

BEAUSOLEIL

Narrated by

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Dedication

The following story is published to acknowledge the respect between the Acadian and the English cultures in Northern New Brunswick.

I was surprised to find this story in my Grandfather's records this year, and I can only speculate why he took a special interest in this true story in l'Acadie, from the perspective of an English Canadian brought up under the banner of the Union Jack.

On occasion he would visit me in Bathurst and always insisted on staying at the Carleton Hotel, as he enjoyed the home cooking provided in a friendly atmosphere.

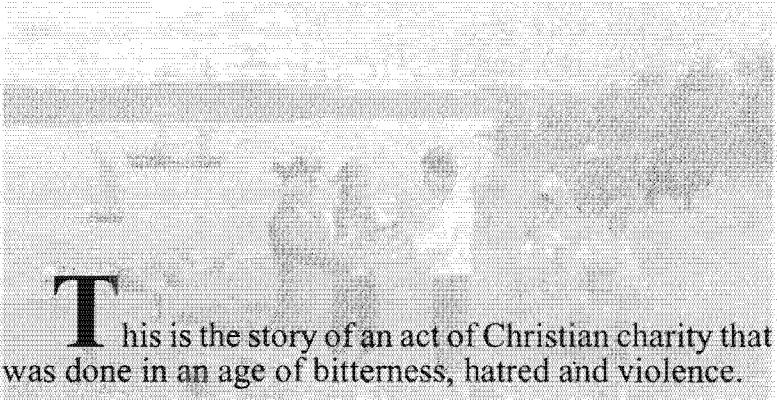
John D. Hazen lives in Bathurst and he wishes to dedicate this publication to the memory of his Grandfather "DK".



Christmas comes once a year
but our friendship is forever.

Noël se fête une fois par année
mais notre amitié est pour l'éternité

PASEG NEGWT NUELWI'GW NEGWTIPUNGEG
PASEG GINU APJI GITAPEGEWITENU



This is the story of an act of Christian charity that was done in an age of bitterness, hatred and violence.

The principals were an Englishman named Gamaliel Smethurst and a French-Acadian named Brossard or Beausoleil, an honoured name in Acadian history.

The date was November 19, 1761. The place "Merrimichi", now known as Neguac in Northumberland County, New Brunswick.

Brossard or Beausoleil had been a partizan in the French cause and had suffered in consequence. He was one of the Acadians who had been expelled from Grand Pré in 1755. He had made his way back from Carolina and settled on the North side of Miramichi Bay. Wolfe's victory on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 must have been a disappointment to him and he had learned, only about a week before he met Smethurst, that an English force had arrived at Nepisiguit (Bathurst, N. B.) and carried away his compatriots. He had good reason to hate the English.

Gamaliel Smethurst was a business man, who had fitted out a vessel of Marblehead, Mass. in 1761 and obtained a license from General Murray, Governor of Quebec, to trade with the French and Indians of the Bay of Chaleur and make an establishment there if he thought

proper. He was getting established at Nepisiguit (Bathurst, N. B.), had a cargo of dry fish, oil, etc., in the hold of his vessel and had entered into contracts with the inhabitants to deliver to him the next year, five thousand quintals of fish, four thousand weight of beaver and other commodities, when in October 1761, a small English force, under the command of Capt. Roderick MacKenzie arrived unexpectedly by sea with orders to deport the Acadians. About one hundred and eighty of them were hearded on board the English ships and their fishing boats were confiscated.

Smethurst decided to sail with the English ships. The vessels left Nepisiguit on the evening of Thursday, October 29, 1761, but Smethurst's brig ran on a sand bar.

The next morning Smethurst went ashore to look for a lighter to unload his vessel, and while he was on the beach, he saw his brig free herself from the bar and sail away. He learned later that the reason his Captain abandoned him was because he was terrified of an attack by the Indians.

Smethurst says in his diary, he was left in a "very disagreeable situation". This would appear to be an understatement in view of the fact there were unfriendly French Acadians and hostile Indians in the vicinity, that it was late in the autumn, and that Fort Cumberland, the nearest English out post on the Isthmus of Chignecto was over two hundred miles away. This is how Smethurst tells the story:

“Friday, October 30th,

In the morning I went ashore in the boat – took my papers and trunk along with me – went to find a lighter in order to unload the vessel so much as to lighten her to float – found one – staid to keep her afloat when the tide should come in – sent the man on board for fear they should be wanted. Towards noon, it began to blow fresh at North West. About two o’clock saw the brig was got off, but no boat came for me; she tacked all the afternoon, as if to get to windward and come to, but with evening she bore away. For what reason they did not come ashore for me, cannot account – suppose some accident happened. I was left in a very disagreeable situation. What few French staid behind, were on the other side of the bay and are irritated to the last degree against the English for the step they have taken to remove their friends from the habitations at this season of the year, and the savages are no friends at all to the English. I was on the South side of the harbour. There came a canoe with Indians in the evening – looked about them and walked off. I durst not appear not knowing what disposition they were in, I staid all night in one of the hovels – durst not make a fire for fear of discovery”.

Smethurst kept out of sight for a day or two. He then got to Caraquet about thirty-five miles distant in a skiff that had come into the harbour from Gaspé with three Frenchmen on board who looked like deserters.

At Caraquet, two Indians who had obtained the consent of their tribe, agreed to take him by canoe to Fort Cumberland for 140 livres.

They set out on November 6, three days later, they were at the Indian Village of "Pookmoosh" where Smethurst had to face a suspicious Indian chief and his council. He succeeded in satisfying them that he had nothing to do with the activities of Captain MacKenzie. Had he failed to do so they would have cut him to pieces.

He and his guides made about thirty miles, the day they left Pookmoosh and camped on a cold beach. That night there was a heavy fall of snow, which was followed by a violent storm. The storm raged for a week. Smethurst and his guides were wet to the skin. They ran out of food as all game was driven away by the storm, but managed to kill two or three sea gulls, which they boiled and ate without sauce but with good appetites. Their situation got so bad that they left the beach and made their way into the woods and after a hard tramp of six miles, forcing their way through under-brush and wading streams that were up to their waists reached a deserted Indian encampment. There they found some food and were able to get dried out but the Indians had become discouraged and said they would go no further. Smethurst persuaded them to take him as far as "Merrimichi" (Neguac) by promising them the full amount he had agreed to pay them for taking him to Fort Cumberland. "Merrimichi" was about thirty miles away and Smethurst had hopes of learning the whereabouts of the English ships at this settlement.

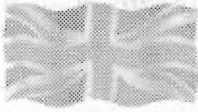
When he reached it, he had to be helped from the canoe and assisted to a French hut after sitting up to his waist in water for six hours.

As he lay on the floor of the hut before the fire that night, he must have felt discouraged, although he does not say so in his diary, for he had travelled only a hundred miles in two weeks, he had experienced hardship and danger, his guides had refused to go further, he had not found his ship, the weather was cold and stormy and he was over a hundred miles from his destination.

It was then that Brossard or Beausoleil who had received such rough treatment from the English appeared on the scene and returned good for evil. Let Smethurst tell the story:

“Thursday, November 19th,

About midnight, a young man came to me from his father, with offerings of service; his name, is Brusar, but they generally called him Beausoleil; he brought me a bottle of rum and some flour – was extremely kind to me. In the morning, the old man came himself – brought me pork and other necessaries. He is the most considerable person here – had been a great partisan – was one of the French neutrals who were removed to Carolina – made his escape by land to Mississippi and travelled 1400 leagues to recover his native country. These people have been great enemies to the



English; however, I shall never forget the great obligations I owe to Brusar, for his great kindness to me.”

With Brossard’s assistance he was able to get two French Acadians to man his canoe. After sixteen days of strenuous travel, they reached Fort Cumberland. It took Smethurst about six weeks to make his way from Nepisiguit to Fort Cumberland, a journey that can be made today by automobile in less than six hours.

Smethurst had his diary published in London in 1774, under the title: “A Narrative of an Extraordinary Escape out of the Hands of the Indians in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.” It is a true story of hardship and adventure written without embellishment and has been described as a precious classic of New Brunswick literature. The highlight of the story is the great kindness extended by a French Acadian who had suffered much to an Englishman in distress, which is an exemplification of that great precept:

“Whatsoever ye would that men would do unto you do ye even so unto them”.

About the Author

My Grandfather "D.K." (1885-1974) was born in Saint John, N. B. to Sir Douglas Hazen (former Premier of New Brunswick) and Lady Ada Tibbitts Hazen. He married Mollie Creaghan of the Miramichi and they had five children. His only brother James Murray Hazen was killed in France during the Great War. DK served in France, also enlisted and volunteered to do military service in Murmansk, Russia, where troops were sent to assist the White Russians against the Bolshevik revolutionaries. With the western advance of the Red Russian army the Allied troops were ordered to leave Murmansk, and DK knew that he was abandoning his Russian comrades to a certain death by massacre. It was thought by some members of his family that he was never able to come to terms with, not only that atrocity of the slaughter of defenseless victims, but of the more serious human crime, of abandoning loyal friends and comrades to a certain death.

After the war he returned to Saint John to practice law and eventually entered Federal politics as a Member of Parliament. He remained a solitary and private person, enjoying a daily swim, the outdoors and, always maintained his physical fitness and a keen interest in literature. He lived at the Saint John YMCA during the last 20 years of his life near his friends and his health club with fading eyesight.