

A STRANGE INTERLUDE IN BORDER HISTORY

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I HAVE before me a small old-fashioned gold brooch, embellished with garnets and seed pearls. It is a link with an older time when war shadows were also heavy above us, and British ships of war thronged Halifax harbor and patrolled the coasts of North America. This quaint little ornament—a highly prized heirloom—belongs to an American friend to whose great-grandmother it was given by the wife of an English officer who lived at Eastport, Maine, during its occupation by British forces in the Anglo-American War of 1812 and for three and a half years after the cessation of hostilities.

This occupation, from July 11, 1814, to June 30, 1818, furnishes a striking contrast in behaviour to that adopted by the Nazis against civilian populations which have come under their military control.

During the early months of 1814 the war seemed to be approaching a close, even though fighting was heavy in Upper Canada and the British were blockading the coast from Passamaquoddy Bay to the Mississippi mouth. Eastport on Moose Island in Passamaquoddy Bay, which for some years after the Revolutionary War had been little more than a fishing village, had come into a somewhat dubious prominence through the extensive and exciting trade in contraband that drew many shrewd and hard-bitten Yankee traders down to what was known as "the lines". In spite of the American and British raiders who haunted adjacent waters, the now flourishing but tiny town of Eastport maintained communication with Saint John and Halifax. Business was business even if there was a war on, and patriotic fervor could often run counter between the Maritimes and New England. Besides, no one in the Passamaquoddy region had suffered any real calamity. Indeed, what was virtually a truce had been in force locally since the beginning of hostilities. True, neighboring St. Andrews had built three blockhouses, and Eastport its Fort Sullivan, and both were garrison towns, but at joint meetings of the citizens it was agreed to avoid bloodshed and hard feeling if possible, and this compact had been faithfully kept. In spite of some militia, no troublesome questions of border regulations dis-

turbed the inhabitants on either side of the boundary of the St. Croix River and Passamaquoddy Bay, and as for passports and visas, no one had ever heard of them.

Early in June 1814 a traveller from Saint John put into Eastport on his way to Boston, and brought the report that a British frigate had arrived in Halifax with news of an armistice to be followed by an early peace. Continuing on to Boston, he passed on this optimistic intelligence to the newspapers which hastened to publish it. *Via* this, the rumour presently reappeared in Eastport clothed with all the authority of the press, and everywhere gained credence.

It was therefore no source of alarm in Eastport when on the afternoon of July 11th a large fleet was observed coming up the Eastern passage into Passamaquoddy Bay which led straight to the town. As might be expected, such a sight brought out a crowd that perched on the rocky hillsides behind the waterfront, and indulged in speculation as to where the big ships with their billowing sails were bound. The natural supposition was St. Andrews, ten miles up the Bay. Probably the war was over, and a fleet of merchant-men from Halifax was bringing a supply of much needed goods. It was to be hoped so.

But an unpleasant surprise was in store. As the ships drew rapidly nearer, it was seen that they were no merchant-men, but a British battle-fleet led by a man-o-war of 74 guns. Even then the onlookers could not believe that their town was menaced. The general opinion was that the fleet would pass between the rocky shores of Moose Island and the equally rocky ones of Deer Island in New Brunswick, and go on to St. Andrews. After all, why not? St. Andrews was a naval station!

Then came the shock. Suddenly the leading ship, wearing a white flag, hove to off the town, and a boat was sent ashore. Out leaped a young man in uniform, with a flag, who started briskly up the hill towards little Fort Sullivan overlooking the harbor.

Thereupon, one of the spectators, Solomon Rice a prominent resident, hurried after this messenger. It is to Rice that we owe the account of what took place then and later.

He was right on the heels of the British officer when he entered the fort, and was conducted to the quarters of the commanding officer, Major Putnam. Pushing into the room with that Yankee disregard of military formalities that the British thought so queer, Rice heard the smartly turned out officer announce himself as Lieutenant Oates of the staff of Sir John Cope Sherbrooke, bearing a written summons for the surrender

of Fort Sullivan and Moose Island. Refusing Major Putnam's invitation to be seated, the officer passed the document and his watch to the commandant, adding that he had been instructed to give him five minutes in which to make his decision. If this were unfavorable, the fort would be subjected to fire. Here Rice interjected his opinion that five minutes was too short a time to consider so important a matter, an opinion that was received in contemptuous silence by Lieutenant Oates.

By that time other agitated Eastporters had followed Rice, and were crowding into the room. Upon hearing Major Putnam declare that he would not give up the fort, but would himself open fire, there were angry expostulations. What, destroy the town? That was all such action could mean! The fort's batteries were no match for so formidable an opponent! Major Putnam appealed to his officers, but when he found them divided in opinion, he threw away his sword with a furious gesture and buried his head in his arms.

Outside, the now thoroughly frightened inhabitants saw the ships taking up positions to begin attack. Directly below the fort was the ship of the line with open ports, guns trained and matches lighted. They watched Lieutenant Oates run down to his boat bareheaded with cap in hand, without knowing that the signal to fire was to be given if he reached his ship with head uncovered. He was half way across the water when they saw him hastily clap on his cap, and could not then know that by that gesture they were spared a tornado of shot and shell. Major Putnam had yielded at the last moment, the colors had been struck, and Eastport remained intact.

In less than an hour the troops had landed, and when darkness fell on the warm July evening the streets of the little frontier town were gay with scarlet and naval blue, and the wharves piled high with cannon and armaments. Everything was done with such speed and precision that the gaping civilians realized that the last least detail had been carefully planned. Before entering the Eastern passage, a sixteen-gun brig had been detached from the fleet and had come into Passamaquoddy Bay by the Western passage—or Lubec Narrows—and preceded around Moose Island to the ferry at its rear where communication with the mainland was effected. Thus those who tried to flee found the way barred. Without a single exception every islander was a prisoner, and so speedily that all they could do, was wonder at the quiet efficiency of the British Navy.

Tense with consternation, Eastporters beheld the garrison from Fort Sullivan marched down to the beach and rowed

swiftly to the sixty-four gun-ship which had dropped anchor under Campobello Island directly opposite. It was whispered that these prisoners were to be sent to Halifax, but that Major Putnam and his officers would be released on parole and return to their homes at distant New England points.

With pomp and ceremony, the naval commander presently came ashore from the *Ramilies*. He was tall and rather corpulent, with fair hair thinning above a full and florid face. The people noted his fine appearance and mild and dignified manner. Soon a note of relief was evident amid the undertones of fear. This officer was known by repute to all. For he was none other than Captain Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, who had been Lord Nelson's friend.

No account of the last moments of England's great and gentle hero ever lacks the name of Hardy, captain of the *Victory*. To him had been addressed Nelson's last words at Trafalgar. It was unthinkable that harshness would be permitted under his command. Hardy had been near him when Nelson, alone in his cabin, had penned his last prayer:

May the great God, whom I worship, grant to my country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory; and may no misconduct in anyone tarnish it; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature of the British fleet.

Though Eastport was occupied by the enemy, its people slept that night. Was not that enemy under Hardy's command!

Within three days after the capitulation, the inhabitants were called upon to subscribe to its terms, which included the oath of allegiance. Unless this was taken, they were to be deported from the island in seven days, and the property of non-residents and absentees was to be disposed of as the government of the Prince Regent should see fit. The municipal laws established by the American government for the peace and tranquillity of the occupied region were left in force, and the inhabitants were to be protected in their private rights, employments and interests.

Sir Thomas Hardy at once received several of the citizens who called to pay their respects. To a deputation of the agitated residents who endeavored to persuade him to modify the form of oath, he replied that this formed part of his instructions and he was compelled to administer it without alteration. He added in his kindly manner that he could say this, that they might regard it rather as an oath of neutrality than as one of perpetual allegiance. He said, too, that this war was an unnatural con-

test, and to carry out his orders was painful to him, but one thing was sure, "England did not begin it".

Sir Thomas remained in Eastport until July 29th, taking up his quarters in the largest and finest house in the town, which happened to be empty. Here he entertained visitors from the New Brunswick side of the boundary as well as from Eastport. He also gave several dinners and balls on board the *Ramilies* to the gentry of the region.

In spite of the natural feelings of the people of Moose Island, who were most unwilling subjects of the Prince Regent, they sincerely regretted Sir Thomas's departure. An address was presented to him, and to Lieut-Colonel Pilkington, in command of the troops, expressing gratitude for the manner in which the occupation had been carried out.

A garrison of eight hundred was left when the fleet left. Fort Sullivan had been strengthened by new defences and batteries. Barracks were erected for the soldiers. One of the first arrangements was for a school for the soldiers' children, for many of the men had their families with them. An officers' mess was set up in the leading tavern, where its proprietor flourished to such an extent that he presently retired, saying that he had "made enough money". Church of England public services were held by the army chaplain, a jolly parson who dearly loved theatricals and to dance. An old schoolhouse was rebuilt and enlarged for a theatre, with stage, boxes, sloping floors and balconies complete. The British officers were everywhere known as accomplished actors, for they were accustomed to break the tedium of garrison life by this means. The proceeds from the performances were for the relief of the poor of Eastport.

Horse racing was another favorite amusement. Fine army mounts, groomed to perfection, were pitted against Yankee "scrubs". Large sums changed hands, for the "scrubs" often proved the speedier. Race day was a town holiday.

Justice was prompt, and the rights and property of civilians were scrupulously observed. All complaints were heard and judged by the commandant, and his decision was final. Although there were a number of different commandants before Eastport was given up, they all adhered to the rule of not allowing the Governor of New Brunswick and his Council a voice in the administration of justice, which tickled Eastport immensely.

Thus for four years Yankee Eastport was to all intents and purposes an English garrison town. The officers brought their families with their governesses and servants, the irfine

furniture and silver plate, and lived in a style altogether different from that of the normal New England frontier. Most of the officers were of irreproachable manners and habits, and their wives were English gentlewomen. They spent money freely, and, what was for long remembered of them with particular favor, paid their debts in the grand manner without haggling or dispute.

The British of all ranks fraternized with the Eastport people, and while the patriotic—which meant practically all of them—chafed under foreign domination, there was no escaping the fact that the town was gay, and in a considerable measure prosperous, during its captivity.

But there was one curious feature which irked Eastport exceedingly. Claimed by both Britain and the United States, the residents of Moose Island were partially disowned by both. When the subject of admitting them to full status as British subjects was discussed in the cabinet council of New Brunswick, this status was denied them, and the decision printed and then posted in Eastport.

Now the last thing that Eastport desired was to have any part in New Brunswick, perish the thought! But to be publicly rejected? Ah, that was another matter!

On the other hand, when their senator appeared to take his seat in the Massachusetts Senate—for Maine was then a part of the Commonwealth—it was contended that as he represented a conquered district, he had no business there. The thrifty State did not forget, however, to levy the State taxes as usual, and later actually sued to recover them. It was all very painful.

Children born on Moose Island during this period were by birth British subjects as well as American citizens. This is a useful heritage for those born on such a border, and it may be added, particularly so to-day.

There came the time when all disputes over the boundary line were finally settled, and the formal restitution of Moose Island to the United States took place on the morning of June 30th, 1818.

On taking leave of the commandant, Captain Gibbon, the people of Eastport presented him with the following address:

Eastport, 27th June, 1818.

To Captain R. Gibbon, Commandant, &c. &c.

Sir: The time being near at hand when this Island will revert to the United States and our separation being about to take place, we the undersigned citizens of Eastport, beg leave

to express to you our high respect and esteem for the disposition you have at all times evinced during your command, to conserve the interests of the inhabitants; to unite moderation with firmness; and prudence with decision.

We congratulate you and ourselves, that the circumstances under which we are about to separate are so widely different from those which brought us together. The happy return of peace between the two countries to which we are respectively attached must ever be a subject of congratulation to the people of both nations.

The causes of war having passed away, we sincerely hope the passions and resentments of the contest have passed away with them; and it is with pleasure we reflect that it is far from being the character of the enlightened people of either country to suffer the bitterness of animosity to mingle with their joy; but rather to consider each other "enemies, in War—in Peace, friends".

We should do injustice to our own feelings, were we to be unmindful of the tribute of respect so justly due to yourself and other officers who have presided over us; and who, in the discharge of their official duties, have had the magnanimity and uprightness to refrain from all oppression, and to overcome the temptation "to feel power and forget right".

To the other officers of the garrison, whose habits have been but little detached from the community, and who in the character of the soldier have not lost the feeling of the citizen, we would present our best and most sincere wishes for their future welfare and prosperity.

Wishing you health and happiness, we have the honor to be, Sir, with great respect,

Your most obedient servants.

"Signed by forty-three of the respectable resident inhabitants, in the name of the whole."

How nobly has that last prayer of Nelson's been carried out, both in his day and on into the present:

And may humanity after victory be the predominant feature of the British fleet.

NOTE—Official Report of the commander of the British Forces. Transmitted by Sir J. C. Sherbrooke, Downing Street, August 10.

Moose Island, Passamaquoddy Bay, July 12th.

Sir:—Having sailed from Halifax on the 5th inst., accompanied by Lieut. Col. Nicholls of the Royal Engineers, and a detachment of the Royal Artillery under the command of Capt. Dunn, I have the honour to acquaint your Excellency, that we arrived at Shelburne, the place of rendezvous, on the evening of

the 7th inst., where I found Capt. Sir Thomas Hardy, in His Majesty's ship *Ramiliés*, with two transports, having on board the 102 reg. under the command of Lieut. Col. Herries which had arrived the day before. I did not fail to lay before Sir Thomas Hardy my instructions, and to consult with him the best means of carrying them into execution. As we concurred in opinion, that the success of the enterprise with which we were entrusted would very materially depend upon our reaching the point of attack previous to the enemy being apprised of our intentions, that officer with his accustomed alacrity and decision directed the ships of war and transports to get under weigh early on the following morning; and we yesterday about 3 o'clock p.m. anchored near to the town of Eastport. On our approach to this island, Lieut. Oates, (your Excellency's aide-de-camp, whom you had permitted to accompany me on this service) was detached in a boat bearing a flag of truce, with a summons (which is transmitted) addressed to the officer commanding, requiring that Moose Island should be surrendered to his Britannic Majesty. This proposal was not accepted; in consequence of which the troops were already in the boats pulled off under the superintendance of Capt. Stehhouse of the *Royal Mary*, whose arrangements were so judicious as to insure a successful issue; but previous to reaching the shore, the colors of the enemy on Fort Sullivan were hauled down. On our landing the capitulation was agreed to, of which the copy is enclosed. We found in the Fort a detachment of the 40th reg. of American infantry consisting of six officers, and about eighty men, under the command of Major Putnam, who surrendered themselves prisoners of war. This Fort is situated on an eminence commanding the entrance to the anchorage; and within it is a block house, and also four 10 pounders, on 18 pound carronade, and four field pieces. The extent of the island is about four miles in length and two in breadth, and in a great state of cultivation. The militia amount to about 250 and the population is calculated at 1500. We have also occupied Allen's and Frederick Islands, so that in this Bay the whole of the islands are now subject to the British flag. It is very satisfactory to me to add that this service has been effected without any loss or casualty among the troops employed in it. To Capt. Sir Thomas Hardy I consider myself under the greatest obligations; having experienced every possible cooperation, with an offer to disembark from his squadron any proportion of seamen and marines which I considered necessary. I beg to acknowledge my thanks to you in allowing your aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Oates, to accompany me upon this service. He has been of great assistance to me, and will have the honour of delivering this despatch. He has also in his possession the colours and standard found in Fort Sullivan, I have &c.

(Signed) A. PILKINGTON,

Lieut-Col. Deputy Adj. Gen.