

## Land Records

John Paterson and his family came to Gaspé in 1764 and, according to Raymond Patterson, he and his wife

...arrived at the mouth of the Gaspé Bay and landed at Grand Greve. After looking the place over, they found the place was not for them. It was too hilly and he did not like fishing. As they had permission to settle anywhere they wished in Gaspé they sailed on up the Bay into the York River and came to a halt at the mouth of the Little River, four acres above the York Bridge. (a landmark in the 1950's not the 1760's) There the same year he was granted 400 acres land for his war services...<sup>i</sup>

It is unfortunate that a written land petition and grant has not been located for John Paterson. Such documents often contain a wealth of information. That no petition appears to have been written and no grant prepared seems to have been not atypical of the Gaspé area at the time John arrived. Permanent settlers on the Gaspé coast were few and the land plentiful. The land was not of very high quality and demand was low. Most of the settlers were fishermen who were more anxious for good beaches to dry their catch on. In 1784 Felix O'Hara, who was a regular correspondent with Governor Haldimand during the American Revolution, petitioned Haldimand to address some grievances<sup>ii</sup>. In his petition he noted that:

I was similarly duped with respect to the spot on which I have resided and improved for this twenty years past. I have not one right to plead except possession and an order from General Murray to set down anywhere in Gaspé that was not in the immediate occupation of any other.

It is almost certain that the John Paterson who settled in Gaspé was either a corporal or a sergeant, as his initial land grant was for 400 acres<sup>iii</sup>. At that time disbanded privates were given 50 acres each, while non-commissioned officers (corporals and sergeants) were given 200 acres each and subalterns (ensigns and lieutenants) were given 2000 acres each<sup>iv</sup>. There was also an additional allotment of 50 acres for each dependent<sup>v</sup>. John probably arrived in Gaspé with his wife and three daughters<sup>vi</sup>, providing him with four dependants and an entitlement to an additional 200 acres.

John appears to have settled in Gaspé in 1764. A petition for land made by his son Peter in 1793<sup>vii</sup> included an endorsement by local Magistrate and late President of the Land Board of Gaspé, Felix O'Hara which stated "the petitioner is the son of John Paterson who has resided in this bay for this twenty nine years". 1764 is also cited in *Historical Gaspé*<sup>viii</sup> under the heading "The population of Gaspé – Disbanded Soldiers and Loyalists" where it is stated:

In the spring of 1764, Governor Murray allowed Felix O'Hara, a naval lieutenant, to settle wherever he wished in Gaspé, provided he did not take anyone else's place. On June the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the same year, Hugh Montgomery asked for a grant of land on the north shore of Gaspé Basin. At the same time John Patterson, a lieutenant in Wolfe's army, settled on the upper York River.

Felix O'Hara's offer for land in the Gaspé would seem to be similar to the offer that John Paterson accepted. Although Peter noted in his land petition of 1793 that his father held land under the Honourable John Collins certificate<sup>ix</sup>. John Collins was Deputy Surveyor General of Quebec<sup>x</sup> and had prepared a survey of Gaspé, including laying out lots, that was completed September 12, 1765<sup>xi</sup>. This plan does not appear to have been used, as he laid out 50-acre lots, and 200-acre lots were actually used. He also stopped laying out lots lower down the York River than John actually settled. In the notes to his plan John Collins states: "The climate is cold, the season short, the frost sets in the middle of September & continues until the last of May." He also described the quality of the lands and woods for all lots on the south side of the York River as "Lands bad, Woods the same."

The land that John received in 1764 was later confirmed to his daughter-in-law in 1820<sup>xii</sup>, after both he and his eldest son Peter had died.

The first documented record of Peter to be uncovered so far is his 1793 "praying for 200 acres of land beginning on the east side of his father's lot, and adjoining same, to run the sundry courses of the shore for front,"<sup>xiii</sup> His name subsequently appears on a "list of applicants in whose favour orders have been made for specific quantities of land since 7 of February 1792."<sup>xiv</sup> Peter Paterson is noted as having received 200 acres of land<sup>xv</sup>. In 1819 the government of Lower Canada set up a commission to settle land titles in the Gaspé region (The Gaspé Land Commission). On July 8, 1819 Widow Paterson, relict of the late Peter Paterson, in his lifetime of Gaspé Bay, appeared before the commission<sup>xvi</sup>. At that time she claimed six hundred acres on the south side of the South West Branch of Gaspé Bay, bounded on the north by the South River of the said SW Branch and in depth by wasteland of the crown and the East by land heretofore granted to Mssrs O'Hara & McCord and on the West by land claimed by Jean Janet dit Papouloust (an Indian). This claim was made by Occupancy during twelve years. She also made a claim for a small lot of land in couission with Jean Janet dit Papouloust (an Indian) on the eastern extremity of a small island in the South River consisting of about 10 acres, and upon which a clearing of about five acres had been made by her late husband and the said Jean Janet dit Papouloust.

The occupancy for twelve years has been a matter of some speculation. The original grant, or occupancy by John was 1764 (55 years before), Peter received his grant of 200 acres in 1792 (27 years before) and Peter died about 1818 (1 year before). Examination of other claims reveal many different periods of occupancy. The most likely explanation is that John Paterson died in 1807 and thus the widow and her husband had occupied the whole 600 acres for the previous twelve years.

Besides a thorough review of the Lower Canada Land Papers, the State Minute Books, which contain the minutes of meetings of the executive council have been reviewed. These minutes include records of early petitions for land, including early settlers of the Gaspé. Most lands in Quebec were not available for settlement until after the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and at this point information on a number of early settlers of Gaspé appear in the records. It seems that John Paterson and Felix O'Hara were a bit ahead of the curve on this, and thus missed out on the chance to appear in the records. The State Minute Books also note that the Surveyor General of his deputy be sent to Gaspé to prepare a survey in order to accommodate the settlers headed to that area. As noted above in 1765 John Collins, Deputy Surveyor General went to Gaspé and prepared a survey. It also appear from Peter

Paterson's petition of 1792 that John Collins provided John Paterson with some sort of certificate authorizing him to hold the land he had staked the year before. It is interesting that John Collins would have done this, but not bothered to survey that far up the York River. He also noted all land on the south side of the river was bad (which is essentially correct) but further up where John settled the land is quite rich intervale land. To date very little of John Collins' papers have been found, and what has been found provides no information on John Paterson.

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<sup>i</sup> Patterson, Raymond; *Family Gatherings*, typescript 1957.

<sup>ii</sup> Haldimand Papers. NAC MG 21, B-202, p. 214.

<sup>iii</sup> No actual record has been found indicating how much land John Paterson was granted. It appears that no petition was filed and no grant made. The best guide to indicate the size of John's grant is the fact that his daughter-in-law claimed 600 acres of land from the Gaspé Land Commission in 1819 and her late husband had been granted 200 acres in 1793, leaving an initial grant of 400 acres. Raymond Patterson in *Family Gatherings* (see Appendix II) also states that the initial grant in 1764 was for 400 acres, without giving any sources. Whether he based this statement on documents he had available or on family tradition is unknown.

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<sup>vi</sup> Reports of the Archives of Quebec, vol. 1936/37, p. 114. Also see discussion below regarding Peter's birth and land grant.

<sup>vii</sup> NAC, RG 1 L3L Lower Canada Lands Papers, p.75907.

<sup>viii</sup> Roy, Charles-Eugène & Lucien Brault; *Historical Gaspé*, Au Moulin des Lettres Quebec, 1934 p. 116.

<sup>ix</sup> NAC RG 1 L3L Lower Canada Land Papers p. 75,907.

<sup>x</sup> Canadian Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. IV Pg. 114.

<sup>xi</sup> A Plan of The Bay and Harbour of Gaspey in the Province of Quebec, (Sept ?) 12, 1765. NAC Map Collection NMC 0017995.

<sup>xii</sup> NAC, RG 1, L7 Pg. 61 Gaspé Land Papers.

<sup>xiii</sup> NAC RG 1, L3L Vol. 155, Pg. 75,907.

<sup>xiv</sup> NAC RG 1, L#L, Vol, 1, Pg. 21.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid

<sup>xvi</sup> NAC, RG 1, L3L Vol. 155, Pg 75,909. Lower Canada Land Papers.