

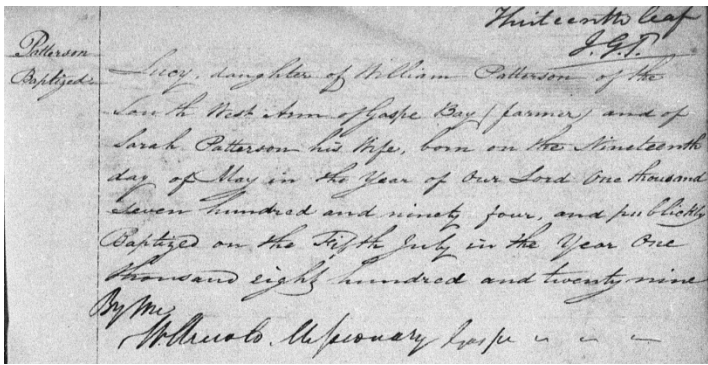
The Paterson Stone House

By Marty Patterson (a 4x great grandson of William Paterson)

Hidden by dense overgrowth, left to suffer the ravages of weather and time, and all but forgotten lies the stone ruins of the oldest house in the Gaspé Bay area. Located along the shore of the York River in what is now Wakeham, formally known as Gaspé Bay South, the house, constructed of limestone found on the property, was built in the late 1790s by my direct ancestor William Paterson and was the first of its kind in Gaspé.

Very little is known about William. He and his wife Sarah arrived in Gaspé in the late 1790s. They settled on what would become Lot #15. Like many other early settlers, they probably built their house on land which they had no legal title to. Two children were born after their arrival: Lucy in 1794 and Benjamin in 1796.

Baptism Certificate of Lucy ¹

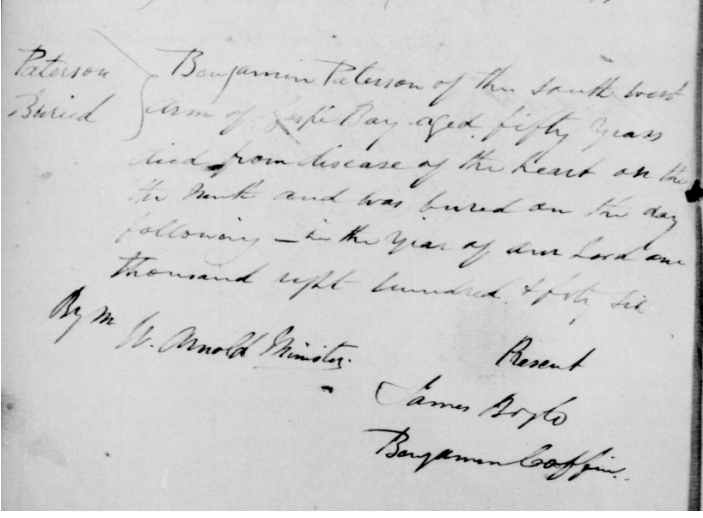


Thirteenth leaf
J. G. P.

Paterson
Baptized

Lucy, daughter of William Paterson of the
South West arm of Gaspé Bay (farmer) and of
Sarah Paterson his wife, born on the nineteenth
day of May in the Year of our Lord one thousand
seven hundred and ninety four, and publicly
Baptized on the Fifth July in the Year one
thousand eight hundred and twenty nine
By Mr.
William McSprouy

Burial certificate of Benjamin ²



Paterson } Benjamin Paterson of the South West
Buried } arm of Gaspé Bay aged fifty years
and from disease of the heart at the
High Church and was buried on the day
following - in the Year of our Lord one
thousand eight hundred & forty six
By Mr. W. Arnold Minister.
Present
James Doyle
Benjamin Coffin.

Research has led to some clues as to the origins of William. In 1786 a United Empire Loyalist name William Paterson arrived in New Carlisle. With him was his wife and two children: a son and a daughter; all unnamed. It was assumed that the William who moved to Gaspé was the son mentioned in the Loyalist rolls. ³ It shows he arrived with a wife and two children, a son 12 and a daughter 13.

A handwritten document with a grid. The top right corner has the number '3417'. The columns are labeled: 'Persons Signatures', 'No. Family', 'Professions', 'Townships', and 'N'. The first row contains the name 'Will^m Paterson' with '1' in the 'No. Family' column, 'Carpenter' in the 'Professions' column, and '22' in the 'N' column. The second row contains the name 'Martin Kelly' with '1' in the 'No. Family' column and '22' in the 'N' column.

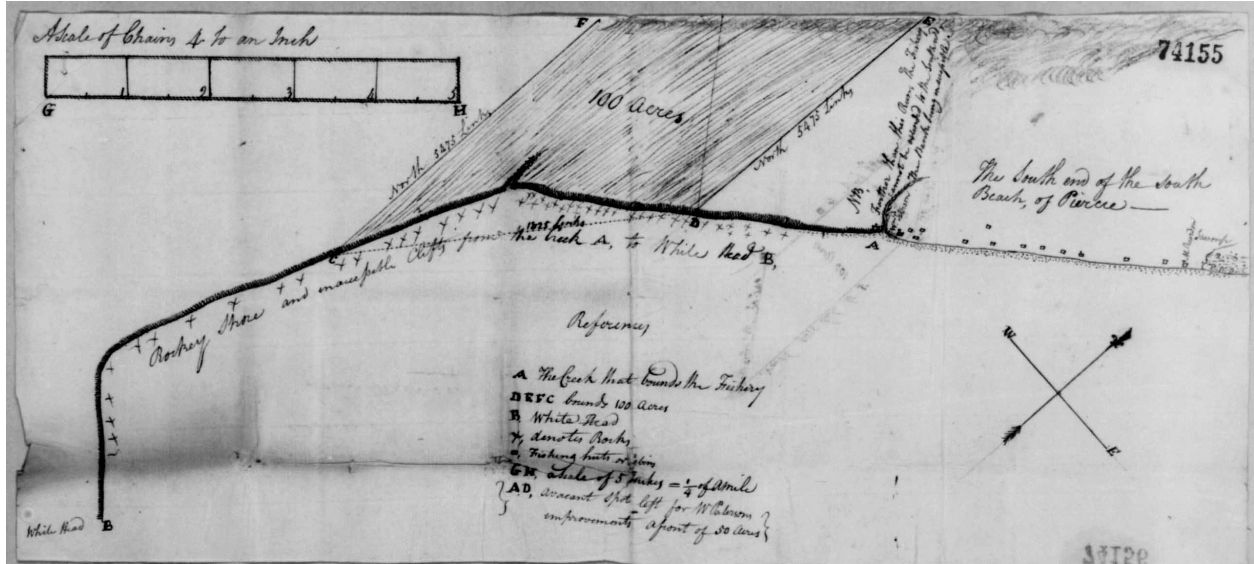
William's name also appears on the roll of the militia for Carlisle in 1789. ⁴

A handwritten document titled 'Alphabetical List of Hamilton Maxwell Company - 1789' and 'Major Commandant of the British Militia Carlisle 24 Mar 89'. It is a table with columns for 'Mens Names', 'Age', 'Arms', and 'Mens Names', 'Age', 'Arms'. The 'Arms' column has '520' written vertically. The entries are as follows:

| Mens Names | | Age | Arms | Mens Names | | Age | Arms |
|------------|------------|-----|------|------------|------------|-----|------|
| Jeremiah | Francis | 35 | 1 | John | Chiley | 34 | |
| Richard | Billingsly | 31 | | Joseph | Goodwillie | 37 | 1 |
| John | Stitt | 39 | 1 | Peter | Galla | 24 | |
| William | Patterson | 27 | 1 | William | Harlow | 31 | |
| | | | | John | Heblagar | 26 | |

Based on how he signed his name (Patterson) and the ages of his children in 1785, it is highly unlikely that this William or his son was the William who settled in Gaspé in the 1790s.

A second clue comes from a land claim in 1770 of Felix O'Hara for a lot in Percé. ⁵ On the map represented by the letters AD show a lot of vacant land reserved for a William Paterson. What is interesting is that this same lot is the one which John Paterson Jr. requested and received in 1790. Is it possible that there was a family connection? Perhaps to John Jr.'s father, John, who settled in Sunny Bank in 1764?

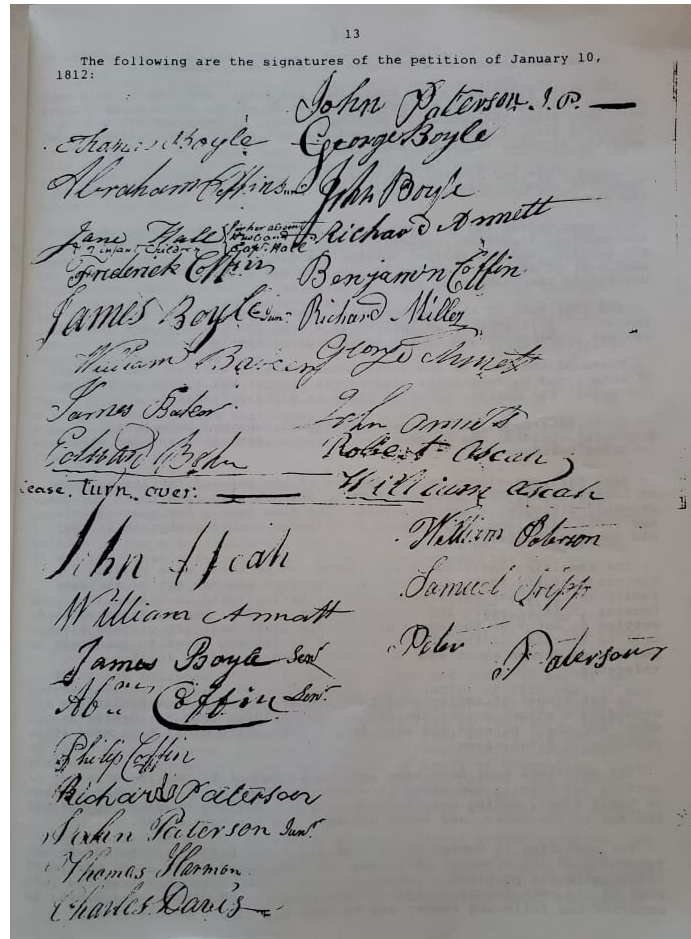


Another possibility comes from the Quebec registry of ships in 1787. A William Paterson was listed as owner and master of the schooner **“Industry”** built in Gaspé in 1786. ⁶ Was he a fisherman or a whaler who decided to settle in Gaspé Bay? On the census of Canada East of 1842, his son Benjamin lists his occupation as Farmer-Whaler, which would indicate some connection to a sea faring past.

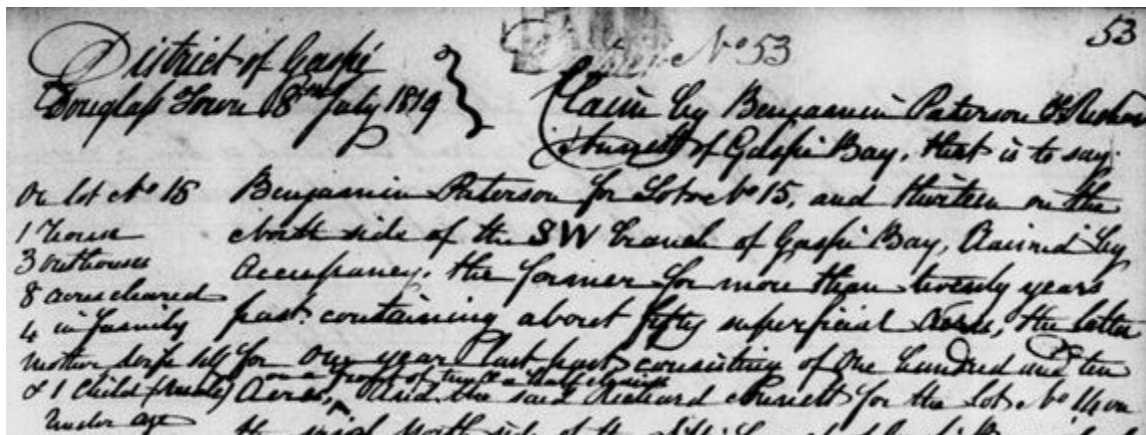
William’s name appears in the ledgers of the Janvrin Company in 1789 again indicating some connection with the fishing industry. ⁷

| D. William Paterson Contra | | C | |
|----------------------------|---|---|----|
| 1789 | To Balance brought from ledger of fishing | 5 | 10 |
| 1789 | By ... | 1 | 7 |
| 1789 | By ... | 2 | 4 |
| 1789 | To Balance brought from ... | 3 | 11 |
| | 18. Total 776 | | |

The last evidence we have of William is his signature on a petition from 1812 for a school in Wakeham. ⁸



After William's death in 1816 his son Benjamin inherited the house and property. Official title to the land would not be granted until 1819 when Benjamin appeared before the Gaspé Land Commission, claiming Lot #15 based on over 20 years occupancy. ⁹



Abraham, Benjamin's son, acquired the property in 1846 after the death of his father. In 1899 the one-hundred-year-old house was destroyed by fire and never rebuilt. Perhaps the most accurate description of the house comes from the 1919 writings of Margaret Grant MacWhirter.

“The remains of another stone house in Gaspé Bay South have an almost monumental appearance. This old stone house was, by the way, built by a Mr. Patterson, who used for the purpose lime obtained near to the property. There were no less than three fireplaces in it – two below and one upstairs. The foundation was made to last, being of stone three feet high, and three feet thick. This picturesque building was destroyed by fire in 1899, and to-day a poplar tree growing from the cellar extends five feet above the roof.”¹⁰

The following series of photos show the remains of the stone house in the early 20th century. They certainly show what would have been an impressive structure when built in the 1790s. The gentleman in the photo has not been identified. Both the eastern and western walls were more or less intact, and the poplar tree can be seen growing from the cellar.



The second photo seems to have been taken sometime later as parts of the western wall have collapsed. ¹¹

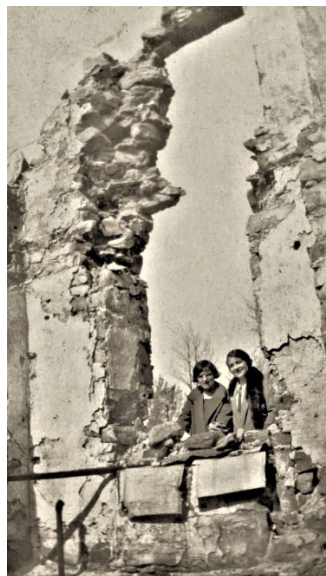


The next two photos show the state of the house later in the 20th century. The poplar tree growing from the interior has increased considerably in size. The land surrounding has not yet become overgrown. Both show what remained of the western wall.





Another photo (from the Morris Patterson Collection) shows two young ladies (unidentified) exploring the ruins. The top sill of one of the windows is still present. Judging by the dress of the girls and the state of the ruins, the photo was probably taken in the 1940s if not before.



In the early 1980s my grandfather, Melvin Patterson and I had the chance to inspect what remained of our ancestor's house. The eastern wall was still mostly standing. We can see how much the poplar tree has grown. However, the surrounding field has not been yet become dominated by forest cover and the house is clearly visible.



The last photo in this series displays the ruins from the western side.



During the summer of 2021 with the permission from the contemporary owner of the property my wife Linda and my parents Curzon and Elaine Patterson were able to spend some time exploring the ruins of the old stone house.

The following series of photos (from the Marty Patterson collection) were taken during this visit. They show how much the walls had suffered from the ravages of time and how overgrown the land surrounding the house had become. The house is all but hidden from view.

The first photo shows what remained of the eastern wall.



The second is taken from the interior and shows what remains of one of the fireplaces.



The author and his father, Curzon Patterson in front of the eastern wall.



What remains of the Northwest walls.



The southwest walls.



The last series of photos were taken in the fall of 2022 by the late Bill Miller, using a drone. Before his passing, he graciously gave me permission to use his photos, which clearly show the remains of the house absent the spring and summer foliage.







The house and property are no longer in the possession of the family. It is my firm belief that the Paterson Stone House should be officially recognized by the city of Gaspé, the province of Quebec and the government of Canada as one of historical significance. It is the oldest remaining example of stone construction in the Gaspé Bay area.

Notes:

¹ Drouin Collection Gaspé Anglican Church 1829

² Drouin Collection Gaspé Anglican Church 1846

³ LAC Instructions from Governor Haldimand to Nicholas Cox, Lieutenant Governor of Gaspé

⁴ BAnQ British Militia for Carlisle

⁵ LAC Lower Canada Land Papers RG 1 L3 Vol. 151

⁶ LAC Quebec City Registry of Shipping 1787-1965

⁷ LAC Janvrin Ledgers 1789

⁸ Philips, Dorothy History of the Schools of Gaspé Bay

⁹ LAC Lower Canada Land Papers RG 1 L3 Vol. 154

¹⁰ MacWhirter, Margaret Grant "Treasure Trove in Gaspé and the Baie de Chaleur" 1919

¹¹ Gaspé Under the Cross of Cartier 1934