

Winter 2013



EXECUTIVE 2012-13

President:
Larry Coady

Vice President:

Fred Smith

Past President:

Melanie Martin

Treasurer:

Nancy Snedden

Councillors:

Terry Bishop Stirling

Allan Byrne

John Cheeseman

Heidi Coombs-Thome

Larry Dohey

Jim Hiller

Caroline Lambert

Joan Ritcey

Jeff Webb

George Withers

Regional Representatives:

Betty Jerrett, Bay Roberts

Jim Miller, Trinity, T.B.

Robert Parsons, Grand Bank

Doug Wells, Harbour Breton

Sandra Wheeler, Corner Brook

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR:

Allison Mercer

Questions, comments, letters to the Editor and membership inquiries may be addressed to:

NHS Office
P.O. Box 23154
Churchill Square
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J9
(709) 722-3191 (phone)
(709) 739-6458 (fax)
email:
nhs@nf.aibn.com

Internet:
<http://www.nlhistory.ca/>

The Newfoundland Historical Society
1905-2013

Newsletter

Upcoming lectures

February 28 -- Patricia Grattan: City Seen: Artists' Views of St. John's 1785-2010

March 28 -- TBA

April 25 -- Tom Gordon: Natanael Illiniartitsijok - Inuk Composer

Regular lectures will be in Hampton Hall at the Marine Institute on Ridge Road at 8.00 pm. If the weather is bad, please consult the Storm Centre at cbc.ca/nl. Cancellations will be posted there.

Cook Symposium 2012: a successful NHS Endeavour

In September 2012 the NHS held a symposium to celebrate the 250th anniversary of James Cook's first arrival in Newfoundland. The symposium started when 110 people turned out for Fred Smith's talk at The Rooms, on Cook's life up to when Cook finished his work in Newfoundland in 1767. Fred also gave a talk at the Ship pub, on what St. John's was like in Cook's time.

Historian Dr. Olaf Janzen of Grenfell College, MUN, treated us to an excellent talk hosted by The Rooms Provincial Archives. His talk, The French Seizure of St. John's in 1762, the British Response, and James Cook, was attended by 130 people and enjoyed by all.

Sessions were also held on the MUN campus. Our first speaker, John Robson, University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand was there electronically. His talk, Cook the Map Maker, was a voice over PowerPoint presentation that you can listen to on our web page <http://www.nlhistory.ca/pastLectures.html>.

Each year MUN Geography Dept. presents a Captain Cook Award to high achieving Geography students. Dr. Charles Mather, head, presented this year's awards to students Christina Pretty and Daniel Downey during the symposium.

Other speakers included Charles Stirling, retired head of the Canadian Hydrographic Service in Newfoundland and Gary Smith, present day writer of sailing directions, Canadian Hydrographic Service. In his talk, James Cook, The Great Newfoundland Survey, The Means of Directing Many in the Right Way, Mr. Stirling discussed how Cook constructed his charts using symbols for submerged rocks, good anchoring places, and how he constructed leading lines and other aids to navigation. Gary Smith's talk, Sailing Directions of Newfoundland and Labrador, Captain Cook to Present Day, followed up with a discussion of how Cook wrote his sailing directions and how they are done these days. Following the talks there was a wide-ranging discussion, and sometimes debate, for an hour, on aspects of Cook's life and work in Newfoundland and how charts were printed in Cook's time. (Photos p. 4)

Inside ...

Thompson's Beach, Harbour Breton 2

Canada's Past Matters, says CAUT 3

The Provincial Commemorations Program 3



Thompson's Beach: A part of Harbour Breton's history

by Doug Wells,
NHS Regional Representative, Harbour Breton

"Thompson's Beach, part of which is occupied by Messrs. Clarke & Young of Poole, whereon they lately built some buildings and made other improvements, is the best situated for carrying on a fishery..."
— Capt James Cook, 1766

Thompson's Beach is located on the south side of Harbour Breton at the entrance to the harbour. It is a naturally formed, cobble and sand beach spanning approximately 700 metres, from the lighthouse on its eastern end to a cluster of fishing premises on its western end. The beach is suitable for drying fish and building stages and wharfs. The area behind the beach is large enough to have all the buildings and services necessary to meet the demands of a large plantation, even a doctor's residence and a church.

Thompson's Beach has been the site of fishery related activity in Harbour Breton for over 300 years. Frequented by the Bretons based at Plaisance (Placentia) in the seventeenth century and the merchants who followed, all recognized the tremendous potential of the beach area for carrying on a fishery. In Captain William Taverner's Survey of 1718, he states *"Harbour Breton is very rugged mountainous land; in the harbour is a good beach [Thompson's], a planter's house and stages."* Captain Cook in 1766 wrote *"Thompson's Beach, part of which is occupied by Messrs. Clarke & Young of Poole, whereon they lately built some buildings and made other improvements, is the best situated for carrying on a fishery..."* Dr. Conrad Fitz-Gerald, a Newman & Co. doctor arrived in Harbour Breton in the summer of 1873 and he noticed a stony beach with sheds, platforms, and fish drying. Dr. Fitz-Gerald has stated that during "settling up time," during the fall of the year, as many as 150 ships would be anchored off Thompson's Beach waiting to be unloaded at the premises. The beach has seen several commercial fishery operations over the years, including Clark & Young, Newman & Co., Job Brothers, Hugh Coady Limited, British Columbia Packers, and Fishery Products International. Currently, it is still the location of the main fishery operations in the community with an aquaculture operation.

Newman & Co., one of the largest English West Country merchant firms to operate in Newfoundland during the nineteenth century, operated its import and export business in Harbour Breton for over 100 years (circa 1790s-1901). Newman & Co. did business with fishermen along the south coast, especially those in Fortune Bay. Thompson's Beach was the hub of the Newman operations and was the location of many of the Company's stores and warehouses for the purpose of curing fish, maturing of port wine, and carrying on a supply trade to communities along the south coast. The western end of the beach was often used for hauling in small schooners for repairs and general maintenance.

Thompson's Beach has cultural value for generations of Harbour Breton residents who have a shared recollection of the cultural use of the beach. Newman & Co. erected a battery on the beach to protect its premises from potential attacks from privateers with several cannons facing the entrance to the harbour. The cannons were often tested by firing across the harbour at Gun Hill. The cannons were also fired to welcome special guests and dignitaries to the community, like a visiting Governor or Lieutenant Governor. Occasionally they would be fired to acknowledge a wedding in the community. An account from 1877 describes this practice following the wedding of Dr. Conrad Fitz-Gerald, who was married in Belleoram on October 18, 1877 and later that day arrived in Harbour Breton aboard the Newman & Co. vessel *Greyhound*. The arrival is described as follows: *"The crashing reports from every variety of fire-arm mingled with the reverberating roar of the cannons of the battery as the bridal ship rounded Rocky Point made excitement run high in the fishing town."* After marriage ceremonies in more recent years, cannons would be fired, not using cannon balls but instead a combination of beach rocks and old cloth for wads. It produced a big bang but the results were very unpredictable. The Battery had cannons of various sizes but the only remaining cannon is a six pounder, which fired six pound cannon balls.

Thompson's Beach is a recognized landmark in the community of Harbour Breton. It has been valued for its natural features for centuries and remains an important component of the community's landscape.



Newman & Co. Battery on Thompson's Beach, c.1837. Schooners in background waiting to be unloaded. Gun Hill is on the left.

Canadian Association of University Teachers launches Canada's Past Matters campaign

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) has unveiled a national campaign exposing the threats to Canada's cultural institutions and historic sites and proposing what must be done to reverse the damage. The "Canada's Past Matters" campaign highlights how federal funding cuts and policy changes are putting the survival of libraries, archives, museums and historical sites across the country at risk.

"Our ability as Canadians to know, understand and appreciate our past is at stake because of the federal government's short-sighted cuts and ill-advised changes to historical programs and services," CAUT executive director James L. Turk said at a recent news conference in Ottawa. We've launched this campaign because the changes we're seeing affect not just our members, but all Canadians in very damaging ways. We cannot chart our future properly unless we know and understand our past. Until government policy is changed, that will be less and less possible for our children and future generations."

The campaign has five aspects:

- **Save Library & Archives Canada:** The federal institution responsible for preserving Canada's history and cultural heritage is seriously threatened by major budget cuts, service reductions, and a narrowing of its mandate.
- **Preserve Canada's Historical Sites:** A \$29 million reduction in the budget for Parks Canada is threatening the future of Canada's 167 historic and archaeological sites.
- **Protect Canada's Public Libraries:** The inter-library loan program between Library & Archives Canada and regional public libraries is being eliminated along with public internet access in local libraries, making it more difficult for Canadians to access information and knowledge.
- **Restore Canada's Local Archives:** The elimination of the National Archival Development Program has put at risk regional archives and their projects across Canada.
- **Retain the Canadian Museum of Civilization:** The government plans to end Canada's largest and most popular museum – the only museum committed to promoting knowledge and critical understanding of, and appreciation and respect for, human cultural achievements and human behaviour.

For more information about the "Canada's Past Matters" campaign, visit www.canadaspastmatters.ca. The Canadian Association of University Teachers is the national voice of more than 68,000 academic and general staff at 120 universities and colleges across the country.

The Provincial Historic Commemorations Program

The Provincial Historic Commemorations Program is an exciting opportunity for citizens to nominate aspects of our heritage and culture that they feel are significant to the province as a whole and contribute to an understanding of ourselves as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The program was created as part of a commitment to raise the profile and awareness of significant heritage resources outlined by the Provincial Government's cultural strategy *Creative Newfoundland and Labrador: The Blueprint for Development and Investment in Culture*. The program's activities support Blueprint's direction by helping preserve and safeguard our tangible and intangible heritage.

What sets this program apart from other commemorative programs is the recognition and commemoration of our tradition bearers. A tradition bearer is a person or group of people, living or deceased, who possess a high degree of knowledge and skills to perform or re-create specific elements of Newfoundland and Labrador's intangible cultural heritage, especially aspects that are rare or are in danger of being lost. Since its beginning the program has recognized Kelly Russell and John Nicholas Jeddore as tradition bearers.

Twice per year the Provincial Historic Commemorations Board considers nominations submitted by the public in the categories of places, people, events, cultural practices and traditions, and tradition bearers. Each successful nomination receives provincial recognition through an official ceremony and e-plaque, and upwards of \$2500 in funding towards a Legacy Activity.

The Program held its first commemorations ceremony in 2010. To date, the Provincial Historic Commemorations Program has designated 16 commemorations.

The Program has also seen the completion of 11 Legacy Activity events. During the course of the Program's history these Legacy Activity grants have been used by organizations to develop programs aimed at engaging youth in the province's culture and heritage, fund tradition bearers in the development of websites and memoirs to help spread their message, added financial assistance to help produce an official history, fostered community celebrations, and much more.

For further information on how to nominate someone or something under the Provincial Historic Commemorations Program or to view past designations please visit our website at <http://www.seethesites.ca/commemorations-program.aspx>

**Remember to join the NHS!
Fill out the form on page 4 and visit nlhistory.ca to find out how you benefit!**

**Newfoundland & Labrador :
the French Presence Past and
Present:**

St. John's, August 14-16 2013

The year 2013 is the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht, a document that has shaped the history of the French fact in Newfoundland. On this occasion, Memorial University's Department of French & Spanish, with the support of a number of local organizations, is planning an event to discuss the current state of knowledge in the field of French-Newfoundland studies.

Ask questions: fran.cotnl@mun.ca

Visit website:

www.franctnl.net

Scenes from the Cook Symposium



Highlights were many at the Cook Symposium held in September, including presenting MUN Geography Department's Captain Cook Award to high achieving students Christina Pretty and Daniel Downey. The awards were presented by department head Charles Mather.



Speakers included (left to right) Olaf Janzen, Charles Stirling and Gary Smith.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Membership Fees: Regular or Institutional \$40 / Life \$400. Membership entitles you to a 30% off Heritage Canada membership.

Note : Membership includes a subscription to the Newfoundland Quarterly and three Newsletters per year, and is valid for 12 months from the date of payment of the fee. Your expiry date will appear at the bottom left of your mailing label; the figures on the bottom right are a mailing code.

Donations are always welcome! And remember that memberships make great gifts; gift cards are available from the NHS office.

Would you like to save paper and receive our Newsletter electronically (in colour)?

Would you like to be added to our list to be notified of upcoming events?

Would you like to be removed from the list of those receiving notification of upcoming events?

Please check the relevant box(es).

Fee _____ Donation _____ Total _____

Visa Card Number _____ Expiry Date _____

Signature _____

Payment may be made by VISA, cheque or money order to the Newfoundland Historical Society. Please send this form with your payment to the address on the front page. US subscribers please pay in US funds to cover postage. International subscribers please pay 18 pounds sterling or Canadian equivalent.

NHS Office, P.O. Box 23154, Churchill Square, St. John's, NL, A1B 4J9