



# CH. LA PETITE GASPÉSIE RD.

TOPONYMIE GÉOGRAPHIQUE | GEOGRAPHICAL NAME



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## **La Petite Gaspésie Road**

Since I was a child, and I am 66 years old at the time of this writing in 2021, I was always told that it was Bishop Pierre Grenier, vicar general and parish priest, who named this stretch of road “La Petite Gaspésie.” Where did he get this idea?

To fully understand the origins of this topographical name, we must put ourselves into the spirit of the times. This road runs alongside a river and its route, which forms a loop, bringing us back to the starting point. Following the pathway literally takes you around it. Let us add that at the time, we had to pass along the railway line that went over the river’s rapids. This was long before the construction of the Highway 11 bridge. It is said that in dry weather, when the Mattawishkwia River was at its lowest, horses and carts could pass through it. Taking this road

was like making a loop, just as going around the Gaspésie Peninsula in Quebec, a very popular tourist destination. To this day, we still say: “Going around the Gaspésie.” In Hearst, we had a “little Gaspésie” which one could go around. Years later, in the 1950s, as the Highway 11 bridge spanned the Mattawishkwia River, more than a few teenagers exchanged their first kisses on that route.

The most important road that crosses “La Petite Gaspésie,” is called Gaspésie Road, and was built in the mid-1980s. Its function was, and remains to this day, a detour that allows lumber trucks arriving from Highway 583 South to avoid the downtown area. Gaspésie Road therefore has a less romantic vocation than its sister, but on mild days you can meet runners, cyclists, and pedestrians. Who knows if these sports enthusiasts also share kisses behind the trees of this beautiful country road.

Hearst has few streets whose names are directly inspired by geographical locations such as La Petite Gaspésie and Gaspésie Road. We find Riverside Drive, Airport Road and Johnson Lake Road, whose names tell us where they lead. There is also Cemetery Lane which leads to, you guessed it, the Monseigneur Pierre Grenier Cemetery. As for Algoma

Street, it refers to the name of the district to which Hearst belonged to before the creation of the Cochrane District, as well as the Algoma Central Railway (ACR).

- *Laurent Vaillancourt*

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