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A Road Trip Guide to the History,
Legends and Attractions

Gaspé
the
Romantique
"Revisited"

Book Synopsis

Does the romantic Gaspé described in Olive Willett Smith's 1936 classic novel, "Gaspé the Romantique" still exist? Olive toured the Gaspé with her family during the summer of 1934, and two years later published her famous travel guide that captured her experiences, along with recounting for the reader, the history, legends, and myths of the Gaspé and its storied past.

The 'romantic' Gaspé she experienced that summer is an echo from the past reminding us of a Gaspé of a different age. The tales of the cod fishery that dominated the Gaspé economy were viewed and recounted from her direct and personal encounters and experiences, an industry still operating among the many outports reliant on its profitability. The long-isolated Gaspé that was in many respects its own jurisdiction, apart from the corridors of power in Ottawa and Quebec City, part of the fabric along Olive's journey. The people relied on their ingenuity for survival, where neighbours from vastly different worlds collided in this place of natural wonder and beauty, not really knowing one another, let alone the vastness of other goings on across North America. In these formative years, the "opening up" of Gaspé created new roadways and rail lines that had finally broken the splendid isolation of Gaspé. It was a land unique and different from the rest of Quebec, closer in fabric to the Maritimes or Europe. It was the Gaspé of legends and romance, with unique connections to the Mi'kmaq people, to France, to England, to Scotland, to Ireland, to the Channel Islands, to America before it became the United States, to our collective past, more diverse and unique than any other jurisdiction in the chunk of soil we now call Canada.

Eighty-five years after her "love letter" to the Gaspé was published, Walter Willett and family hit the road, retracing his ancestor's steps, following her route from 1934 as closely as possible. While retracing Olive's route along the gravel road Old #6 Highway, today the famous #132, the book captures a journey of discovery, to unravel the changes that eight decades have made to the Gaspé road trip experience, and the many ways the remarkable 'tour de la Gaspésie' is the same. For anyone planning the famous road trip, considering it again, or seeking Gaspé's authentic history and story, the author shares the modern Gaspé road trip experience while exploring the legends, myths, and history of Gaspé's colourful past. Empowering today's tourists with a travel guide that connects between past and present to reveal the essential Gaspé road trip spirit.

From Perce Rock, Bonaventure Island and The Forillon, to the beaches of Metis, Haldimand, Pabos and Carleton-Sur-Mer, and warm summer breezes of La Baie-des-Chaleurs, discover the infamous “tour de la Gaspésie” road trip and its irresistible ability to seduce the traveller, in this land of legends, where mountains meet sea, and the air is like champagne.

There are very few books available in English about the Gaspé and this would be a great resource for anyone who is interested in history, myths and legends of this peninsula, or planning a road trip tour for the first time.

The book will be available in e-book, soft or hard cover versions via Amazon.ca, and is 275 pages featuring 120 images and illustrations. To order a copy go to www.gasperoadtrip.com for more information.

Excerpt from the book Gaspé the Romantique ‘Revisited’

If there is a more spectacular overload on the senses in all of the Gaspé one would be hard-pressed to name it, as the sounds, smells and views of this oceanside bird paradise sanctuary on Bonaventure Island are truly beyond simple words to capture. For the eager tourist visiting Perce this is surely an unmissable experience. Setting the mood, one must appreciate that as the tour boat slowly pushes into that famous body of water between Perce Rock, Bonaventure Island and the mainland, you are crossing the waters certainly crossed by Vikings, pirates, buccaneers, explorers, adventurers. The beaches behind you once filled with brave cod fisherman who crossed the Atlantic’s perilous seas in tiny wooden ships to fish in this exact spot for well over 500 years. You are in the waters once traversed by Cartier, Champlain, Marquette, LaSalle, Bishop Laval, Talon, Frontenac, Phipps, the Kirke Brothers and General Wolfe. These are not myths but facts as you enjoy the views and imagine the ships and sailors who came before you.

Preface

*I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."*

Ozymandias, by Percy Bysshe Shelley



PERCE ROCK BY AUGUSTUS W BUHLER,

PUBLISHED IN *SKETCHES IN GASPE* BY JOHN MASON CLARKE, 1908