

This is an update of more accurate information based on new data or a better understanding of the data. This " explanation" has been added to "Margaret Coffin's Account Book", which is now at the Gaspé Museum.

Explanation to Accompany

Margaret's Account Book

By Lynden Bechervaise

Phillip Samuel Bechervaise was born on the Island of Jersey in 1787. At the age of 15, in 1803, he became "Indentured" to Mr. James Day, who was Master Ship Builder for the Charles Robin Firm at Paspébiac Qc. At the time his father, also named Phillip, was a Senior Captain for the Robins Firm.

The young Phillip served out his five-year apprenticeship in 1808 and decided to return home to Jersey. His Father learned of his intention from other sea captains and wrote him a letter (in French) of which we have a copy. In it he warns of the risk of returning home due to the war between England and France. That he could likely be captured by the French and be put in prison for many years. He also heard that the young fella was courting a Poindexter girl. The old man had lived on the Coast for 15 yrs. And knew everybody (the population was not very large at that time). He knew the Poindexter family well and warned his son that if he ever made a union with that girl, that he would disown him.

Phillip Jr. was in a quandary so he decided to try to go home anyway. There were more chances of getting a ship home from Gaspé than from Paspébiac, so he came here. While he was here, he came in contact with a Coffin Family who had a young daughter, Margaret, under one year of age. The oral history tells that before leaving he promised to return to marry her.

Effectively as his father had predicted, he was captured by the French and interred in Longway Prison for 8 yrs.' or so. In 1815, after the Battle of Waterloo, British seamen in French Prisons were released. He must have returned to Gaspé rather quickly for he took Margaret under his wing and schooled her to read and write for when she wrote her "Account Book" in 1820 she was only 12 yrs. old.

It is not an Account book at all but a textbook of all the systems of weights and measures being used at the time. It is housed at the Gaspé Museum.

The Museum also has a notebook which Phillip wrote while at Longway. Wherein he outlines all the steps required to build a seagoing ship. He lists many ships with their details and records his "catechism".

There was no formal schooling in the area until much later when Phillip started his own school, one of his daughters taught there.

When Margaret was 16 yrs. old, they applied for a license to marry and were married in 1824. They raised 14 children and died within 2 months of each other in 1878.

See our: "Bechervaisfamilyhistory.com" web site.