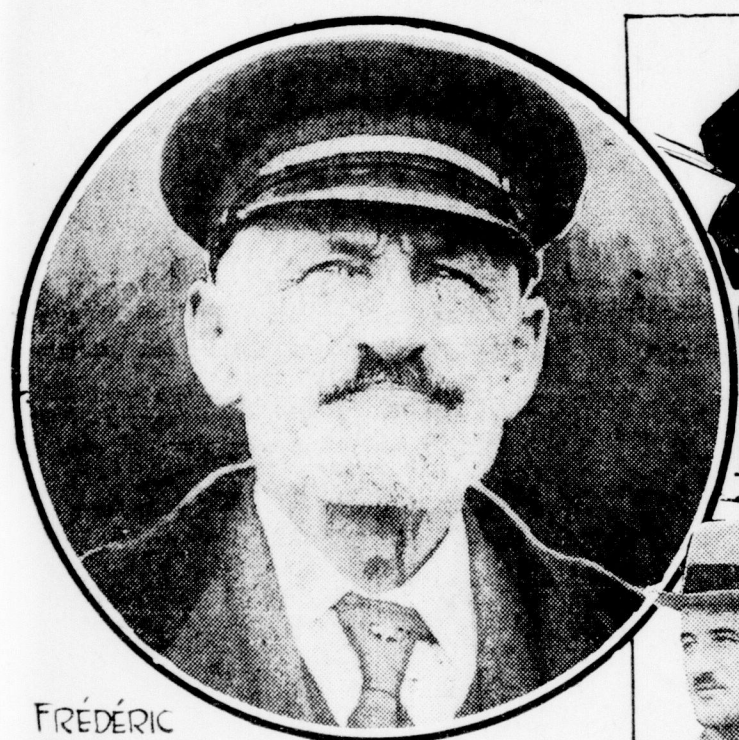


# POLISHED YOUNG PILOTS OF ST. LAWRENCE DO DUTY IN SPATS! OLD SALTS GONE, GRAND OLD TRADITIONS OF RIVER REMAIN



FREDÉRIC BOUFFARD  
FORTY YEARS A PILOT, ONE OF THE OLDER MEN

Men Who Take All Ships Up and Down Famous, Dangerous Watercourse Look Like Landsmen, Not Sailors—But You Never Hear of Them Losing a Vessel.

By F. G. GRIFFIN

THE first pilot I watched climb on board an incoming tramp at Father Point was a young man in his twenties, wearing a smart grey fedora, a Fashion-Fit overcoat and spats. Spats! Shade of the Ancient Mariner.

It was my first trip out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence on the pilot boat Jalobert, and I was watching carefully the routine of putting the pilot on board the Quebec-bound freighter. Yet, as the two boats touched, a young fellow was half-way up the rope ladder before I noticed him fully, dressed as aforesaid. "Who's that chap going on board?" I asked the doctor standing nearby.

"That's the pilot," he answered, as he, too, grasped the rope ladder to swing himself aloft. Right there, with the spats, all one's preconceptions about the pilots of the St. Lawrence went wandering. With a composite picture in the back of one's mind of the sea and ships from the pages of Conrad, Melville, Dana and Kingston, not to mention W. W. Jacobs, one went to Father Point expecting to find the old salt personified, ruddy, bluff, sturdy, weatherbeaten, bearded possibly, wearing a blue reefer and a peaked cap, a more or less traditional figure of the sea. Instead, young men wearing spats, not one, but several of them, dapper, trim, well-dressed young fellows who might have been bank clerks if one had seen them on St. James street, Montreal.

There seemed something anomalous about one of these slick young landlubbers, for so they seemed, climbing to the bridge of a big ship and taking her over from a stern-faced captain in blue uniform and gold braid while she threaded her intricate way up the river channels. Why had one come down with the expectation of finding these pilots elderly and salt-encrusted? After all, on the upper lakes one had found the majority of the captains and mates young men. One was to find, too, that many of the ships that passed Father Point had youthful skippers and first officers. To-day youth rules the sea and the age of the old salt has passed. Very quickly, within a generation, at least at Father Point. One of the pilots, not yet middle-aged, to whom I commented on the youth and fashionable smartness of the younger pilots, smiled as he said: "It was different when I was an apprentice. I remember when I came down wearing a collar and tie, some of the older men said, for my father had been a pilot himself: 'If your father saw you dressed up like this he would be ashamed of you.'"

## \$4,500 For Season

THE evening of my arrival at Father Point I watched half a dozen young pilots playing baseball with a group of local boys, shouting, running, laughing, rooting. That completed the disillusion. These were not of the sea but of the city sandlot. So that, later, one was no longer astonished to see some of them smoking their cigarettes through long and elegant holders instead of black sailor's twist in a short cutty pipe.

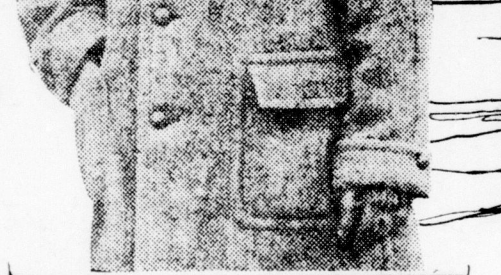
Of the fifty pilots on the stretch of the St. Lawrence between Father Point and Quebec, ten are over fifty and ten are over forty. The oldest of the remaining thirty is thirty-six years of age; ten of them are in their twenties, the youngest of all being twenty-three.

Some few of the old men are left and some of the older men lack the landsman elegance of the younger pilots, but they have a farmer rather than a sailor look, as befits men whose roots are deep in the soil of the Isle of Orleans and of the farms and villages on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. None of them wore uniform or distinctive sea garb, with the exception of one peaked cap. They looked no different from the men who crowded and gossiped in the local trains.

The young pilots one found exceedingly courteous in this province where the people are always courteous if a little aloof with Ontario outlanders; but they seemed a little cocky, a trifle upstage, with a very proper sense of their



THERE SEEMED SOMETHING ANOMALOUS ABOUT ONE OF THESE SLICK YOUNG LANDLUBBERS, FOR SO THEY SEEMED, TAKING A BIG SHIP OVER FROM HER STERN-FACED CAPTAIN



HIS SON ÉDOUARD BOUFFARD  
TYPICAL OF THE YOUNGER PILOTS

own dignity. Not without reason. They are a class apart, few, select, skilled as men of an ancient guild. They belong to a great brotherhood of river men. They have a profession that is honorable and important and that requires long years of preparation and study. They are men of importance. The youngest of them is qualified to step on board the biggest of ships, climb to the bridge and take charge of her navigation in the river. They earn big money. Last year every pilot on the run received for the season's work the sum, in round figures, of \$4,500. One can easily imagine them being little social gods in the villages from which they come, for Quebec has not the industrial, business and professional opportunities for its young men that Ontario has. Youth in the main must find its opportunities in the woods and farms and rivers.

On one occasion, in an argument, an angry man said to one of these young pilots by way of crushing retort: "You look as if you ought to be behind a counter selling lingerie to women." On another occasion one of them had just brought down the river a big grain boat. He was taken off at Father Point by the motor launch, being somewhat splashed in the process by the waves that broke over the buoyant open boat. He thought that the Jalobert might very well have come out for him, which would have saved him from a wetting. He said so. "Listen," exclaimed the man to whom he groused, "Before you became a pilot you were perfectly content to ride in an open cutter behind a horse to church."

## Devoted, Skillful Men

BOTH quotations, used without rancor, admirably describe the appearance and background of some of the young pilots. But, make no mistake about it, they know their job. The record of the river proves it. When do you remember reading of an accident, a grounding or collision, the loss of a ship, on the St. Lawrence? They are superb navigators, trained, intelligent. One has only to look at a chart of the river to become at once seized of its difficulties and dangers. "Eddy currents with confused and heavy seas in easterly gales," "Rocky patches," "Very heavy ripples on change of tide," "Flood stream very weak with variable currents."

Every trip up and down the river, they say, is different. Never twice are the same conditions found in the stream. Everywhere lurk danger and hidden treachery. A wrong command to the wheelsman may mean piling on a hidden shoal. A buoy may be out of place. Yet, in night-time as in daytime, in fog, rain, storm and snow, these pilots bring their ships up and down this great inland tradeway, passing other vessels, gauging the effect of wind, avoiding the dangers of changed currents, tide eddies, rocks and shoals, with a virtual absence of mishaps as compared to those which occur among cars on the clearly defined Hamilton highway.

It is thirteen years since a pilot lost his life and his ship on the lower river. It was in a November storm on a sailing ship. She was last sighted at Bic Island, which is less than a score of miles from Father Point. The pilot had almost brought her to the end of his tour. By next morning she was found sunk away up the river at the mouth of the Saguenay with only a piece of her stern showing above water. She had been swept uncontrollably up the river in an easterly blizzard, which had raged all night. There were no survivors.

They are devoted, these men. In good weather a passenger ship will reach Quebec from Father Point in twelve hours, and the bigger freighters in from eighteen to twenty. But the pilots are sometimes 25, 30, 35, even 40 hours or more on the bridge on a very slow ship or in extremely bad weather, eating their meals there, never relaxing for a moment from the strain of navigating the vessel under their care. Sometimes, during a temporary shortage of pilots at Father Point, a man has stepped off an outbound ship only to be put on board an in-

SOMETIMES TWO OR THREE OF THEM WOULD BEAT UP ALONGSIDE THE SAME SHIP BIDDING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF EARNING THE FEW DOLLARS WHICH WOULD BE THEIRS FOR THE PILOTAGE

bound without chance of rest, without stepping ashore.

## When Pilots were "Pirates"

BEATING UP the river in a sailing ship, the trip from Father Point to Quebec frequently took a week's pilotage. But the pilot would not be all the time on duty. Fallen wind and change of tides would mean anchorage and rest. When the ebb tide flowed he slept, starting on his way again with the flood. That was why in the days of sailing ships there were very many more pilots than in these fast days of steam when a pilot slips up the river with a liner almost between darkness and dawn.

But pilotage in the days of sailing ships was another story, now largely lost. Those were the days when the pilots were sufficiently of the old salt type to satisfy the most exacting taste. They are no longer a memory, scarcely a tradition even; they are quickly growing blurred outlines in the mists of the intervening years that brought steam and wireless and the corporation of pilots, mists deeper than the fogs which blot out the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It was only in general terms that one could find out anything about their ways and deeds. The next generation of river pilots will have forgotten altogether these hardy adventurers in whose trail they follow just as the urban dweller in Ontario never thinks of the pioneers of a few brief years ago who blazed trails, cleared land and endured hardship to make his cities possible. Thus is one richness after another that went into the making of the modern dominion as we twentieth-century folk know it gradually being lost. It is a pity that the stories of such men as these are not caught and held before they are lost beyond recall.

One must go back seventy years, away before Confederation, to find these early pilots who ranged the gulf as free-booting adventurers seeking ships to board. Not pilots so much as pirates, somebody said not without truth. In those days when there was neither cable nor wireless no one knew what ships were expected. So the pilots of the St. Lawrence used to put out in small twenty-foot boats with a tiny cabin amidships and sail away down to the mouth of the gulf in the search of incoming ships.

The pilots were really farmers and fishermen living along the shore. Pilotage was a sideline for acquiring a few dollars in ready cash. The pilot, carrying his gun usually so that the latter might bring his boat home, would put out and sail down the gulf. He would carry some cold potatoes and dried fish with him for food. Perhaps he would hug the shoreline part of the way, drawing in and landing in bad weather, or camping at night. Usually he had a box of sand on board on which he would light a fire to cook his meagre meals if he cruised far from the shore. Often he would go without food for long stretches at a time. A missed meal was a little thing in the lives of those far-ranging men.

It was a heart-breaking job. Often they would not sight a ship for days. Frequently, after approaching a ship, their offer of pilotage was turned down. Sometimes the spectacle was seen of two or three of them beating up alongside the same ship, bidding against one another for the privilege of earning the few dollars which would be theirs for the pilotage.

## The Pilots' Brotherhood

WHEN there was an easterly wind they fought their way against it down the gulf for the easterly winds brought the sailing ships. In the spring, when the ice went out, was their harvest time. It was not unusual to find fifty or a hundred ships down at the mouth of the gulf waiting for a clear river. But that was the

time of bad weather and many pilots lost their lives in the little boats in the fogs, squalls and gales that came sweeping in from the Atlantic. In one storm tradition says seventeen of them were lost and there was mourning in many a little home along the shore from the Isle of Orleans to away down below Bic. Those were the days of anxious hearts along the shore in the spring and fall storms when men were out in small schooners braving the open gulf. For there were many pilots and many waiting wives and mothers.

It was in 1860, shortly after a number of pilots had been lost, that a bill was passed in the legislature of Lower Canada incorporating the pilots and banding them into a brotherhood of the river for mutual benefit and protection. The corporation carried on, master of itself and the river, until the early days of the present century, maintaining several schooners at Bic, above Father Point, by which members were transported to ships, although the pilots were often carried out in a rowing boat. It was a close corporation, this river fraternity. A pilot had the right to nominate apprentices, and he nominated his own sons, or the sons of other pilots. An outsider was practically barred from entry. Pilotage was virtually the monopoly of a number of families.

An old man, Lavoie, an ancient sailor now living at Father Point, told me that he had sought to be a pilot in his youth. His uncle was a pilot, but his father was a farmer. The former took his own sons as apprentices. Old Lavoie as a boy went to Quebec, saw the superintendent of pilots, and offered \$200 to become an apprentice pilot. His request was refused, though there were pilots in his family, because his father, a farmer, could not nominate him.

About twenty years ago, with the modern opening up of the dominion, swelling trade, the increasing inpouring of immigrants, the government took over the pilotage of the St. Lawrence. The pilots remained a corporation with certain dignities and rights, but they became servants of the dominion instead of a self-governing company. The government took away their schooners and supplied them, as per agreement, with a steam tender for boarding ships. That is one reason why to-day the pilots of Father Point are put on board ships with more comfort and dignity than pilots anywhere else in the world. It is part of the purchase price paid by the government for the old-time pilots' services.

In the first days of the corporation the pilots made very little money. Three hundred dollars a year was a big sum. Pilotage still remained largely a sideline. There were very many pilots and few ships. In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and for some time afterwards, ships were so scarce that pilots made only three or four trips in a season.

(By the way, in this article and the last I am writing only of the pilots who ply between Father Point and Quebec. Boats on the river between Quebec and Montreal are handled by another body of pilots, whose status and conditions of work are very similar to those under review.)

## Must Train Seven Years

WITH the coming of government services the numbers of the pilots gradually dwindled to the present numbers, which are maintained as adequate. The nomination of apprentices ceased to be the prerogative of members of the corporation. When apprentices are sought they are advertised for in the Canada Gazette. The most suitable, regardless of family, are chosen after passing a stiff examination in English and French, mathematics and other subjects as well as for eyesight and hearing. An apprentice must be seventeen years old at least. He must serve

RAOUL LACHANCE  
WHO HAS THREE  
CENTURIES OF SEA  
AND SHIPS IN  
HIS FAMILY.



The PILOT ABOUT TO JUMP INTO THE WAITING MOTOR BOAT.

seven years, learn every inch of the 157 miles of river between Quebec and Father Point, pass repeated examinations in navigation and yearly tests of eyes and ears; and in addition, during that time spend 42 months at sea and obtain a certificate qualifying him to be the first officer of an ocean-going ship. He learns his trade of the river in the summer time; at winter he goes to sea. During his apprenticeship of the river he receives no pay. At sea he usually receives the pay of a quartermaster of wheelmen, which is comparatively small pay for a mere 42 months out of seven years.

So that any argument that these men have a dignified profession holds good even from the viewpoint of strenuous apprenticeship. Their practical training and study is as lengthy and as thorough as that of a doctor and longer than that of an engineer or a clergyman. Their later responsibility is tremendous. Ships, lives, freight depend on their knowledge and judgment. A mistake, a slip, an error of judgment—they must face an enquiry and may lose their license. Year after year eyesight and hearing are tested. A slight falling of either and they may be struck off the list; they may lose their years of severe unpaid apprenticeship and find themselves without a calling.

Although the pilots of the St. Lawrence are now in the government service they are paid, not straight salaries, but according to the tonnage that passes through their hands. The government collects the dues for each ship at Quebec and turns it over to the corporation. The total money received for pilotage in each division is pooled by the corporation and divided equally among the members, less seven per cent, which goes into the Aged Pilots' Fund. Pilots need not wait to the end of the season for their earnings. Dividends are declared fortnightly. It does not matter whether a pilot takes up the most majestic of liners or the sorriest of battered tramps, his pay is the same at the end of the season.

There is one interesting distinction. There are what are called line pilots and tour pilots. At the beginning of each season lines like the C. P. R., Canadian or White Star, which maintain regular services in and out of the St. Lawrence, are allowed to choose a number of pilots who become the pilots of their line. They have the privilege of taking up boats of the line. They receive no extra pay from the corporation for this, but the company concerned gives them a bonus of \$15 a vessel. The tour pilots take ships as they come in turn. Line pilots must act as ordinary tour pilots unless awaiting a ship of the line to which they are affiliated. For the shipping cannot be held back.

## Paid According to Tonnage

THE appointment of line pilots is a long-established practice. In fact, the liners created Father Point. In the old days of the corporation only liners took on their pilots there. Other ships picked up the pilots at Bic, where the corporation kept its schooners. When the government took over the service Father Point became the pilot point for all ships, liners and casuals as well.

Although the earnings of the pilots, except for the bonuses given to line pilots, are equal, the same charge is not levied on ships. In some ports ships pay for pilotage according to tonnage. But on the St. Lawrence they still pay according to foot draught—a survival from the days of wooden ships when charging by the draught was more remunerative, for a ship drawing twenty feet might only carry six or eight hundred tons cargo. So payment by draught still stands. And the payment varies according to the season. For inbound ships, from Father Point to Quebec, the charge for the summer season from May 1 to November 10, is \$3.87 a foot; from November 10 to November 19 it goes up to \$4.95 a foot; from November 19 to March 1, which is really the close season of winter, still further up to \$6.02; and from March 1 to May 4, when the season is opening, down to \$4.41. Thus a vessel drawing 25 feet would pay \$96.75 for pilotage from Father Point to Quebec in the summer, and \$150.50 late in November or in December.

It can be easily seen that these charges in a season run into big sums of money, which are increasing every year. In 1919-20 sixty pilots in the Quebec district divided a gross total of \$141,917.77 between them, receiving \$2,366.97 each. During the season of 1921-22 there was a grand total in the Quebec division of 2,587 ships piloted in and out by 54 men who received in pay a total of \$176,660.49, or an average of \$3,203.87 each. Last year fifty pilots brought a

grand total of some 2,400 ships up and down and received at the end of the season \$4,500 apiece. This worked out at an average of 48 ships piloted during the year, or an average of one trip a week for the whole year, at the average earning rate of something like \$93 a ship. Which must make some of the old-time pilots lying at the mouth of the gulf in the wreck of their little schooners turn in their long sleep beneath the waters and wish they were alive now. Small wonder if a youthful pilot seems a trifle upstage. Remember a line pilot receives in addition a bonus of \$15 from the company for every vessel he takes up.

But they are a fine type, these French-Canadians who are farmers and yet sailors, who look like bond brokers and are navigators of the first water. They have tradition, though they are scarcely conscious of it, that stretches away back into the soil and the sea.

## Generations of Pilots

SOME families can trace back pilot forefathers for generations. Among the photographs illustrating this article are those of the Bouffards, father and son. Édouard Bouffard is typical of the younger pilots, somewhere around thirty, yet five years a pilot, smart, clean-cut, smoothly dressed. Two of his brothers are also pilots. The father, Frédéric Bouffard, has been a pilot for nearly half a century. His father before him, grandfather of the younger men, was a pilot, too, for fifty-two years. The three generations have given pilotage service to hundreds of ships entering and leaving the St. Lawrence without break for nearly a century. The river is in their very blood.

I sat talking to Raoul Lachance, assistant superintendent of pilots, in charge at Father Point. A quiet-spoken, clean-cut man in his early forties, brown-eyed, hook nose, lean, with a spare, nervous face. As he talked I found myself thinking of him in command of a French destroyer. I could not help putting him on the bridge. It was the way I felt from his story. A remarkable one. The sea was in the story of his family for generations. He had served his apprenticeship on the sea himself in sailing ships. He had been a river pilot until he received his present appointment.

The original Lachance was a French sailor of the seventeenth century who had been wrecked on the coast of Newfoundland on the way to Canada. The sole survivor, he had eventually made his way to eastern Quebec, where the people of his race were building a dominion, settled down, and founded a family of many branches. For there are Lachances on the Isle of Orleans and in many places along the south shore.

Time passes until one comes to the great-grandfather of Raoul Lachance. In 1760, as a boy in his teens, he was serving as an apprentice on a ship which was captured on the Atlantic by a Spanish privateer. England was then at war with Spain. The Spaniard was nearing the home coast with prize when it was taken in turn by a British frigate. The British ship, after the fashion of those days, impressed the Canadian lad and his fellows into service. So he came many months afterwards to Montreal; and his old mother, great-grandmother of the present Lachance, hearing of it, came to plead for his release. But the captain was adamant. He sailed away with young Lachance on board.

But once more he ran into trouble, for war had broken out between England and France, and on the way across a French ship sank the British frigate after a running fight. The youth was taken prisoner to the land of his forefathers. Eventually, however, he escaped and made his way back to his home in Quebec.

His son, grandfather of Raoul Lachance, became a river pilot and was lost with his son out in the gulf scouting for ships to board. Another son of his, father of Raoul, served on the ocean and became a captain. Later he commanded a revenue cutter down the coast watching for smugglers.

So one comes to Raoul Lachance himself, in turn sailor and pilot. Ships are in his very fibre, and the sea and the St. Lawrence, away back at least to that first Lachance of the seventeenth century. Perhaps away before that again Lachances sailed La Manche or the Mediterranean. Perhaps some of them had been out on the ships of Jacques Cartier or Joliboert and the "first" Lachance was merely following in their wake. Tradition, with these people, away back.

NURSE (to housemaid): "Baby's got her mamma's complexion."  
Father (from next room): "Nurse, are you letting that child play with those paints?"