The incomplete nature of the information makes it probable that this average figure is somewhat low.

The best year on record was 1858 when six whaling schooners with an aggregate tonnage of 330 tons produced a total of 1624 barrels of whale oil. The usual whaling season was July, August and September, so that the whale oil productivity of the Gaspé Bay whaling fleet was certainly equal and probably better than many individual American whaling ships of equivalent tonnage which whaled year round on two or three year voyages.

Information on the numbers of whaling schooners in various years, census and church records of men described as whalers and other references to the names of schooners and their masters engaged in whaling have been used to construct Table I on the Gaspé Bay whalers.

Because they were either broken up, wrecked or sold, few of the whaling schooners built before 1828 continued whaling much past the start of the 1830's. With the exception of the last on the list, the remainder were all afloat in the 1860's, but only the "Violet", "Admiration" and "Lord Douglas" were still whaling in 1875. The "James Dwyer", the last of the Gaspé Bay whalers was purchased in Halifax in 1890, but was wrecked at the St. John River on the north shore of the Gulf in October 1893 and its master, Joseph Tripp, died two years later at the age of seventy-two. All of the masters of these vessels were long-time residents of Gaspé Bay and many of the surnames (and some given names) are in the preceding list of ship builders. The greatest difference between this list and the former is that there are no Channel Island, Acadian or French-Canadian names. One Channel Island name which might be added to the list is Elias Todvin. All that is known of him is that when he died in 1867 at the age of 78 he was a resident of St. Georges Cove and had been a shipmaster and whaler.

TABLE I

<u>Name</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Built, year</u>	<u>Master</u>
1. unnamed	?	?	John Boyle
2. "Trial"	45	Gaspé, 1805	Wm. Annett
3. "Four Brothers"	51 34/94	Gaspé, 1808	Wm. Annett (1808 later A. Cass A. McInnis (1812)
4. "Mary Boyle"	80	Gaspé, 1811	John Boyle
5. "Eliza"	65 7/94	Gaspé, 1812	James Baker (1812) later Wm. Baker
6. "Good Intent"	48 87/94	Bay of Chaleur, (New Carlisle?)	Abraham Coffin (1812) later F. Coffin
7. "Charlotte"	52 17/94	1806 Gaspé, 1816	Richard Ascah
8. "Lord Wellington"	46 23/94	Gaspé, 1816	Thomas Daniel Johnston (1819)
9. "Ann"	75 34/94	Gaspé, 1816	John Patterson (1816) John Boyle (1825)
10. "Annabella"	87	Gaspé, 1818	George Boyle
11. "Antelope"	55 22/94	Gaspé, 1819	Thomas Miller (1819) John Miller (1827)
12. "Lively"	74	Gaspé, 1821	Richard Ascah
13. "Harmony"	47 19/94	Gaspé, 1823	Wm. Miller (1823) Allen Pike (1826)
14. "Ellen and Jane"	65 50/94	Gaspé, 1828	Felix Boyle
15. "Mayflower"	49 44/94	Gaspé, 1833	Wm. Annett (1833) Charles Stewart (1851) Richard Mullin (1852)
16. "Breeze"	66 77/94	Gaspé, 1833	Thomas Daniel Johnston (1834) William Harbour (1845)
17. "Rambler"	51 2703/3500	Gaspé, 1839	William Baker, Sr. (1840) William Baker, Jr. (1855) John Davis (1864)
18. "Perserverance"	69 1327/3500	Gaspé, 1840	Frederick Coffin, Jr.
19. "Defiance"	39 1454/3500	Peninsula, 1843	William Annett
20. "Violet"	65 359/3500 39 3199/3500	rebuilt, 1853 Gaspé Basin, 1847	Thomas Suddard (1847)
21. "Admiration"	37.35 46.76	rebuilt, 1858 Gaspé Basin, 1855	Henry Suddard (1849) Joseph Tripp
22. "John Stewart"	60.47 76 152/3500	rebuilt, 1867 Douglastown, 1855	Charles Stewart
23. "Highland Jane"	70 536/3500	Corner of the Beach, (Mal Bay) 1853	John Ascah (1856)
24. "Lord Douglas"	58.32	Douglastown, 1858	William Baker (1861)
25. "Osprey"	59.35	Gaspé, 1859	James Baker
26. "James Dwyer"	94.14	West Quoddy, N.S. 1870	John Davis Joseph Tripp (1890)

The beginning of the final decline of the Gaspé Bay whaling industry approximately coincides with the same technological and economic changes at the beginning of the final third of the XIX century which were noted in conjunction with the decline in ship building. Undoubtedly, the most significant was the substitution of "coal oil" (kerosene) for whale oil in lighting (in 1869, one of the whaling schooner masters paid 40¢ a gallon for "coal oil" when he was getting 54¢ per gallon for his whale oil and the average U.S. price was \$1.01 3/4). In 1879, some emphasis was given by Pierre Fortin (who had been the commander of the first government built Coast Guard vessel, "La Canadienne"), to depletion of the whale population as a major cause, but this is probably only partially true. The last right whales, which were the principal North Atlantic source of both oil and whale bone, were reported to have been taken in the early 1850's (1850 at Hermitage Bay, Newfoundland and 1854 at Kamouraska), but the best years for whale oil production were in the latter part of the same decade. Humpbacks, finners and the occasional blue whale continued to be taken for oil, but whereas the rising price of whale bone kept whaling profitable in the North Pacific, the whalers in the Gulf and nearby Atlantic could take little advantage of that option. At about the time that the Gaspé Bay whaling came to an end there were some short-lived attempts by Newfoundland and Canadian companies to whale in the Gulf, none of which appear to have had any success. However, Norwegian steam whalers began operations out of Newfoundland in 1897, and produced as much or more whale oil in 1899 and 1900 and again in 1905, 1906 and 1907 as the Gaspé Bay whalers are known to have done in any one year (no production figures have been found for 1901-1904). Their more efficient methods of whaling may have done more to reduce the whale population in nine years than the combined efforts of the Gaspé Bay whalers in nine decades.

Master Mariners

In the discussion on ship building it was noted that there was an abnormal distribution of vessel tonnages between 70 and 99 tons which seems to have reflected a means of circumventing regulations on the command of vessels of 100 tons and more by master mariners. Besides that, although a coasting "ticket" had few formal requirements (for example, literacy and navigational skills were not essential), "coasting" could include voyages as far south as the West Indies and the River Plata in the Argentine. Thus, although most of the coasting and whaling were primarily within the St. Lawrence river and the Gulf, some masters, (who are not known to have had more than a coasting ticket), made extended voyages during most of which they were out of sight of land. In addition, the large fishing companies generally used square rigged vessels which, besides being registered in the Channel Islands, had masters whose homes were there as well. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that not only were master mariners a minority among the masters of Gaspé Bay vessels, but were in disproportionately small numbers to the population which grew steadily from about 500 in 1819 to about 5000 in 1901.

If residence on Gaspé Bay is used as a criterion, a list can be compiled which begins almost at the start of the XIX century. The first was James Patterson, who was described as a master mariner and trader in partnership with a George Meggison in 1803. He seems to have been at least briefly a resident of Gaspé Bay and had acquired property on the North West Arm in 1801. However, the two partners also appear as residents of Prince Edward Island in 1803, which leaves his permanent residence in doubt. He was later the commander of the Government Schooner "St. Lawrence" and appears to have lived for some time in Quebec City when he died in 1812. William Hall, who had married a daughter of the Boyle family a few years prior to 1810, was also a master mariner and circa 1820 was master of the "Quebec", one of the earliest

steam vessels on the St. Lawrence river. He was apparently a resident of Gaspé Bay part of the time, and a daughter, who married the Point St. Peter merchant, Henry Bisset Johnston, had probably spent most of her life there up to the time of her husband's death.

However, neither Patterson nor Hall could be called full time residents and the earliest reference to a master mariner who fitted that description was in 1833 to Felix Boyle, the young brother-in-law of William Hall. From then until the end of the century, an additional thirty five Gaspé Bay men have been identified as master mariners. The sources used in compiling these names are essentially the same as those used for the preceding list of ship builders and the same arrangement has been followed with the names in chronological order of the earliest reference. One of the uncertainties encountered is that "mariner" appears to have sometimes been used in the sense of "master mariner" with the result that some names have probably been left out. For the same reason some individuals do not appear in the list until they are known to have either reached an advanced age or to have died. Various scattered pieces of information suggest that the majority of them probably became master mariners prior to 1870.

James Patterson:	1803
William Hall:	1828
Felix Boyle:	1833, 1848
Thomas Daniel Johnston:	1834
Neil Ascah:	1835
John Baker:	1836
John Hammond:	1839
Henry Stewart:	1840
John Francis Wilson:	1841
Francis Ahier:	1841
John LeBoutillier:	1844
William Baker:	1846
William Baker, Jr.:	1846
Thomas Boyle:	1846
David Baird:	1846, 1857, 1859 1861, 1871, 1886
Robert Baker:	1847
John Vibert:	1849
Frederick Coffin:	1850
Henry Suddard:	1851, 1884
John Arthur Vibert:	1854, 1855 1858, 1871
Peter Robert:	1855
William West:	1855, 1864
Peter Briard:	1855, 1856 1857, 1894
William Annett:	1861, 1871
George Douglas Miller:	1861, 1863
Charles Stewart:	1866
Thomas Francis Robert:	1868
Abraham Vautier:	1871
Thomas Robert:	1875
Robert Pye:	1880, 1893
John Ascah:	1880, 1894
Edward Quigley:	1883
Richard Miller:	1888, 1897
John Robert:	1888, 1890
Thomas Adams:	1890
William Robert:	1890
Joseph Tripp:	1890
John Quigley:	1895

As noted previously, Annett, Ascah, Baker, Boyle, Coffin, Johnston, Miller and Stewart were names of pre-1800 settlers, to which Tripp (a Loyalist family) can be added. Most of these names also appear in the lists of ship builders and whaling captains. Another group-Ahier, Briard, Hammond, Le Boutillier, Robert, Vibert, Vautier and (somewhat unexpectedly) Wilson-had their origins in the Channel Islands, although some individuals were second or third generation in Gaspé. Ahier, LeBoutillier and Wilson were merchants; Hammond was originally a fisherman who, by 1842, was the keeper of the South West Point lighthouse on Anticosti Island; the several Roberts were the sons of fishermen who had been at Grande Greve and its vicinity for at least two generations; and the surnames, Briard, Vibert and Vautier have already appeared in the list of ship builders. Of the remainder, Baird was born in Scotland; Pye and the elder Quigley were from Ireland; and Adams, Suddard and West were the sons of men who had come to Gaspé Bay in the first half of the 1800's. Although there were master mariners of Acadian and French-Canadian origins elsewhere along the Gaspé coasts (notably on the Bay of Chaleur), there are no indications of any resident at Gaspé Bay as late as the 1890's.

From the limited amount of information which has so far been assembled some of the Gaspé Bay master mariners appear to have spent all of their careers on the eastern seaboard of the Americas (mainly over the 1000 miles from Quebec City to Halifax, but also from Labrador to the Argentine), while others regularly or occasionally sailed to British, Iberian or Mediterranean ports. One example of the kind of information on which these suppositions are based is the Daily Customs Register of the Port of Gaspé for vessels entering from outside the Province of Canada during the period from 1852 to 1857. This is one of the more continuous records which has been located but information on either outward bound

destinations or coasting voyages within the Province have to be found elsewhere. References in the Customs register to men who are included in the list of master mariners have been summarized in Table II.

The increased traffic to Halifax and New York which began in 1855, is a reflection of the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States in that year and the establishment of Gaspé Bay and a number of other eastern Canadian ports as a free trade area. The termination of the Treaty in 1866 coupled with the increasing use of steam-powered vessels and the completion of the Intercolonial Railway marked the beginning of the end for the independently owned Gaspé Bay coasting schooners and their master-owners. Schooners continued to be used well into the present century but mainly for low cost, bulky items (dried fish, lumber, coal and stone) and the ownership came progressively into the hands of merchant firms. From the 1870's onwards a Gaspé Bay master mariner was more likely to be an employee than self-employed. Some continued in the coasting trade; some of the more elderly became semi-retired and only made occasional trips to the North Shore and across the Gulf as pilots; and a few became the masters of Canadian and American owned private yachts which were based at Gaspé Bay during the 1890's. However, their maritime traditions continued with their descendants, one of many aspects of which can be illustrated with a final list of names. In 1934, more than half of the "upper deck" officers of the "Gaspé Navy" (in more formal terms, the Marine Section of the RCMP) were from Gaspé Bay. Two of the names have not been noted previously - Pelletier and Rioux - but the others are an echo of the master mariners of the 1800's - A. Ascah, J. Ascah, W. Ascah, H. Coffin and P. Robert.

TABLE II

23.

Master and Vessel	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857
<u>John Arthur Vibert</u> Brig'n "St. Anne"-139 tons	Halifax, NS*	Liverpool, GB	Liverpool, GB Ponce, Porto Rico	Ponce via Quebec New York*	New York*	New York*
<u>Abraham Vautier</u> "Auora" Schr. "Reward"-54 tons	Cadiz, Spain			Halifax, NS Pr. Ed. Isl.	Halifax, NS	Halifax, NS
<u>David Baird</u> Schr. "Caledonia"-75 tons Schr. "Canopus"-64 tons			Dalhousie, NB			Portugal
<u>Peter Briard</u> Brig'n "Lady Maxwell"-79 tons				Cadiz, Spain	Jersey, CI	Bristol, GB
<u>Joseph Tripp</u> Schr. "Admiration"-46 tons**				Dalhousie, NB	Halifax, NS* Pr. Ed. Isl.	Halifax, NS* Pr. Ed. Isl.
<u>Frederick Coffin</u> Schr. Perseverance" 69 tons**					Pr. Ed. Isl.	Pr. Ed. Isl.
<u>Charles Stewart</u> Schr. "John Stewart"-76 tons**					Caraquette, NB	
<u>John Ascah</u> Schr. "Highland Jane"-70 tons**						Halifax, NS
<u>Peter Robert</u> Schr. "St. Ignace"						Halifax, NS
<u>William Baker</u>						Halifax,

* More than one arrival during year

** Whaling schooner

Conclusion

During the 1800's, the ship builders, whalers and master mariners of Gaspé Bay formed part of a distinct maritime social unit and had a history which is largely independent of that of either the cod fishermen or the Jersey fishing companies. Many of them could be described as the heads of family partnerships with economic links to merchants in Quebec City and Halifax. They were mainly, but not exclusively English-speaking, most were either Anglican or Wesleyan Methodist and, within the constraints of language and religion, usually married within their social group. Their maritime activities appear to have begun abruptly at the start of the XIX century, reached a peak during the middle third of the century and then, under the pressures of technological and economic change, underwent a rapid decline during the final third. Ship building and whaling had ended before the close of the nineteenth century, but the traditions of the master mariners continued into the twentieth.

Some Notes on Sources of Information

Despite the fact that during the 1800's, the building and manning of wooden sailing vessels was an important part of the local economies of not only Gaspé Bay but also Mal Bay, Paspébiac, New Carlisle, Bonaventure and the Restigouche area, virtually nothing has been written about the Gaspé coast which is equivalent to the "library" of books and pamphlets which are available on the maritime histories of various parts of the Atlantic Provinces and New England.

The early history of Gaspé Bay up to 1759 has been dealt with in a number of secondary sources, the most complete of which is probably "The French in Gaspé" by David Lee (1970). However, the period from 1760 to 1820 is almost completely untouched and there is no entirely satisfactory published material concerning the remainder of the XIXth century. A manuscript monograph by David Lee for the period 1760 to 1867 is helpful for the general background, but concentrates mainly on the inattention of government, the Charles Robin Company at Paspébiac, the Indians on the Bay of Chaleur and, in the process, errs in some respects. A local history "Treasure Trove in Gaspé and the Baie des Chaleurs" by Margaret G. MacWhirter (1919) is generally reliable, particularly for the sixty to seventy odd years prior to its publication. Two others, "Gaspé depuis Cartier" and "Historical Gaspé" by C.E. Roy (1934), are ostensibly the French and English translation of the same book but differ in detail. In both versions the author has an unfortunate tendency to either describe events separated by as much as a century as contemporaneous, or give events in reverse sequence, or on occasion to selectively ignore certain aspects for which information was readily available.

Published information on the early whaling in the estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence can be found in "Les Basques dans l'Estuaire du St. Laurent" by Rene Belanger (1971),

"Essai sur l'Industrie au Canada sous le Régime Français" by J.N. Fauteaux (1927), "Labrador" by W.G. Gosling (1910?), with some additional material in "A History of the American Whale Fishery" by W.S. Towers (1907). However, except for a series of Canadian government reports on the fisheries by Pierre Fortin (1858 to 1865), there is little but passing commentaries from the 1770's until the start of the Norwegian whaling at the end of the XIXth century which was described in "Newfoundland and its Untrodden Ways" by J.G. Millais (1907).

In addition to the foregoing secondary sources, bits of information have been gleaned from a large number of government publications, travel memoirs and local history essays (for example, papers in the *Revue d'Histoire de la Gaspésie*), recognizing that, in the latter two categories, scholarly precision may be somewhat uneven.

There are a substantial number of manuscript documents concerning Gaspé Bay stored in the Public Archives at Ottawa, many of which have apparently not been utilized by previous writers. Among the most useful for the present purpose have been the Ship Registers of the Ports of Quebec and Gaspé which, in addition to data on the vessels, give the names, residence and occupation of the owners and somewhat sporadically, those of builders and masters and information on transfers, mortgages, wrecks, etc. The manuscript censuses of 1765, 1777, 1819, 1825, 1831, 1861 and 1871 (1842 and 1851 are missing) have also been utilized although only the last two have much direct information on maritime activities. A great deal of background information on the "blank period" from 1760 to 1820 has been found in the Lower Canada Land records, the Haldimand Papers (for example, correspondence between Felix O'Hara, the Lieutenant-Governor of Gaspé, Nicholas Cox, and Governor Haldimand at Quebec) and a miscellany of other documents.

Documentation from other sources includes church registers of birth, deaths, baptisms and marriages from Anglican parishes, the earliest of which date from 1823, but occasionally provide information of an earlier date. Depending on the recording style of individual ministers, these sometimes include information on occupations. The Roman Catholic church records for the whole coast, up to 1850, have been summarized in the typescript "Les Registres de la Gaspésie, 1752-1850" by Patrice Gallant (1961) but there is relatively little concerning Gaspé Bay and occupations are only mentioned in rare instances. For reasons that were sometimes legal, sometimes ecclesiastical and sometimes simple expedience, a variety of other denominations including Roman Catholic can sometimes be found in the Anglican records and conversely Protestants appear in the early Roman Catholic records. Privately published memoirs, family documents and anecdotes collected from descendents of Gaspé Bay mariners (sometimes in the original but more often as xerox copies and handwritten memoranda), have been another source of information which, although occasionally contradictory and difficult to interpret, have been very useful.

