



Symposium attendees ponder "The Idea of Newfoundland"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Beyond the Overpass
In this issue, Joyce Montague
updates us on the
development of Labrador
West's new Gateway facility
3

News
West Coast Exhibition Centre
Update
4

NHS Lecture Series
Dr. Christopher English
explores the Cashin libel trial
of 1947
7

As well as all our regular
features...

NHS Newsletter, Spring 2003
This is a quarterly publication of the
Newfoundland Historical Society.
Questions, comments &
membership enquiries may be
addressed to:

Room 15, Colonial Building
Military Road
St. John's, NL
A1C 2C9

Tel: 709.722.3191
Fax: 709.729.0578
email: nhs@thezone.net

Visit our website at:
www.infonet.st-johns.nf.ca/providers/nfldhist

NEWFOUNDLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter



News, resources and events for Newfoundland & Labrador's history community

2003 Symposium an Overwhelming Success

The Newfoundland Historical Society's 2003 symposium, *The Idea of Newfoundland: Nationalism, Identity and Culture from the 19th Century to the Present*, featured a slate of speakers who captivated audiences over the course of the event that ran from March 27th to March 29th. While all of the lectures focussed around the theme of "The Idea of Newfoundland", each speaker shaped their lecture to their own area of expertise, allowing the audience to see how nationalism has played such a large role in Newfoundland's development in the last couple of centuries. Their words obviously struck a chord with the audience, who were ready with questions and comments after the speakers had finished.

Jerry Bannister's talk explored how cultural memory has evolved over the course of the 20th century. The themes of struggle and conflict have forever been part of our history from the days of Prowse to Peckford. The audience wondered how deeply we need to feel loss as part of our Newfoundland identity. Bannister responded that this has been a fairly recent development but it is one that shows growing strength. This notion carried over into a discussion of the fishery and the pain Newfoundlanders have felt in the years since the moratorium.

The Saturday morning session of the symposium started with a talk by Jeff Webb. Covering the period between the first usage of the term Newfoundlander in the 1760s through to the Smallwood era and beyond, Webb questioned what it is that ties us together as a nation and a people. The audience offered some suggestions, such as the role of language in cultural identity. Webb noted that we perceive those who speak a different language, even though they still live in Newfoundland, as being different, as "other". Some audience members commented on the role of our built heritage, oral traditions and songs as feeding into our sense of what it means to be a Newfoundlander.

Peter Pope spoke about how 17th century Newfoundland history has largely been forgotten or left unexplored. Pope made the point that Acadia will never forget its 17th century settlements but that Newfoundland has. Why is this the case? Many similarities existed between Acadia and Newfoundland in that era such as their early failure as commercial ventures and the discouragement of settlement by over regulation of the fishery. Pope tied this in with the notion of victimhood and reconciliation. Newfoundlanders, he suggested, questioned the existence of this settlement. So many other colonies flourished; why have we not fared as well as New England? The audience questioned the idea of failure of the early settlements. One audience member pointed to the optimism found in many of the 17th century proposals relating to Newfoundland. Pope stated that there was plenty of reason to be optimistic. Newfoundland has always had resource potential. It has just taken centuries to develop it.

Continued on page 8

President's Report

The aim of the Newfoundland Historical Society is to bring quality Newfoundland and Labrador history to the general public. It seems 2002 - 2003 was a good year, if we measure it by attendance at lectures and the annual symposium, sales of Society booklets, and the media's interest in covering the Society's events and lobbying efforts. In line with the aim of bringing history to the public, Society events were free of charge again this year. Thanks largely to a grant from the Newfoundland Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, the Society obtained enough money to run its most expensive event - the symposium - without charge to attendees and without going into debt.

The program this year included six lectures (delivered by C. Wheaton, M. Wilkshire, P. Pope, C. English, J. Shawyer, and the George Story Lecturer H. Rollman) and a symposium on *The Idea of Newfoundland*, which was held over a period of three days. The executive hopes the audiences enjoyed these events. Those who could not attend the symposium might be interested to know that preparations to publish the proceedings are underway.

As mentioned above, the Society's publications are selling well. The latest booklet, Ingeborg Marshall's *The Beothuk*, was promoted this year and is currently selling in bookstores, pharmacies and museum shops around the province. The Society's newsletter

under Anita Best's editorship received a facelift and now includes new departments such as news from beyond the Overpass, articles on heritage topics and letters.

The Society is honoured to be closely connected to Memorial University's new *Newfoundland Quarterly*. Members of the Society's executive serve on the Newfoundland Quarterly Foundation Board and the Editor's Advisory Committee. The Society is responsible for the Aspects section in each issue, and each Society member is a *Newfoundland Quarterly* subscriber. This close relationship is possible because the Quarterly's editorial position and the Society's goals are so complementary. The Society would like to thank Dr. Leslie Harris for his decades of work in the Society's interest as editor of *Aspects*.

The Society continued to promote history in the schools with the Department of Education, working for more and better quality of content in the proposed Grade 8 history course and, with the Association of Heritage industries, lobbied to save the Colonial Building by developing its use as an office for heritage organizations. This would preserve this historic structure, yet keep it a working building. The Society anxiously awaits the decision on the building as it is so closely tied with the Society's future. The membership is strong; the outlook is good. Thank you for your continuing interest in the history of the province and in the Society's activities.

Joan Ritcey, President

The Newfoundland Historical Society Executive

Debbie Andrews
Jerry Bannister
Anita Best
Emma Butler
Terry Bishop-Stirling
David Bradley
Gordon Bradley
Linda Cullum
Eleanor Dawson
Larry Dohey
Mark Ferguson
Sarah Flaherty
Rosemary Healy
Jim Hiller
Betty Jerrett
Willeen Keough
Joyce Montague
Robert Parsons
Joan Ritcey
Ivy Tong
Fran Warren
Jeff Webb
Doug Wells
Carla Wheaton
Sandra Wheeler
David White
Linda White
Fred Winsor



Do you have news, upcoming events, or opinions you'd like to share? We welcome your submissions to future issues of the newsletter. If you have an article you'd like to contribute, please contact the NHS Office at the address on the front cover. We look forward to hearing from you.

SPRING, 2003

News, events and resources for
Newfoundland & Labrador's
history community



Regular Column

Labrador West's new Gateway nears completion

Beyond the Overpass

In this issue, Joyce Montague provides an update on the development of Labrador City's new Gateway facility.

An historic event will be held in Labrador City in June of this year when a new interpretation complex will be officially opened to the public. The new building, called "The Gateway," is located on the Trans Labrador Highway within the town limits and is a 520 square metre white pine log structure, nestled in the pristine Labrador wilderness.

The project is an initiative of the Labrador Heritage Society -- Height of Land Branch, which had long sought a place to depict the unique history and culture of Labrador and will highlight the Labrador West portion of the province in the interpretation of its historic past. Inside the building is a large foyer to accommodate visitors. The curator's office and a board room are situated on either side of the interesting and attractive entrance way. The local Labrador West Tourism Development Association has spacious accommodation with information on all destinations in Labrador that will be of interest to tourists and locals alike, as well as exhaustive details on services available in the local area. It is the place for visitors to obtain any information required.

The Labrador Heritage Society operates the craft shop where all types of souvenirs and gifts pertaining to Labrador can be

obtained, including the famous and much revered Labrador flag on which this Branch of the Society holds the copyright.

The most exciting and informative part of the building is the interpretation centre. Designed by Ed Montague, a native Labradorian and chair of the interpretation committee, this 200 square metre section will showcase and interpret the rich history of Labrador West beginning from the melting of the glaciers only 5000 years ago and the appearance of the nomadic Innu circa 3500 years BP (Before Present). The stone tools that have been discovered by archaeologists will be on display along with interpretive panels which will document the known and inferred habits of these pre-historic peoples.

French fur trader Louie Jolliett, of Mississippi fame, is recorded to have traded here in 1695 and is highlighted in the French Fur Trade section, which also includes taxidermy models of the fur bearing animals trapped in the region. Continuing in chronological order, the French were succeeded by the English in the form of the Hudson's Bay Company who established Fort Nascopie on the centre of the Labrador plateau to intercept the Innu on their age-old travel routes to gain the furs before they could be traded to rivals on Quebec's North Shore or Lake Melville -- most of whom they soon bought out. A model of Fort Nascopie is the centrepiece of this era and exhibits include the post records (1840-

1856) and artifacts obtained on the site. Other exhibits include the geological and geographical data of geologist A.P. Low (1894-95), the ill-fated "Labrador Gold Rush" (1932), and the mineral explorations of the Labrador Mining and Exploration Company leading up to "Ore by '54." The Iron Ore Company of Canada and Wabush Mines' displays, as well as Churchill Falls, will feature exhibits from their inception to the present day and the growth of the modern communities. Historic land use of the Aboriginal peoples also continues to be an area of investigation.

"History" and "old" won't be synonyms in the Gateway Complex. In addition to hard artifact exhibits and interpretive signage, the Gateway Complex will house one of the most extensive collections of images, documents, even film, of the Labrador West region thanks to an ambitious IT project that allows the Gateway to extend its collections into the virtual areas of cyberspace. A DVD-ROM driven mini-theatre capable of recreating history with surround sound and incredible images is a keystone of the centre. Through the wonder of the information highway, Labrador history will be made available to the world as the Centre's impressive website grows by leaps and bounds. The Gateway Committee and the Labrador Heritage Society -- Height of Land Branch are extremely proud of the complex and invite everyone to visit the "Gateway" and sense a touch of our exciting past, present and future.



Local News

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Below is a list of titles newly acquired by the Centre for Newfoundland Studies. It is not a complete list. If you have any questions, please contact the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at 737-7476.

The Encyclopedia of the British Empire : the first encyclopedic record of the greatest empire in the history of the world / edited by Charles W. Dornville-Fife; illustrated with 2000 photographs and maps.

About Aboriginal Peoples : a key to research and understanding / by Bernard Cleary and Associates Inc. ; researched and written by Rene Boudreault ... [et al.] ; graphics and editing, Chantal Cleary.

Newfoundland, its origin, its rise and fall, also, an epitome of the Jersey crisis in January, 1886 : an episode of the history of Jersey / by John Sullivan.

Sailors Ashore : RCN interactions with civilian society at St. John's, 1941-1945 / by Malcolm MacLeod & Brad Penney.

Newfoundland at the Crossroads: documents on Confederation with Canada / edited by John Edward FitzGerald.

Etat de la recherche concernant les Franco-Terreneuviens

The uses of oral history and folklore in an area of illegal settlement : the Port-Au-Port Peninsula, Newfoundland.

Lost Lands, Forgotten Stories : a woman's journey to the heart of Labrador / Alexandra Pratt.

The Amazing Adventures of Captain Bob Bartlett / Susan Chalker Browne ; illustrated by Mel D'Souza.

The Mourner's Dance : what we do when people die / Katherine Ashenburg.

Yuletide Yarns : stories of Newfoundland and Labrador Christmases gone by / Mike McCarthy & Alice Lannon, eds.

In Whose Best Interests? : women, custody and access in Newfoundland and Labrador / Joanne Hussey and Gander Status of Women Council Justice Issues Committee: Elaine Condon...[et al.]

Glimpses of the Wonderful : the life of Philip Henry Gosse, 1810-1888 / Ann Thwaite.

Rue des Terre-Neuvas : Normands et Bretons a Terre Neuve au XIXeme siecle / Jean-Pierre Martin.

Challenge and Change : an illustrated history of engineering and geoscience in Newfoundland and Labrador / by D.R. Tarrant.

BAY ROBERTS PILOT PROJECT

The Bay Roberts Heritage Society has completed a pilot project for the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) Community Memories Initiative. It is part of the CHIN Virtual Museum Project and is entitled *The Cable Building Story*.

To view the Bay Roberts Community Memories project, go to www.virtualmuseum.ca and follow the links to the Community Memories page, the Newfoundland and Labrador page, and on to the Cable Building Story.

WEST COAST EXHIBITION CENTRE

Premier Grimes and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation Julie Bettney, provided an update on the West Coast Exhibition and Cultural Facility which will serve the arts and heritage needs of the west coast of Newfoundland and the southeast coast of Labrador. It will cost approximately \$3.25 million to construct the new facility at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook. The Provincial Museum will provide an additional \$650,000 to be directed towards the museum exhibition which will be housed in the Corner Brook Museum. A call for proposals has been made and a decision was planned for April 3, 2003. On July 1, 2003, the tender for construction will be announced, with the goal of construction start-up in August.

National News

LAUNCH OF THE CANADIAN GENEALOGY CENTRE WEB SITE

March 26, 2003 (Ottawa) - The Library and Archives of Canada is pleased to announce the official launch of the Canadian Genealogy

Centre Web site. This unique virtual centre will be the primary online site for access to genealogical resources in Canada. Over the years, Canadians have shown a growing interest in finding out more about their family histories, stories and roots. In fact, genealogy and family history research are the fastest growing hobbies in North America.

The Canadian Genealogy Centre Web site is an online centre that will provide access to all genealogical resources in Canada. It will offer genealogical content, services, advice, and tools, and provide Canadians with the opportunity to work on joint projects online in both official languages. The Canadian Genealogy Centre Web site will allow history to be written in the first person-our history, our family, our community-by making available to Canadians the vast network of genealogical information that exists across the country and around the world. Visit the Canadian Genealogy Centre Web site at: www.genealogy.gc.ca

This unique centre was made possible in part through the Canadian Culture Online Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. For more information, please contact:

Jean-Sébastien Potvin
Agent de projet / Project Agent
Bibliothèque et Archives du Canada
/ Library and Archives of Canada
Projet Centre canadien de
généalogie / Canadian Genealogy
Centre Project
395, rue Wellington Street,
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0N3
Telephone : (613) 995-8085
Fax : (613) 995-6274
Toll-free number : 1-866-578-7777
Email : jpotvin@archives.ca

International News

SUMMER INSTITUTE IN NEW YORK

The Columbia University Oral History Research Office will hold its annual Summer Institute on Oral History from June 16 - 27, 2003. The theme of this year's Institute is: Telling Lives: Memory, Orality and Testimony in Oral History. The focus will be on the ethical, methodological and theoretical challenges of documenting the power of testimony, and oral history, to shape public discourse and strengthen communities whose histories have been subjugated or silenced within dominant historical paradigms and media accounts. Within these parameters, they will explore the subjectivity of gendered, ethnic, cultural and other identity based narratives -

particularly the ways in which these accounts subvert and correct public myth and memory. They will also probe the ways in which oral history, in its historical origins and its contemporary uses, is a radical form of testimony in which both collective and individual memory are preserved in texts, and other media, as social history and literary genre.

Faculty for this year's Summer Institute will include Alessandro Portelli of the University of Rome; Silvia Salvatici of the Archives of Memory Project, Florence; Linda Shopes, of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; Rina Benmayor of California State University Monterey Bay; Bonnie Gurewitsch of the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust; Steve Rowland, CultureWorks; Revan Schendler of Smith College;

Mary Marshall Clark, Director, Oral History Research Office; Jessica Wiederhorn, Associate Director, Oral History Research Office; Ronald Grele, Director Emeritus, Oral History Research Office.

The application deadline is May 10, 2003. For further information please visit our website:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/summer.html>

Or contact:

Jessica Wiederhorn
Oral History Research Office
801 Butler Library, Box 20
535 West 114th Street, MC 1129
New York, NY 10027
Phone: (212) 854-4012
Fax: (212) 854-5378
E-mail: jw712@columbia.edu

CALL FOR PAPERS

Memory and Globalization: The XIIIth International Oral History Conference - Rome, Italy, 23-26 June 2004

Proposals are invited from around the world for contributions to the XIIIth International Oral History Conference hosted by the International Oral History Association in collaboration with the City of Rome. Proposals may be for a conference paper, a workshop session or a thematic panel. Only papers with a clear focus on oral history will be taken into consideration. Papers will also be evaluated according to their methodological and theoretical significance. The specific theme for the conference is 'Memory and Globalization'. Proposals are also invited which address ongoing oral history issues and practices. Conference sub-themes include: The processes of globalization,

SPRING, 2003

News, events and resources for
Newfoundland & Labrador's
history community

6

from above, from below, and in the middle

Local-regional-national-global relationships and impacts including the global impact of local and regional conflicts, the local and regional impact of global trends, and the transformation of local, regional, national economies and social structures

Politics with a particular emphasis on the crisis of democracy in the globalization process

Labour including 'new forms of labour' (casual, temporary, contractual, part-time, requiring mobility and adaptability ,deskilling)

Resources including the commodification of resources: water, health, tourism (including cultural tourism), and the expansion of consumer culture over poor and marginal people and cultures

Transmission and preservation of memory including individual and collective memory, global forms, global corporate memory, digitisation, ethical issues

Social movements including alternative globalization or anti-globalization movements, from the local to the transnational scale

War including the revival of war as a way of approaching international controversy

Terrorism

Migration including new types of migration (for example, the separation of national economic policies from migration policies, the increase of state regulations around their borders, the exclusion of labour migration from migration

policies)
Poverty including the growth, expansion, and feminization of poverty

Development: the role of oral history, the impact of globalisation, ethics

Gender, religion, music, health and healing dealt with specifically or as a particular focus within other sub-themes

Theory and methodology

If you are interested, please send us a single-page proposal including an outline of your paper and the following details: name(with your family name in capital letters), affiliation, postal address, email address, phone and fax numbers. Proposals (and subsequently papers) must be written in English or Spanish. If possible abstracts in the other language should be provided. At the conference there will be simultaneous translation in English, Spanish and Italian for the plenary sessions. Efforts will be made to provide informal consecutive summary translation during workshop sessions.

Deadline for paper proposals is June 30, 2003.

The Conference Committee will confirm acceptance or rejection of your proposal by September 31, 2003. The final paper of no more than 15 double-spaced pages, must reach the conference organisers before December 15, 2003, for publication in the Conference Proceedings.

SEND PROPOSALS TO:

IOHA 2004 Organising Committee
C/O Professor Alessandro Portelli
Piazza Campitelli 7

00100 Rome
ITALY
email: info@ioha2004.it
fax: 1-39-06-44249216
Attention: Alessandro Portelli

DIRECT ENQUIRIES TO:

email: info@ioha2004.it or to
Africa: Philippe Denis
(denis@nu.ac.za)
Asia: Gunhan Danisman
(danisman@boun.edu.tr)
Europe: Alessandro Portelli
(alessandro.portelli@uniroma1.it)
Latin America: Marieta de Moraes
Ferreira (marieta@fgv.br)
North America: Rina Benmayor
(rina_benmayor@csumb.edu)
Oceania: Janis Wilton
(jwilton@pobox.une.edu.au)



Upcoming Events

Thursday, May 15 at 8 PM,
Hampton Hall, Marine Institute

The Political Songs of Thomas Moore, presented by
Dr. Johanne Delvin-Trew of MUN's
School of Music. Admission is
free. Presented by the Irish
Newfoundland Association

NHS Lecture Series

The Cashin Libel Trial of 1947

The Newfoundland Historical Society's first lecture of 2003 featured a hot topic on a cold winter evening. Dr. Christopher English of Memorial University's Department of History treated the crowd at Hampton Hall to a talk about one of the most interesting episodes in Newfoundland legal and political history - the Cashin libel trial of 1947.

The case of Emerson et al v. Cashin was described by English as a watershed in contemporary Newfoundland history. The defendant, Major Peter Cashin, was accused of making false statements about several prominent figures in Newfoundland's legal community. In a speech before the National Convention on February 28, 1947, Cashin had charged that Lewis Emerson, Harry Winter and James Winter had interests other than the good of Newfoundland at heart when they voted to replace responsible government with Commission of Government in 1933. Cashin alleged that Emerson and the Winter brothers had secured plum positions for themselves with the Commission. His remarks were broadcast over the government radio station that same evening.

An Unusual Turn of Events

At the time of the libel trial in 1947, Emerson was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Harry Winter was an assistant judge of that same court and James Winter was the court's registrar. English noted that it was very unusual for the judges to

take the issue to court. They typically stayed out of the realm of public politics. English surmised that the plaintiffs felt that the nature of the allegations were exceptionally severe. Perhaps they felt they had done no wrong or that their actions should be beyond reproach.

If Cashin was correct in alleging that the actions of Emerson and the Winter's were motivated out of self-interest, the benefits were not immediately forthcoming. It took several years before either of the

and privilege, with the court of law being used as the arena for airing grievances. Peter Cashin also appeared to share the elite background of the plaintiffs but this was not really so. While his father Michael had been a prominent political figure, Peter Cashin lacked the education and opportunities offered to the others involved in the libel case. In fact, Cashin was someone the jury identified with. He was outside of the elite circle which contained the plaintiffs and Dunfield. Cashin opted to defend himself against the charges.

English described the case as a watershed in contemporary Newfoundland history

plaintiffs became a commissioner. Their ascendancy to the Supreme Court had taken even longer. The charge of libel against Cashin was heard by Mr. Justice Brian Dunfield, colleague of the plaintiffs. English questioned the impartiality of Dunfield in light of his professional relation to Emerson and the Winter brothers.

Complicated Social Web

Over the course of the lecture English explained the complicated web which connected the key figures involved in the action. The plaintiffs and Dunfield had attended private schools in St. John's. All came from well connected families. Ties of marriage and kinship further cemented their connection to each other. To the jury who heard the case, it seemed to be about politics

English makes it clear that this trial had no clear winners. In the end the jury failed to reach a verdict. The trial had given the plaintiffs the opportunity to air their grievances but they received no damages. In defending himself, Cashin had managed to establish common ground with the jurors but they were unable to find him not guilty. Cashin was unable back up his allegations against Lewis Emerson, Harry Winter and James Winter. English concludes that outside of the courtroom, Cashin appeared to have been vindicated. He paid no damages to the plaintiffs. His many supporters believed he had attacked a system which secured a life of privilege for a few individuals, a system which excluded most Newfoundlanders.

FEATURE STORY

2003 NHS Symposium Report

Continued from page 1

Thursday Night: David Alexander
Lecture by Dr. Margaret Conrad

This year's symposium got off to a great start with the annual David Alexander Lecture--a thought-provoking talk by Dr. Margaret Conrad, Canada Research Chair in Atlantic Canadian Studies at the University of New Brunswick. Dr. Conrad's talk, "Mistaken Identities: Newfoundland and Labrador in the Atlantic Region" addressed the historical construction of the idea of "region," with particular reference to Atlantic Canada. We were treated to a fascinating illustration of the public representations of Atlantic Canada and the provinces within the region in newspaper political cartoons. Conrad argued that these cartoons in particular clearly depicted the minimal place of Atlantic Canada in Confederation.

Drawing on the work of Janine Brodie who suggests that a "region" exists in "form, function and imagination," Conrad asked if Atlantic Canada constitutes a region under this definition. She argued that Atlantic Canada was created in 1949 with the joining of Newfoundland and Labrador, but while we joined with the Maritimes to form a larger "region," we did not gain the level of services consistent with the current Canadian standard. She challenged the "simplified and stereotypical view of Atlantic Canada" as the place of "second-class citizenship" held by the rest

of Canada and portrayed in editorial cartoons.

Considering form and function as definitions of region, Conrad sees a "deep and thick texture of connections" in this region - economic, social, educational and patterns of disasters like the Halifax explosion, which affected many from Newfoundland and Labrador living there. In "form" and "function" Newfoundland and Labrador may fit at least part of the definition of region, however, Conrad posed a final interesting question: what of our imagination? How might a new conceptualization of region be undertaken, one that would allow us to proceed in new alliances, nationally and/or

globally? She suggested that we look to a region of our "imagination": as "island communities" we might form alliances with other island communities in the world and thus be better able to shape our future. Linda Cullum

Friday Night: Dr. Jerry Bannister

In his presentation, Making History: Cultural Memory in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland, Jerry Bannister examined how our changing notion of History affects not only how we see the past, but how we imagine ourselves in the present and future. He maintained that our cultural memory remains dominated by themes of struggle and loss. We commemorate our economic failures and mourn the



Symposium speakers (L- R) Jerry Bannister, Jeff Webb, Peter Pope, Shane O'Dea and Margaret Conrad (in front) at the Saturday night banquet

loss of our traditional culture. Bannister argued that this view of history has only become entrenched since the 1970s. This change shaped, and was in turn shaped by, the economic nationalism that emerged in the 1970s and the provinces cultural renaissance from that decade on.

Prior to the 1970s the most significant work on the history of Newfoundland and Labrador was D.W. Prowse's *History of Newfoundland*. While Prowse divided his study into four periods, Bannister argued that the most significant division was between the first three sections, covering the period from 1497 to 1825, and the last section, the modern era, the struggle for autonomy, which began with the appointment of the first civil governor and ran to 1895. The final section then, covered Prowse's own lifetime.

According to Bannister the first three sections share the common themes of mercantile oppression, imperial neglect, and local perseverance. But in his classic whig view of history, Prowse saw the past as something quite distinct from his present. By the 1890s, merchants and fishermen should no longer be governed by mistrust because employers and employed are mutually dependent on each other. The gloom of the past, in Prowse's history, was left behind as late 19th century Newfoundlanders prepared to bounce back from misfortune and move into a bright future marked by modernization and economic progress.

For almost a century Prowse's history remained the orthodoxy, and influenced scholars like A.H. McIntock and Leslie Harris, as well as popular writers such as Joey Smallwood. Beginning with Keith

Matthews 1970's thesis, however, academic historians systematically challenged Prowse's simplistic account of villains and heroes. But despite the revisionist criticisms, Prowse's epic remains a popular and influential work. Bannister went on to explore this continued popularity and its impact on the province's economic and cultural nationalism in recent decades.

He argued that recent nationalist works, both economic and cultural, have been inspired by Prowse while, at the same time, his entire view of history has been turned on its head. Newer works did not distinguish between a distant oppressive past and progressive present. Rather than triumphing over their history of oppression, according to this view, Newfoundlanders are haunted by it.

Brian Peckford used both Prowse and the revisionist historians in his work *The Past and the Present*, published during the province's battle to gain control of offshore oil. In this work Prowse's fishing merchants were replaced by contemporary businessmen and repressive government officials intent on once more limiting Newfoundlanders' rights to control their own development. Unlike Prowse then, Peckford did not view the past as a separate quaint time replaced by modernity. The past haunted the present, making it difficult to break from the historic patterns of subjugation and failure. This view, Bannister argued, also permeated the social studies text studied by school children from the mid-1980s on, thus shaping the view of a whole generation.

Bannister maintained that the same pessimistic view permeated much of the cultural works from the 1970s

on. Writers like Sandra Gwyn, Ray Guy and Harold Horwood celebrated a lost heritage. Bannister quotes Sandra Gwyn's conclusion that the old order that produced all of us is being smashed, homogenized, and trivialized out of existence. For such writers the modernity touted by Prowse as salvation was now mourned as a cultural loss.

Bannister argued that as the line between history and heritage blurred, poets, novelists and other writers have supplanted historians as interpreters of the past. Works by E. Annie Proulx, Bernice Morgan and Ed Riche have been widely read. He focused particular attention on Wayne Johnston's acclaimed but controversial *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, a fictional biography of Smallwood. Rather than looking at Johnston's characterization of Smallwood, however, Bannister brought his talk full circle by analyzing Johnston's portrayal of Prowse's history. In *Colony*, he maintained, Prowse's history became a secular bible that haunted the main character. Smallwood's view of the past, based on Prowse, is a spiritual inheritance that leaves him, like other Newfoundlanders, guilty of failure to live up to the greatness of the land. Bannister concluded that Johnston's interpretation of Prowse was faulty. While his fictionalized Prowse may have been tortured in old age, his work was not. Its last section was an optimistic reassertion that Newfoundlanders could transcend their legacy of oppression and forge a new age of progress.

Bannister concluded his address by returning to the theme of nationalism. Nationalism, he argued, relies on certainty about the past and it minimizes cleavages. He admitted that nationalistic

accounts of oppression have value in any post-colonial society and that all societies need myths to sustain them. But heritage and history, he argued, cannot be used interchangeably. Heritage celebrates the past and offers a clear vision of cultural memory, while historians are wary of notions of truth and certainty. But history, like other writing, is socially constructed and professional historians cannot ignore nationalist historiography. Debunking myths is an undeniably important task, but we must not miss the essential point that nationalism is a significant part of Newfoundlands past, rooted in the history of its political and intellectual culture.

We need to recognize that in the twentieth century our view of our past shifted away from Prowse's unrealistic account of triumph over oppression to an equally flawed account that sees us trapped by history. While studying history can inform political debate, it should not replace it because, the past is as muddy and complex as the present. Borrowing the often-quoted sentiment that those who forget their past mistakes are doomed to repeat them, Bannister ended by warning that forgetting our achievements is just as risky.

Saturday: Dr. Jeff Webb

Saturday's sessions opened with a stimulating lecture by Dr. Jeff Webb entitled *Popular Culture and the Invention of a National Identity*. Webb, a Professor of History at Memorial University, has done extensive research on the role of mass media and popular culture in shaping society. According to Dr. Webb, it is futile to try to determine a single Newfoundland identity because in different regions of the province and at different times in

our history this identity varies greatly. A review of the literature shows that markers of identity are often determined by elites, usually as a means of advancing specific agendas, for example, intellectuals use symbols to rally groups in a common cause.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Patrick Morris and William Carson used contemporary mass media (newspapers) to promote the creation of democratic institutions to advance their individual social and political aspirations. Within Newfoundland society, there have been competing visions of nationalism seen through the use of symbols. For example, Bishop Fleming used the pink, white and green flag to create a vision of Newfoundland for the Irish population, a vision that was not universally shared and a symbol that was never sanctioned by the state. In a regional context, the seal hunt on the North East Coast engendered nationalistic sentiment through its portrayal of sealers as strong, hardy, independent men. Dr. Webb went on to examine the role of broadcasting in determining national icons. He contends that mass media creates a collective identity by presenting common symbols and that icons from specific geographic regions are generalized to represent a homogeneity. Prior to Confederation, when broadcasting was controlled locally, the Barreman program and the Doyle Bulletin shaped the way Newfoundlanders perceived themselves. According to Webb, Smallwoods portrayal of Newfoundlanders as a self-reliant, independent people was proposed as a way of countering the gloom of the depression. In what is perhaps the most obvious example of mass

media seen in what is perceived as Newfoundland music, the musical tradition from the predominately Irish Avalon Peninsula has been generalized to represent a homogenous Newfoundland music to the exclusion of all other musical forms.

Today much of Newfoundland's cultural fabric is woven by its artists; the image of Newfoundlanders created by painters, poets and writers has evolved through the combination of historical factors overlain by contemporary influence.

Saturday: Dr. Peter Pope

Dr. Peter Pope, a historical archaeologist at Memorial University, followed with a lecture entitled *How History Forgot 17th - Century Newfoundland: The Myth of Retarded Colonization and the Projection of Failure on the Past*. Dr. Pope questioned the historical record of 17th century settlement. Unlike Quebec, which exaggerates its 17th century past, Newfoundland has chosen to ignore much of its history of that period; the information that is known is shrouded in myth. Since omissions are essential factors in shaping a nation, Newfoundlands identity has been shaped by misinformation. The most common myth from that era portrays a demonic Great Britain controlling settlement for its domestic advantage. This myth was perpetuated by Prowse and has continued through the historical writings up to the present time. Most myths have some basis in truth but are usually employed for a purpose; the rationale in this case may have been to bring the English and Irish settlers together. Dr. Keith Matthews writing in the 1970s challenged this notion of inequity; his findings show that settlers and

merchants were mutually dependent.

According to Dr. Pope the history of settlement in Newfoundland during the 17th century may not have been as singular as had been previously considered. He examined the similarities between settlement in Newfoundland and other areas of Atlantic Canada and suggested the real question to be asked is: Who settled here and why? Dr. Pope has credited the work of archaeologists over the past fifteen years in challenging the prevailing assumptions concerning settlement in Newfoundland, and in asking historians to reconsider their previous notions about the history of the 17th century.

Eleanor Dawson

Saturday: Shane O'Dea and Bernice Morgan

Shane O'Dea in his talk entitled *Culture and Country: the Role of Arts and Heritage in the Revival of Nationalism* challenged the notion that nationalism is a pre-occupation of an urban elite. He stated that culture cannot exist within a vacuum. Its influences come from many sources. One audience member asked what is the role of ordinary people in the development of culture. O'Dea responded that there is a "popular" culture and an "elite" culture but that the two frequently overlap. The audience was also interested in discussing the cost at which we trade off our culture for tourism dollars. O'Dea responded by saying that commercial culture has its place but we tend to see it as contaminating "pure" culture. O'Dea agreed that it is a tricky topic but that we need to advance our economy in order to move forward.

The final lecture of the morning The



David Alexander Lecture Committee with David Alexander Lecturer Margaret Conrad on the first night of the symposium. (L - R) Shannon Ryan, Margaret Conrad, Gordon Inglis, David Facey-Crowther, Terry Bishop-Stirling

session was given by Bernice Morgan and entitled *The Culture of Place*. Morgan told the audience that as a child and young adult she had very little notion of what it meant to be a Newfoundlander. Growing up, she knew far more about England than she did about the island that was her home. Her knowledge of England came from books. There was no Newfoundland equivalent for her to learn from. Years later, Newfoundland songs started to become more common. In the 1960s and 1970s, community histories started to take shape, the first Newfoundland literary works were published and Newfoundland art galleries were showcasing the works of local artists. Morgan praised the efforts of those who have been responsible for the promotion of our history. The audience echoed her praise. They were very interested in ensuring that elderly Newfoundlanders write

down their stories so that parts of our past are not lost. Another audience member expressed a desire to see an oral history project capturing the experiences of organizations like the LSPU Hall. Again the issue was raised about the loss of our built heritage as outport homes are purchased by tourists. Morgan asks what are the alternatives. Without the tourists many outports would die. Isn't their survival preferable to their abandonment?

Saturday: Panel Discussion

The afternoon session was a panel discussion featuring Ed Riche, Jillian Keiley, Helen Peters, Daniel Payne and John Joy. Together, they tackled the idea of Newfoundland in the 21st century. Each of the panellists took the opportunity to say a few words about their views of Newfoundland identity and how they have been

shaped. Their experiences helped generate many questions from the audience such as do Newfoundlanders know who we are as a people. The panellists sensed that we do. Once again the audience returned to the idea of cultural activity being limited to St. Johns elites. Payne talked about his experiences growing up on the Great Northern Peninsula and how he felt the importance of preserving Newfoundland culture, something he has tried to do through his music. Other audience members were interested in gauging our sense of self-worth. Do we see ourselves as capable of handling our own affairs? The panellists agreed that we are indeed capable but sometimes we don't quite see it that way.

The question was also raised about what makes Newfoundlanders distinct from other Canadians. Keiley pointed to our wit and sense of humour. Peters noted that we seem to have a different sense of time. We are a more relaxed society. Riche commented on the way we express ourselves. Sometimes, he said, we shock mainlanders in the way we talk about the people close to us. Our language seems harsh even when speaking about those we like. The panellist agreed that we have many characteristics that make us unique. Based on the range of questions and comments over the course of the three day symposium, it is apparent that Newfoundlanders are thinking critically about what makes us who we are. What events

have transformed us? How does our shared history determine our current perception of ourselves? What are the commonalities that link us as a people? As we contemplate our place within the Canadian nation, one truth emerges. We need to fully appreciate what we have to offer before we can have any hope of Canada's recognition of our value.

Sunday: Closing Banquet

The Symposium concluded with a banquet of Atlantic salmon at the Battery Hotel. Local author, Michael Crummey, rounded off the evening with his reflections on his family history in Labrador and Conception Bay, and on being a Newfoundlander in the context of the 21st century - an insightful, entertaining and provocative presentation.

Membership Application Form

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____ EMAIL _____

Payment may be made by VISA, or by cheque or money order payable to the Newfoundland Historical Society

U.S. subscribers please pay in U.S. funds to cover extra postage. International subscribers please pay 18 pounds sterling or Canadian equivalent for regular membership.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Regular	\$24	Student	\$15	Life	\$400
---------	------	---------	------	------	-------

Institutional	\$24	Student (no Newfoundland Quarterly)	\$ 15
---------------	------	-------------------------------------	-------

Gift membership (Please give name and address)

FEE: _____ DONATION: _____ TOTAL: _____

VISA card number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Signature: _____ Amount: _____