ATLANTIC GUARDIAN

THE MAGAZINE OF NEWFOUNDLAND

VOL. XIII, No. 7 JULY
20c. 1956

This Month—

NEWFOUNDLAND'S FAMOUS FIRSTS

Acadia University

WOLFVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA

On a campus of unrivalled beauty fronting Cape Blomidon and the blue tidal expanse of the Minas Basin

The Registrar, Acadia Univer
Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Atlantic Guardian

THE MAGAZINE OF NEWFOUNDLAND

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Atlantic Guardian is printed and published by Guardian Limited, 96 Water Street, St. John's, Nfld., Canada. Authorized as Second Class Mail, Post Office Department, Ottawa. Subscription rates, $2.00 a year anywhere in the world, (Newfoundland subscribers add 3% U.S.A. tax). Single copies, 20c.

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Atlantic Guardian

To make Newfoundland better known at home and abroad;

To promote trade and travel in the Island;

To encourage development of the Island's natural resources;

To foster good relations between Newfoundland and her neighbors.

Cover Picture: Nothing typifies Newfoundland better than the codfish, chief among the products of the sea for which the Island has been known around the world for centuries. Although the cod fishing has declined in recent years, the famous "cod-trap" is still being hauled around our coastline at this time of year.—Photo by Melba Lent.

A Capsule of Culture

• We bring you this month a "capsule of culture"—history, famous firsts, drama, seafaring, government—all of course centered in Newfoundland. It's an issue crammed with information researched and written by half-a-dozen well-known authors, and we think it will make a pretty good addition to any library shelf.

• Our request for "Baby of the Month" pictures has met with excellent response from all over the Island. But we haven't been so fortunate with our Old Photos Department. Readers are again invited to search among their souvenirs for interesting old pictures that tell a story and send them along for publication. Personal snapshots are preferable. Postcards are not acceptable, sorry.

• As this issue goes to press we are on the move again, armed with camera and notebook to record more of the Newfoundland scene. There's just time and space now to squeeze in this picture of SOUTHERN BAY in Bonavista Bay, one of the places visited so far. There'll be more familiar scenes from our photo-log in future issues.

—E.Y.

Fishing Admirals

By L. E. F. ENGLISH, M.B.E.

Curator, Newfoundland Museum

L. E. F. ENGLISH

IN the British Commonwealth the growth of self government has been largely an experiment by means of the trial and error method. The stages of development have been most prolonged in the case of Newfoundland, partly because she is the oldest of the colonies, and partly because of her slow advance to maturity. Indeed, it may be argued that this tedious period of adolescence was not a primary cause of delayed status as an independent unit of Empire, but rather a result of lack of encouragement and of inherent weakness in the island's economic structure.

In the course of over four centuries Newfoundland has seen at least a dozen different forms of control. The island became a colony of Britain when John Cabot discovered the New Land in 1497 and set up the flag of England to take possession in the name of Henry VII. This possession by right of discovery was never quite relinquished and was reasserted when Queen Elizabeth I made a grant of the island to Sir Humphrey Gilbert in 1583. Between Cabot and Gilbert nearly a century had passed in which the fishing ships of Europe came and went and exchanged their merchandise in a land free for all. Yet even in those far off days the fishing Admirals of England ruled the harbors, and the visits of John Rut, of Sir Bernard Drake, and of Sir Thomas Hampshire were reminders of England's claim to sovereignty.

Gilbert established the first colonial government of Britain when on the 5th of August, 1583, he formally took possession of Newfoundland. Historians have frequently fallen into the error of stating that Sir Humphrey thus took possession for the English Crown. The fact is that he took it for himself, as the Queen gave him a grant of all territory within a radius of three hundred leagues from St. John's. This included not only Newfoundland but por-

to Confederation

The Story of Government in Newfoundland

tions of Nova Scotia and Labrador. He formulated a set of laws to govern the colony, but as he left no representative to enforce these laws, the whole scheme went out of existence by his untimely death.

Government by Companies

The next system of government to be established in the island was that of the chartered companies. John Guy was governor of the colony at Cupids, formed by the London and Bristol Company, in the year 1610. The charter granted by King James I gave authority for appointment of governors, officers, and ministers to make laws, forms and ceremonies of government, and to nominate magistrates within the precincts of the colony. Governors and their officers were empowered to punish, pardon, rule, and make laws within the pattern of English statute. Under this instruction Guy issued a set of laws by proclamation on August 30th, 1611. His authority was disregarded by visiting fishermen. In 1615 Sir Richard Whitbourne was ordered by the Admiralty to inquire into malpractices in connection with the fishery. He held court aboard his ship in Trinity Harbor, and subsequently visited many other fishing stations. He exacted pledges from the masters of one hundred and seventy vessels that they would observe law and cease from troubling the settlers. It appears that the turbulent spirits of these West Countrymen were not easily held in check. They robbed Guy's plantation at Cupids, and marauding pirates completed the destruction by fire.

The charters granted to Baltimore, Kirke and others were similar

to that of the London and Bristol Company. Kirke held the reins of power with a firm hand, and in doing so he antagonized the ship masters and merchants of West England. They held that the right to fish in Newfoundland waters was their sole privilege. Kirke favored settlement and protected settlers against aggressors. The merchants opposed the idea of a resident population and were backed in their views by the attitude of the British Government. Under the brief rule of the Commonwealth this policy of repression was relaxed and there came the first dawn of rule by the people. A commission consisting of fourteen members was appointed to administer the affairs of the colony. The personnel included commanders of warships and several merchants residing in St. John's. John Treworgie was chairman and a set of instructions was issued by the Commonwealth for his guidance in matters pertaining to Newfoundland.

The name of John Downing next takes an honored place in the island's annals as champion of the rights of the ordinary settler. His petitions against aggression of fishing ships, his reasoned requests for the establishment of forts, at length led British authorities to foresee the dangers of French aggression. The French settled and fortified Placentia in 1662 and showed unmistakeable evidence of their intention to control the whole island. Somewhat belatedly the English constructed forts at St. John's and organized local volunteer companies to man batteries

against any attempted enemy assault. The commodores of convoy squadrons were supreme in command during their three or four month stay on the coast, and it was mainly through their recommendations that a naval governor was finally appointed and a local system of justice established.

First Efforts at Local Rule

The first real attempt at a purely local government was made in 1711. The credit must be accorded to Captain Joseph Crow, commander of the naval squadron for that year. He convened several courts at St. John's wherein were present the masters of merchant ships, local business men and leading settlers. In his report to the Lords of Trade he listed sixteen regulations agreed upon by the local Assembly. These related chiefly to maintenance of a church and minister, suppression of drunkenness, voluntary patrol of the town to guard against enemy surprise, retirement of people to forts in winter, repair of fortifications, and ownership of property. Unfortunately, this promising effort lasted only two years. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 caused a relaxation of vigilance and a consequent loss of interest in local government. Rule by the people in Newfoundland was not to come until over another century had passed.

The opening years of the nineteenth century witnessed a determined movement for government of Newfoundland by her own citizens. As early as 1803 Vice Admiral Gambier, Governor of the colony, recommended to the British Government that some form of local control be granted the growing colony. England refused the boon of home rule although other North American colonies had already received their charters of local legislatures. Then appeared on the scene the one man who above all others deserves the undying gratitude of an island race, for it was Dr. William Carson who led the people of Newfoundland to ultimate autonomy. At long last

his memory is being recognized by the erection this year of a statue in his honor in front of our local House of Assembly.

The fighting doctor came to Newfoundland in 1808. He was a graduate of the University of Edinburgh and had been practising his profession for several years in Birmingham, England. He was appointed surgeon to the Loyal Volunteers at St. John's in 1809. Because of his outspoken criticism of the local authorities and the oligarchic system of government, he was dismissed from his post. In a series of pamphlets he continued to flay the tyrannical methods of the naval governors Duckworth and Keats who complained bitterly to the British authorities. The latter advised that Carson be treated with silent contempt.

First General Election

The agitation for local rule by the selected representatives of the people was continued during two decades. Carson was joined by Patrick Morris, a young Irish merchant who had made his residence in St. John's. The boon of self-determination was finally granted in 1832. A general election took place in the autumn of that year, and fifteen members were elected in the nine districts. By a strange turn of fate, Dr. Carson was not elected to the first House of Representatives. Two years later he received the popular acclaim and became Speaker of the House of Assembly.

An Upper Council was created to consist of the Chief Justice, the Attorney General, the Commander of the Garrison, the Colonial Secretary, the Collector of Customs, and a representative of the mercantile body. This local House of Lords had power to set aside all laws passed in the Assembly. Friction arose immediately, mainly over the matter of finance. Dissatisfaction led to disorder and political riots. The constitution was suspended in 1842, and restored in 1849. At length in 1855 full fledged Responsible Government was inaugurated. During the next eighty years certain changes were made in the number of districts to conform with a growth and shift of population.

Finally Confederation

After a century of existence as an independent unit of Empire, Newfoundland relinquished its status of Responsible Government. Students of the island's history may in future seek the reasons which prompted it to make such a momentous decision. The Amulree Commission of Enquiry which was appointed by the British Government in 1932 to report on conditions in the colony, recommended that a surcease from politics be undertaken for a period of years, and the colony be ruled in the meantime by a Commission of six members.

The Amulree findings stated that a reckless disregard of financial prudence had brought on an intolerable burden of public debt. The country found itself lacking capital and credit, and lacking a diversified economy. Indeed, the last mentioned seems to have been the root and source of the whole situation in which the colony found itself during the depression days of the early thirties.

When the island became self-supporting during the prosperous times of World War II, the British Government decided that it was then fitting that the people of Newfoundland should choose their future status. The referendum held in 1948 showed that a majority of recorded votes favored union with Canada.

Newfoundland's

By MICHAEL P. MURPHY

NEWFOUNDLAND may be lagging far behind in many ways when compared to other parts of North America, but down through the years she has attained a highly respectable number of "firsts" in various phases of human endeavor, particularly in the fields of transportation and communication.

Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland, the first part of North America to be found, was the beginning of a long series of "firsts" to which the Ancient Colony can lay claim. For, although Columbus is credited with the discovery of the New World when he landed in the West Indies in 1492, the honor of finding North America was earned by John Cabot when he set foot on Cape Bonavista, Newfoundland, on the 24th of June, 1497.

Thirty years after Cabot's discovery, John Rut, an English naval commander and fishing captain, wrote, on August 3rd, 1527, what was, in all probability, the first letter to be sent from the New World to the Old World. The letter, written in St. John's, was addressed to King Henry VIII, and was taken to England by an English ship returning home. It probably took a month or more in reaching its destination, but it marked the humble beginning of a trans-Atlantic mail service that has grown in our time to gigantic and hitherto undreamed of proportions.

Another "first" came to Newfoundland in 1583 when Sir Humphrey Gilbert landed at St. John's on August 3rd of that year and took possession of the Island in the name of Queen Elizabeth, thereby claiming Newfoundland as England's first overseas possession, and laying the cornerstone of the great British Empire.

First Trans-Atlantic Cable

On August 5th, 1858, the first telegraphic communication between Europe and North America was in-

Famous "Firsts"

This plaque at the base of the National War Memorial in St. John's, commemorating Sir Humphrey Gilbert's historic landing in 1583, is one of many monuments to the famous "firsts" to which Newfoundland can lay claim and which are recounted in the accompanying article.

augurated when the U.S.S. *Niagara* successfully landed the first trans-Atlantic cable at Bay Bulls Arm, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, and H.M.S. *Agamemnon* arrived with its part of the cable at Valencia, Ireland. Although this cable ceased to function after a few weeks, during which time Queen Victoria sent a congratulatory message to President James Buchanan of the United States, work on the project was resumed after the Civil War, and in 1866 another cable was landed at Heart's Content, Newfoundland, and has been successfully functioning ever since.

A "first" of the greatest magnitude, one that marked the beginning of a new era in the field of communication and the conquest of space, was added to Newfoundland's record in 1901. On August 11th of that year, in an old military barracks on bleak Signal Hill, overlooking St. John's, Guglielmo Marconi, an obscure Italian scientist, picked up a telephone attachment and heard three faint clicks, three short dots, the letter "S" of the Morse code. Sent from Poldhu Cornwall, England, over 1800 miles away, as a pre-arranged signal, this was the first wireless communication ever received from across the Atlantic, and it was brought to Marconi by the rather primitive means of a frail aerial wire suspended by kites four hundred feet in the air over Signal Hill. Such was the beginning of wireless telegraphy and Newfoundland's name will forever be associated with it.

Another and entirely different "first" came to Newfoundland in August, 1914, when, at the outbreak of the war with Germany, Sir Edward Morris, Prime Minister of Newfoundland, made the first

offer from Britain's overseas dominions to send troops to assist the Mother Country in her fight against the enemy. The offer was gratefully accepted and from it followed the great record made in that first World War by the men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve.

First Trans-Atlantic Flight

Ever since Wilbur Wright succeeded in raising a plane from the ground in that short flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903, aviation had progressed by leaps and bounds. After the first World War, air craft had become so advanced that by 1919 aviators everywhere were seized by a desire to accomplish the seemingly impossible, to cross the Atlantic by air. Newfoundland, because of its nearness to the Old World, quickly became the focal point for attempts of that sort. The first attempt to cross the Atlantic Ocean by air was made by the U.S. seaplane N-C 4 when it took off from Trepassey, Newfoundland, in company with two other seaplanes, on May 16, 1919, and, after stops at Horta and Porta Delgado, arrived at Lisbon, Portugal, on May 27th, after 26 hours and 45 minutes actual flying time.

The attempt of the N-C 4 was a success, and two English aviators, Hawker and Grieve, took off from St. John's on May 18, 1919, in an endeavor to make a non-stop flight across the Atlantic. Forced

down by engine trouble, 1100 miles off the Newfoundland coast, their attempt was unsuccessful, but it is notable for the fact that in their plane they carried the first Trans-Atlantic Air Post, a mailbag filled with letters, the first air mail across the Atlantic. Hawker and Grieve were picked up by a Danish ship and the plane was found with the mailbag still on it, the contents somewhat the worse for water, but all the letters were delivered to their various destinations.

However, the first non-stop crossing of the Atlantic by air was finally accomplished on June 14th, 1919, when Capt. John Alcock and Lieut. Arthur Whitten Brown ascended from Lester's Field, St. John's, in their Vickers-Vimy bomber and landed in Clifden, Ireland, 16 hours and 12 minutes later.

The famous American woman flyer, Amelia Earhart, also added a "first" to Newfoundland's list when, with pilot Stultz and mechanic Gordon, she left Trepassey on June 17th, 1928, in the hydroplane Friendship and landed in Wales on the following morning, and became the first woman ever to fly across the Atlantic. In 1932 she obtained the distinction of being the first woman to make a solo flight across the Atlantic when she flew from Newfoundland to Ireland.

In July, 1920, another historic, epoch-making "first" came Newfoundland's way when from a hastily put-together temporary transmitting and receiving station on the same Signal Hill where Marconi had received the first wireless message, an attempt was made to hear the human voice, without the aid of wires, from a ship at sea, hundreds of miles away. The attempt was successful and from that crude radio station on Signal Hill communication was kept up with the S.S. *Victorian* during the whole of her voyage across the Atlantic.

First Overseas U. S. Base

The second World War brought still another historic "first" to Newfoundland when, in 1941, some time prior to America's entry into the War, 1,000 U.S. troops, under command of Col. Maurice Welty, landed in St. John's to occupy the first American base to be established on a permanent basis in a friendly country.

And, finally, in October, 1955, Newfoundland's list of "firsts" in the field of trans-Atlantic communication became larger when news was received that the first section of the submarine telephone cable linking the British Isles to Newfoundland, was laid, and that, eventually when the job is completed, with the line stretching under the sea from Oban, Scotland, to Clarenville, Newfoundland, communication by telephone cable with the countries of the Old World will be a common, everyday happening.

Square-riggers in the harbor of St. John's in 1900 mark an era in the romance of seafaring in Newfoundland as described in this article

The Saga of Seafaring

By ERN MAUNDER

IN THIS article I shall try to recall the days of sail as I remember them in my youth. St. John's and the Newfoundland outports were filled with schooners and small boats, all locally built and rigged—all blacksmith work and sails were locally made, the wood being gotten out of the forest "up the bay a ways," and all bends for ribs were natural growth.

The schooners made trips to Labrador and all around the coast without benefit of engines. Many a time I have seen a dozen or more schooners, large and small, "beating" in through the "Narrows" of St. John's. It was a joy to watch. This training in sail, in punts and in small boats, led a famous admiral during the First World War to remark that "the Newfoundlanders were the best small boatmen in the world."

When a lad I often with other companions walked from Lower Harvey's premises to the Dry Dock in the west end of St. John's from schooner decks across a wharf, across other schooner decks and wharves, without once coming up on Water Street. Sail played a big part in building up our foreign trade before the depression days in the 1930's.

St. John's harbor used to be filled with square-rigged ships, barques, barquentines, two, three and four topmast schooners, which brought our dry salt fish to the Mediterranean, West Indies and also to South America. In fact I made one round voyage myself in a brigantine.

Fish was the outstanding cargo to the West Indies and molasses in puncheons and tierces was brought back. The vessels bound to Spain, Portugal. Italy with dry fish generally brought back salt and those to the Brazils brought back sand as ballast. All this vanished during the depression years as the Latin countries could not buy our fish because their coinage had to go to London to be changed into pounds then be transferred out here to Newfoundland in dollars, which made it impossible to trade in money. Greece offered barter in cargoes of currants. Spain and Portugal wanted to barter wines.

Sail was in St. John's in the days of Queen Elizabeth I. Sir Humphrey Gilbert stated when he arrived in St. John's that he found the harbor filled with Spanish and Portuguese ships. The Spanish and Portuguese ships still come out to the Grand Banks and catch the fish we formerly sold them. The Portuguese ships are all government built and maintained. They have schools in Portugal to train young men as fishermen. While on the Grand Banks their families are taken care of and given food and hospital care if necessary. They also have several homes for aged fishermen. They maintain a new hospital ship, the *Gil Eannes*, which gives medical care to all nationalities on the Banks who require it.

John Cabot the First Sailor

John Cabot came out to Newfoundland in a sailing ship, the *Matthew*. The people of Cape Breton maintain he discovered their shores first and not Newfoundland. In fact they have a motor road around Cape Breton called the "Cabot Trail." Men who know say Cabot in the *Matthew*, which was square-rigged and with the winds prevailing at that season of the year, could not possibly lay his course to fetch up on Cape Breton shores; rather he would have made land in the region of Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland. So we claim Cape Bonavista was Cabot's landfall and not Cape Breton.

Sail has held out against the motor in Newfoundland longer than in any other place. The motor had to come for convenience and to cut down the overhead. Rope and sails cost money, also time lost awaiting a good wind kept costs up in these days of high prices. So now the average schooner is cut down, no jib-boom, no main-boom, no topmasts and the only sail is maybe a foresail and a triangular sail on the mainmast to keep her from rolling too much.

I made five trips to the Banks and around the coast in the Canadian hospital ship *Arras*. We spent a lot of time towing the Lunenburg and Newfoundland fishing fleet, two or three at a time, in and out of Newfoundland ports to get bait. When finished we would tow them three or four miles out to sea to give them an offing and a wind so they could use their sails. There was not an engine among the fleet. Now all is changed—each ship has one or two engines and a small crew.

A new hazard has come into being, namely fire. The engines use diesel oil but the electric generator can run on gasoline and many fires in schooners have resulted from backfires in these generator engines.

A new fishing boat has appeared—a long liner. She is diesel motor driven and about sixty-five feet long and carries a crew of four or five men. She can go well off the land, four or five miles and the long lines are handled by a winch known as the gurdy. They have proven very successful and are being built in small numbers.

Each May and June St. John's harbor is filled with lovely white hulled Portuguese ships, three and four masters, and the crews are colorful with their dark-bronzed skins and loud checkered shirts, wooden sabot shoes and stocking caps. They spend quite a lot of money in St. John's on articles to take home. Leaving St. John's they go to Greenland and when filled up return home to Portugal where their cargoes of salt bulk cod first are washed and dried for market.

For some years previous to 1937 there were fishermen races held off the Canadian coast by the smartest of the Grand Bank salt-fishing fleet. The last two, the beautiful hulled Canadian *Bluenose*, whose effigy is on the Canadian 10c. piece, and the equally beautiful hulled American schooner *Gertrude L. Thebaud* raced for a silver cup known as the International Fisherman's Trophy. The *Bluenose* won the cup which is now in Halifax. I had the pleasure of coming up from Cape Race to Holyrood, C.B.,

with the *Bluenose*. She had a spanking breeze and made a beautiful sight, logging well over fourteen knots. I was in the hospital ship *Arras* which was doing about eleven knots and we could not keep up with the *Bluenose*. When we arrived at Holyrood the *Bluenose* was at anchor and her crew ashore at a dance.

The *Bluenose* went ashore once on Peter's Ledge, Placentia Bay, and was towed to Burin by the *Arras* and repaired on dock there. I have a model of the *Bluenose* made from a piece of oak from her keel obtained at Burin. Both these ships were lost—the *Bluenose* off Haiti in the West Indies and the *Gertrude L. Thebaud* off the coast of Venezuela.

Newfoundland lives by the sea. In former years St. John's was the big distributing port. Fish was brought to St. John's in the fall and marketed from there but in later years, with the advent of the motor schooner and the firms from Canada supplying a steamship service to the larger outports and taking cargoes of fish direct to market, a lot of this trade is lost to St. John's. Ports like Bay Roberts, Harbor Grace, Port Union, Botwood, Lewisporte and Corner Brook, to name a few, have cut into the St. John's trade.

When I was a boy small topsail schooners two and three masted would come out with loads of salt and after discharge would lay in St. John's or outport or Labrador ports awaiting for a dry fish cargo for "across." These beautiful small ships would hail from Port Madoc or Carnarvon, in Wales or Fowey or Bristol, England, and were generally

Sailing vessels pictured in the harbor of Burin many years ago are a reminder of the old days when wind provided the sole motive power for the fleets.

manned by the father who was master, the mate, possibly his brother, and the crew would be made up of nephews—truly a family ship.

Some of these ships had Bible texts cut into the woodwork of the wheelhouse. I have seen cut into the ceiling beams of a small ship and a five ton yacht the Breton (French) Fishermen's prayer "Oh, God! Your sea is so big and my ship is so small," also "Be just and fear not," and another "The sea is His and He made it."

Sail also played its part in the sealing industry of Newfoundland. From way back hundreds of small boats, brigs and barques, prosecuted the seal fishery from St. John's way north to Fogo and Twillingate and perhaps farther. There were three thousand men alone from Brigus, which had its own fleet. This gave work to carpenters, block and pump makers, also sailmakers.

St. John's was completely frozen over by the month of March and all crews would get together and saw a channel out toward the Narrows and with combined sail and the crews ahead on long ropes would pull the ship out toward the Narrows or entrance of St. John's. St. John's harbor was much larger then. All along the waterside has been filled in to make land where the wharves are now. A big barque was built where the General Post Office now stands. Up to before the second World War St. John's had a big fleet of sealing ships propelled by sail and steam but all are gone now. I have often seen fifteen to twenty ships pass out the Narrows on the 10th of March with their crews cheering and waving.

There have been many changes indeed in the saga of seafaring in Newfoundland. Sic Transit Gloria.

Glimpses Into

By MARGARET DULEY

Author of: *The Eyes of the Gull,*
Cold Pastoral,
Highway to Valour,
The Caribou Hut.

MARGARET DULEY

In the struggle for settlement in Old Newfoundland it seems as if more hardship came from nature than from the man-made injustices that often hit hard. There were stark years of subsistence when the meagre holdings were home-made, even to the boxlike houses, the boat and the oars, cut and shaped from the virgin forest.

A. P. Herbert, that most sympathetic writer on Newfoundland, says the Island has been "begrudged and belabored by a niggardly and hostile nature." Even the late Sir Cavendish Boyle, author of the Ode all Newfoundlanders sing so lovingly, chilled his ardent patriotism with blinding storm-gusts, wild waves and sprindrift snow. Yet A. P. Goldsmith declaims:

"And they called it Newfoundland at sight
It's rather the land of Heart's Delight."

In spite of the lyrical note in the latter, long looks backward weigh the scales towards a harsh background where man was forced to fight for his existence before a thought of the arts ever crossed his mind. Consequently there is little Newfoundland literature on library shelves, scant poetry and the smallest output of romance highlighting four hundred and fifty years of local living. Yet all is by no means unrecorded or unsung. In spite of frustration, voices have been heard, and stars of varying lustre have illumined the Newfoundland sky.

The Beginnings

It was natural that the first notes should be struck by the explorers and pioneers, perhaps the most sustained story (later called *Westward Hoe for Avalon*) coming from the bold Elizabethan pen of Captain Richard Whitbourne in 1622. Shortly after, came *The Golden Fleece* and the *Newlander's Cure*, from the pen of Sir William

Local Literature

Vaughan, who settled on the Southern Shore, and in one of his pages writes of a man shooting seven hundred partridge, as if he had indeed discovered the sportsman's Paradise.

Prior to the above dates there were enthusiastic writings from Captain John Mason, who was Governor of Cupids Colony in 1615. Captain Mason wrote glowingly, what would be called today, a tourist brochure, in which he waxed so eloquent over the productivity of the short summer that it reads, in any age, more than life-size. But these men were the propagandists, writing principally "to persuade people to adventure into strange countries, especially to remain and settle there."

Treasures in a Vault

Many Newfoundlanders are familiar with these books, so hard to come by, and at such a price. To handle them is an experience, describing as they do the beginnings in Newfoundland. Two of the books are in the Gosling Memorial Library though it is almost a case of look but touch not. The writer of this article was most courteously conducted downstairs to the library vault, with two escorts, where she heard the clink and click of locks before the books were even visible. Then, as a special favor, she was allowed to take some notes. It was something to hear the crackle of old, yellowed paper, to turn ancient pages and read about undeveloped Newfoundland of the bygone days.

The Poets

Possibly the best description of poetry is that it expresses the wonder and rapture most people feel but cannot put into words.

Newfoundland is truly a strong theme for the poet. Every Newfoundland exile one has ever met, is full of nostalgia for what he calls "the old sod." But the Island

has an unforgettable personality. It is boisterous, buffetted, moody and sullen, sharp and pointed, an elemental drama in itself, an angel and devil, and the rising and subsiding of its surrounding sea is a challenge to any poetical impulse.

Newfoundland has a poet in the grand manner in E. J. Pratt, "Ned Pratt," and though in his later works he became a Dominion-wide poet, his earliest verse belongs to Newfoundland.

Another Newfoundlander, the late Ron Pollett, said, "the mind retains the pleasant memories of childhood—the early years in the mature brain are like a log with the knots shorn off." It must have been that way with Ned Pratt. He was a boy in Newfoundland, living the country so vigorously that he makes the native blood run faster when he writes of tides, winds, fogs, ice-floes, "red kelp on the beach," or seagulls, "as wild orchids of the sea." Even to quote a fragment of his Newfoundland verse is to stir all one's private enthusiasm.

"Tide and wind and crag
Seaweed and sea-shell
And broken rudder
And the story is told
Of human veins and pulses
Of eternal pathways of fire
Of dreams that survive the night
Of doors held ajar in storms."

There are other poets with lesser voices but in such short space only a few can be mentioned. There is Michael Harrington with his *Little Wet Ships* and *The Sea is our Doorway*, titles that tell stories themselves. Poems also abound, with a swing, such as Jack Turner's

Salt Watermen. And not to forget the women. One calls to memory Florence Miller's folksy poems and acclaims her faculty for seeing magic in the near and far view of "Topsail Bay." But do people know about *A Little Prayer for Larry,* by M. M. Brown, on a page about Newfoundland dogs in the Book of Newfoundland? This poem is a pure inspirational piece written in spontaneous sorrow over the death of a beloved dog.

The Historians

Newfoundland has been called a severely masculine country. History is a masculine subject and in relation to this Island there are thick volumes on the Library shelves. Men of letters came and went, recording factually the wars, the brutalities, the coming of law and order, through the growing pains of development when the wealth of Newfoundland waters roused the avidity of several rival economies.

To mention a few outstanding histories. There is one on Government by John Reeves, a Chief Justice in 1783. Another history by the Rev. Lewis Amadeus, 1827, once a missionary for Conception Bay, a history by Sir Richard Henry Bonnycastle, 1842, and so on until one reaches Newfoundland's own, the great history, by the late Judge Daniel Woodley Prowse, who has given Newfoundland a reference book that will stand for all time. This book is a considerable literary legacy to Newfoundland, a monumental labor especially as St. John's was burned several times in a century, thus destroying many records. For that reason Judge Prowse's undaunted research, here and overseas, outrivals the proverbial patience of Job.

The Adventurers

Though the adventurer was always the man of the moment in the bold, buccaneering of old, he rarely wrote his life-story.

In modern times, from another angle, the title for adventuring could belong to the late Sir Wilfrid Grenfell, the doctor who founded the International Mission for Labrador. But that aspect of his life is for another theme. His impor-

tance to this article is that he became a distinguished author, who wrote fascinating stories about the north, about ice-floes, journeys across frozen wastes in komatics drawn by teams of husky-dogs, distilling first-hand experience into the art of the pure adventure story.

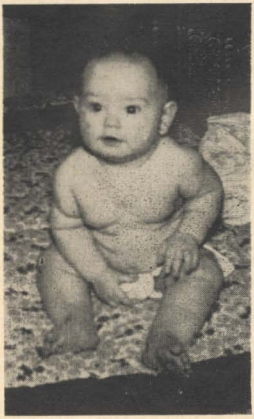
Equally, in modern times, with the sea as his battleground, the book *Forty-Eight Days Adrift*, the voyage of the Neptune Two, by Captain Job Barbour, is a true tale of danger, where in turning its pages one learns that Captain Barbour, during his worst ordeals drew courage from the seaman's philosophy, "that it will be better tomorrow, please God."

To mention a saga from the seal-hunt there is *Old and Young Ahead*, by "the millionaire in seals" Captain Abram Kean, O.B.E. Historically, while taking the broadest look at the seal-fishery it would appear that Captain Kean, will remain the all-time guest of honor for the sealers' toast to "Bloody Decks."

The Recorders

Such writers give outward expression to the things they have heard and seen. Some fascinating reading from this school is the walk one can take, by looking back eighty years or so, with P. K. Devine, in *Ye Olde St. John's*, and strolling with him on both sides of the waterfront, beginning at what was called Maggoty Cove and stopping at the Cross Roads, where the Topsail and Waterford Bridge roads join. There one learns "that

Baby of the Month



This husky lad is Barry Lorne Anstey, aged nine months, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Anstey of Norris Arm, South Side. Barry has four brothers and three sisters, all older than himself.

Mrs. Dooling had the fronting house in the early days."

But honors for nostalgic memories of sights, sounds and smells must go to the late Ron Pollett, who spent his youth in Trinity Bay, but who wrote from New York for *Atlantic Guardian*, this magazine that has opened its pages to native sons and daughters. No one can rival Ron Pollett for his portrayal of everydayness. He brings Newfoundland scenes strongly to the eyes, and smells strongly to the nose. His every word represents a rugged heritage —codheads cascading through a trunghole—bannystickles, seatansies conners, tomcods and rounders, etc. He can make you see one and every outport, as you recapture the joy of youthful adventuring in places where the land and sea made mutual playgrounds. Ron Pollett wrote many articles for *Atlantic Guardian*, all of them Newfoundland gems. Fortunately they are being collected in book form, and will appear shortly, so that his portrayal of the bones and blood of Old Newfoundland will not be lost to posterity.

The Novelists

Amongst the records Newfoundland novelists show the smallest output of all. But heresay memory

turns immediately to Earl Spencer, born in Fortune, and who by a magical turn of destiny went to England, as a protege of Lord Beaverbrook, to work on the staff of the Daily Express. From there he began a series of best-selling novels, principally sea-stories, with Newfoundland as the background, of which "Yo Ho Ho," is a good example. Unfortunately Earl Spencer died before his works had penetrated his own land, but now they have become collector's items for Newfoundland library shelves.

The writer of this article has published in London, New York and Toronto, and acclaims Newfoundland as a magnificent and dramatic background for any novel. She wrote *The Eyes of the Gull*, because one summer day, while leaning on the deck of the S.S. *Kyle*, in Labrador, a gull hovered in front of her, and she experienced eyes like yellow ice, the symbol of the pitiless heart of the north, and so on, through works all born of some Newfoundland compulsion.

After this slight glimpse into Newfoundland literature one concludes that the story is yet to be written. But in this Island where the Arctic Current and the Gulf stream throw their conflict back on the land, who will have the calm, quiet patience to write it? Winds will still sniff at the heels of every generation "like hungry dogs defeated of a bone." Perhaps the saga will come from an exile, like Ron Pollett, who write feelingly of "the old sod" in the grand manner of emotion, distilled from afar off and finally recaptured "in tranquillity."

A scene from the production "Here We Come Gathering."

The Little Theatre Movement

By BRUCE FEATHER
Former President, St. Johns Players

NEWFOUNDLAND should be fertile ground for the Little Theatre Movement—most of the essential ingredients are here: talents for directing, acting, scene design and production; a characteristic wit; a tradition of many decades; and in recent years, an increase in the activity and stature of local playwrights.

The tradition of 'amateur theatricals,' in some form or other, goes back at least 150 years—to the days when young gentlemen of the garrison and the young ladies of St. John's put on plays together. Outside St. John's ,the tradition is usually of 'mummering' or 'janneying'—groups of people dressing up as historical, mythological or imaginary, fantastic characters and making the rounds of their neighbors' houses, singing, dancing, clowning and generally having a gay time.

These traditions, until fairly recently, remained more or less distinct. As the capital city, the principal seaport and by far the largest town in the Island, St. John's has always attracted the travelling actors and other entertainers who found there large enough audiences, with enough spare cash, to make the sometimes hazardous journey worth their while. Its status also gave its inhabitants more opportunity of keeping in touch with current developments—cultural, as well as

commercial and political—in other countries, particularly Britain and the United States. In short, St. John's became, quite naturally, more sophisticated in its tastes for entertainment.

In the rest of Newfoundland, equally naturally, the tendency was more to improvisation, the inspiration of the moment: from this has developed the well known ability of Newfoundlanders to entertain themselves and others impromptu —with songs, stories and verse, illustrated with suitable gestures and expressions.

The more or less constant migration from other communities to St. John's has continually renewed this tradition of spontaneity in the capital and leavened its sophistication with natural humor.

The past fifty years, however, have seen great changes in the relationship between St. John's and the other communities: communications have expanded enormously, new and important towns have grown with the development of industry, and film shows have carried some knowledge of organized drama into many places that might never be visited by a company of actors.

In the last twenty years or so, quite a few of our towns have become accustomed to seeing plays —perhaps one a year, perhaps more —staged by their own people; the industrial towns of more recent growth—such as Grand Falls and Corner Brook, to mention only two—have shown a quite amazing development in this direction during the last ten years, or less. And even now, other communities can be seen reaching out to those more ambitious standards of production and performance that are set by the Regional Drama Festival.

Drama Festival Sparks Interest

The Drama Festival has been the outstanding influence in Newfoundland theatre during the last six years. The first two Newfoundland festivals, in 1950 and 1951, were organized independently of the Dominion Drama Festi-

val; they were trial runs to prepare us for participation in the DDF, and in 1952 the first Newfoundland Regional Drama Festival was held in association with the Dominion Drama Festival.

Newfoundland has been very fortunate in that the winner of the Regional Festival has been invited to the Dominion Festival in three years out of the five: in 1952, the St. John's Players, and in 1954 and 1955 the Northcliffe Drama Club of Grand Falls. In consequence, a comparatively large proportion of our keenest amateurs have had the opportunity of studying, in friendly rivalry, the methods and achievements of some of the best of Canada's theatre groups.

The adjudication—a main feature of festivals—has also contributed greatly to the improvement in performance and production that has been evident in our leading groups during the last five or six years. For actors, directors, producers, designers—and, indeed, all who have a hand in presenting a play—intelligent, constructive, on-the-spot criticism is an invaluable help in the correction of faults and in striving for better achievement. Both the critic and the criticism must, of course, have that desire and intention in their minds if such criticism is to produce its best effect. It is so easy for an adjudicator to take the role of star performer in delivering his or her criticisms of the other performances; it is no less easy for the disappointed competitors to be more aware than the adjudicator of their own merits and of the shortcomings of others.

It is also easy for those taking part in a drama festival to lose sight of its real benefits—the chance to study the work of others, and to profit from informed criticism —while concentrating on the awards or trophies that might come their way. This attitude is fatal to the purpose of drama festivals, if the main objective—the improvement of performance—is supplanted by a secondary objective—the enjoyment of the immediate fruits of that improvement, perhaps even without the improvement itself!

A mistake like that is more

likely to be made when successive festivals become a series of contests between more or less the same few competitors; standards cease to improve, and the rivalry receives more emphasis than the exchange of information and ideas.

There are, fortunately, signs that this danger is not being ignored in Newfoundland; some effort is being made to encourage new groups to qualify for invitation to compete in the Regional Festival. (By 'new groups' is meant groups new to festivals, not necessarily newly-formed groups).

Problems to be Faced

There is a problem here, particularly for the Newfoundland Regional Drama Festival Society, the body responsible for organizing the regional festivals. Under DDF rules, no theatre group has an automatic right to compete in a regional or final festival; it can do so only by invitation from the responsible authority—the regional society, for a regional festival, or the DDF for a final festival. The regional society has to face this dilemma: should we encourage new, perhaps less skilled, theatre groups by inviting them to take part in the regional festival, or should we send invitations only to experienced goups who can be relied upon to present productions of festival standard?

Problems also arise as to the number of plays the adjudicator will have time to see in any one region, and—in Newfoundland, at least—as to how many visitors the festival host town can accommodate. But the main problem is still: on what basis should invitations be issued to groups to take part in a regional festival?

Obviously, new groups ought to be encouraged, but how is the Society to know whether their productions are of a sufficiently high standard for festival competition? Pre-festival eliminations, of course, might help both to select the best groups and to limit their number; but they might make it difficult for even a promising new group to get into the regional

festival, if the eliminations were done on an Island-wide basis; or, if Newfoundland were divided into sub-regions, in each of which a pre-festival elimination were held, the qualifying play in one sub-region might not be as good as one that failed to qualify in another sub-region.

These are some of the main problems that have to be faced and solved if the Newfoundland festival is to retain its vitality and usefulness.

Meanwhile, individual groups have begun to tackle them, as it were, from below; and this, in the long view, may be the best way to do it, since an ounce of group initiative from within is worth a pound of advice or direction from without. Last year, two St. John's groups co-operated in setting up a one-act play festival for the Avalon Peninsula, and it is expected that this festival will be continued and enlarged in the future; a similar festival is to take place in central Newfoundland later this year. These local festivals can become valuable stepping-stones to the regional festival, by enabling new groups to gain festival experience before aspiring to take part in the regional festival.

Another step in this direction has also been taken: non-participating groups were invited to send representatives, as observers, to the 1956 Regional Festival, so that they might have a better idea of what is involved in taking part in a festival: the organization, the production, the adjudication, and so on.

Little Theatre in Good Shape

At present, then, the little theatre in Newfoundland is in good shape; there is increasing public interest in its work and its achievements; there is a growing number of able and experienced actors, directors and production crews; there is a spirit of adventure and enterprise in the choice of plays and in the overcoming of difficulties. And, for most groups, the difficulties are neither few nor trivial: lack of rehearsal room, of storage and workshop space, and of well-equipped theatres, can be crippling, and, what is worse, makes it difficult to put on shows of high enough standards to attract and hold an audience.

The audience, after all, is the final judge of a little theatre group's achievement, and should never be overlooked. Amateur companies are usually better able than professional to risk presenting an unusual, experimental or local play that may or may not please the audience, and it is one of the aims of the little theatre movement to give audiences an opportunity to see such plays and find out whether they like them.

The Newfoundland audience, generally, is kind and sympathetic —and some would say, long-suffering; it is a growing audience that is coming to expect (if not yet to demand) higher standards of production and performance. If our little theatre groups try to give our audiences what they are looking for—entertaining plays, well done —there is every prospect of a bright future for them.

The Strategic Island

A Report on Newfoundland's Place in Peace and War

By MICHAEL FRANCIS HARRINGTON

DESPITE past, current or future controversy on the subject of the voyages of the Norsemen to America, it is an established fact of history that a party of Norse colonists visited Labrador, Newfoundland, and other parts of eastern North America, between A.D. 1000 and A.D. 1006, and described these lands with "unerring fidelity." It was not, however, till the end of the 15th century that Newfoundland was actually "discovered," by the naturalized Venetian John Cabot, in the service of King Henry the Seventh of England. Eighty-six years later, the island was entered in the records as the first colony of the British Empire-to-be, when Sir Humphrey Gilbert, entered St. John's harbor in August 1583.

However at that time, Empire-building lay far ahead in the future, and England's original and abiding interest in Newfoundland was mainly created by the reports of the enormous resources of fish in the waters around the New Isle. When the great wars began between England and France to decide who was to be *the* colonial power in America and Asia, the major battles in the first instance were fought on the American mainland, and those who do not know Newfoundland history may think that the ancient colony was a backwater hardly disturbed even by a swirl from the main tide of conflict.

That is far from the truth. Newfoundland suffered a continual series of invasions, climaxed in 1762 by what for Newfoundland, constituted, a major military operation. France, with her hold broken on the mainland, made a last-chance bid for Newfoundland. Her urgency was taken into account by the British authorities who could see the peace-table looming closer every day, and within three months Colonel William Amherst had recaptured the island bastion.

With British military and naval strategy now plainly concerned with Newfoundland, the island was continually in the foreground in every succeeding period of hostilities. During the American War of Independence, the Napoleonic Wars, and the American War of 1812, privateers attacked her fishing settlements and ships; a French fleet pillaged the larger harbors and threatened to assault the capital; British men-o-war operated from bases at Burin and Trepassey, as well as St. John's. During the long peace of the Victorian era, and the recession of war from the North American and North Atlantic areas, Newfoundland was suddenly seen as an island possessing strategic qualities of a very different character.

As scientific research speeded up the pace of the development of international communications, Newfoundland's geographical position, between the two great English-speaking capitals, London and New York, was duly noted. When the day of the trans-Atlantic cables arrived, where else could they be laid but between Ireland and Newfoundland! The first short-lived cable of 1858 "put Newfoundland on the map" for people who did not know she existed, and the cable of 1866 made her a household word throughout the civilized world. From that day on, Newfoundland became an indispensable landing-place for cables of every description and belonging to several nations, and at the present time is again in world prominence on account of the super-telephone cable now being laid between Clarenville, Trinity Bay and Oban, Scotland. When Marconi made the wireless spark jump the gap of space in the 1890's, and the inventor considered a real test by a bridging of the Atlantic, he came to Newfoundland, and on Signal Hill, St. John's, in December, 1901, received the first Trans-Atlantic wireless signal. Less than twenty years after, Signal Hill assisted at the birth of modern radio when the Canadian Marconi Company's temporary transmitting and receiving station there kept up voice communication with the S.S. *Victorian* during the whole of her Trans-Atlantic voyage in July, 1920.

In the meantime the conquest of the air had begun. Spurred by World War One, modern aviation had entered the era of tremendous development which was to make it

a determining factor in World War Two. The Daily Mail prize of $50,000 for the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic by a British-built, British-manned, heavier-than-air machine had caught public attention, and six months after the Armistice, there were four groups in Newfoundland, preparing for the attempt. A month later, all had made their bid. Alcock and Brown were 'lords of the air,' and Newfoundland was now on the aviation map. When Lindbergh's non-stop flight, New York to Paris, in 1927 ushered in the new era of long-distance aviation, the island became a stepping-stone and half-way house for innumerable aviators making long-distance and even round-the-world flights.

Then Came Gander

It was this aspect of Newfoundland's significance in international aviation—the intermediate point between two worlds—that was quickly seen by long-headed men who in the early 1930's already foresaw World War Two . Out of their foresight came the huge airport at Gander, just finished and in operation in time to become the main way-station on the so-called "staging" route of the bombers being flown from the United States to embattled Britain under the famous Lend-Lease arrangement. After World War Two, Gander leaped into prominence in passenger air travel, and, despite the Cassandras who have predicted it would be by-passed ever since 1945, it is now in 1956 looking forward to an even more impressive future than its past remarkable decade.

In 1940, the island of New-

foundland was occupied in wartime by the forces of a foreign country, but a friendly country, admitted on peacable and friendly terms, something unique in international relations and world history. The first bases occupied by American troops following the Destroyer-Bases deal (which, incidentally, did not include Newfoundland or Bermuda) were near St. John's, Argentia, Placentia Bay and Stephenville on the West Coast. With this friendly and profitable occupation (from both the Newfoundland and American standpoint), the island became an important link in the chain of United States security. With the headquarters of the United States Northeast Air Command, presently located at Pepperrell Air Force Base near St. John's, Newfoundland is now the nerve-center of the defences of the North American continent.

Newfoundlanders, who had stayed aloof from the Confederation of the British North American colonies for over three-quarters of a century, finally made their choice in 1948. Rejecting the principle of Confederation in 1869, refusing to consider the Canadian Government's proposals in 1895, a majority of the voters decided, in the 1948 referenda, to accept the Terms of Union submitted by the Liberal Government of Prime Minister Mackenzie King to the Newfoundland National Convention. On April 1st, 1949, Newfoundland became the 10th Canadian Province and put her destiny squarely alongside that of the Dominion of Canada in the years that lie ahead.

In conclusion, after consideration of the foregoing facts, Newfoundland's strategic significance and importance, not only in North American and European but in world affairs, is irrefutable. What the future holds, as we enter the atomic age, who can say? But it seems clear, since with every successive phase of scientific advancement Newfoundland has come into more and greater prominence, that in the years ahead the great Atlantic Guardian of the North American continent will continue to play a powerful role on the world stage.

AT SCHOOL AWAY FROM HOME

Acadia University

Some eighteen Newfoundlanders have been in attendance at Acadia University during the 1955-56 session—eight from Grand Falls, three each from Corner Brook and St. John's, two from Botwood and one each from Cupids and Curling.

On April 12, 1956, Eric Abbott, of St. John's, who is qualifying for his Master of Music degree, gave a distinguished piano recital before a large audience in Convocation Hall. His program included numbers by Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy and Bach, this last a concerto played along with a University String Orchestra. Helen Doreen Coultas of St. John's is qualifying for her Licentiate in Music and Janet Mary Arklie of Grand Falls for a Bachelor of Education degree. Miss Arklie will be teaching in Japan for the next three years.

Two dietitians, Caroline Hillier of St. John's and Mary Parsons of Grand Falls, are qualifying for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Home Economics. Frank Rowe Penney, of Grand Falls, is due to receive his Engineering Certificate.

Rothesay Collegiate

Rothesay Collegiate School, which now claims top rank in the field of boys' boarding schools situated in the Atlantic Provinces, is proud of its growing connection with Newfoundland. It is also proud of the boys who have come to it from New Brunswick's new sister province.

For a number of years the school did not receive any boys from Newfoundland but since the war, and because the school's reputation has grown, more and more boys are coming from across the Straits. St. John's, Corner Brook, Grand Falls, Brigus, Stephenville, White Bay are all contributing students to the school. Many boys have graduated and gone their way to university or business.

Our Newfoundland boys bring their own special flavor to the school's cosmopolitan group. It is a cheerful and refreshing flavor made up of common sense, intelligence and good manners, together with an attractive friendliness and strong sense of humor.

Whatever else Newfoundland gives to the rest of Canada, Rothesay is more than pleased with what it is receiving. It intends to see that Newfoundland's investment in Rothesay pays off.

Following are names and addresses of Newfoundland boys who attended the school this year:

Jonathan Berger, Corner Brook; Edward Bulley, Baie Verte, White Bay; John Cant, Corner Brook; Denny Christian, Grand Falls; Ryan Cooke, Stephenville; James Crosbie, St. John's; Donald Gruchy, Corner Brook; Charles and David Hiscock, Brigus, C.B.

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