STORYTELLING ON THE GABARUS-FRAMBOISE COAST OF CAPE BRETON: ORAL NARRATIVE REPERTOIRE ANALYSIS IN A FOLK COMMUNITY

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STORYTELLING ON THE GABARUS-FRAMBOISE COAST OF CAPE BRETON: ORAL NARRATIVE REPERTOIRE ANALYSIS IN A FOLK COMMUNITY

by

Ranald Thurgood

A thesis submitted to the
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Abstract

The rural folk community exists. The Gabarus-Framboise region of eastern Cape Breton, although not Redfield's ideal folk society, is, nonetheless, a contemporary folk community in which virtually every person knows every other and where all are connected by a strong sense of history, tradition, kinship, and place. Unlike members of many urban communities of interest, residents of Gabarus-Framboise interact continually at work and play. Any individual's social universe extends well beyond the immediate area but is dominated by relationships with local people. Here, a sense of regional identity is both shaped and reinforced by storytelling traditions. In fact, stories provide roots for the people of this community, connecting the tellers and listeners even as they entertain.

This thesis is a repertoire analysis of contemporary oral narratives in a rural folk community. A thematic breakdown of stories shows that while they cover a variety of topics, most focus on the community, its residents, and their physical and social environment. To situate current storytelling practices and themes, they are first placed within their historical-cultural context. The region's oral narratives are enjoyable and comprehensible, at a basic level, to outsiders. However, these stories are better understood as parts of an ongoing community novel containing both repeating and overlapping characters and topics, carrying deeper messages about identity, relationships, and values to insiders.

The community's narratives cannot be separated from either tellers or listeners. Most local residents share the ability to create entertaining narratives about such subjects as personal experiences, family and

community history, supernatural occurrences, and local characters. Typical conversational storytelling is analyzed by examining a house visit involving two couples, in which each person makes an important contribution to the evening's entertainment. The thesis includes many stories from both men and women. However, the role of specialized storyteller is attributed locally to the elderly, usually men or Gaelic speakers. The repertoires and storytelling practices of three men who are recognized by their neighbours as the community's outstanding storytellers are explored. While expressing their own preferences for particular narratives and narrative genres, local storytellers, whether conversational or specialized, maintain and reshape regional identity.

Dedication

I was raised in a home in which laughter, music, art, literature, creative pursuits, and moral values were ingredients of daily life. The dinner table was a lively and noisy place where my family shared experiences and debated current events. We spent considerable time in the outdoors where we children learned to observe and appreciate the natural world. After moving to Ontario, we maintained close bonds with our extended family in the Maritimes, thereby developing a strong sense of kinship and heritage.

My parents are both artful storytellers of different types. My mother tells lengthy and lively stories about personal experiences and family and community history. My father's specialty is turning observations of the world around him into short, humorous anecdotes. It was from my parents and relatives that I learned both the art of conversational storytelling and the skill of listening.

By their words and actions, my parents taught me to value both higher education and the wisdom of uneducated people. Their teachings enabled me to retain my sense of wonder and to pursue my dreams even when they seemed to go against the current of the times. (My folks must have sometimes questioned the worth of the second lesson.) They provided both emotional and financial support at times when it was needed. The interests that inspired this thesis and the determination that led to its completion were developed under their tutelage. It is to my parents, Charlie and Lois Thurgood, that this work is dedicated, with love and respect.

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If my acknowledgements seem lengthy, that is because this thesis is based on an ongoing study of a community and would not have been possible without the co-operation, help, advice, and encouragement of many people.

From the development of my proposal to the completion of my thesis, I benefited from my supervisor Martin Lovelace's expertise in the areas of oral narrative and rural culture, his exacting standards, and his empathetic and respectful attitude toward students. Martin challenged my thinking throughout by providing constructive comments, astute questions, and perceptive observations. Having Martin as my supervisor was a privilege. My scholarship matured considerably under under his guidance.

My advisors, Neil Rosenberg and Jerry Poçius, through their conscientious criticism and their knowledge of the folklore of small communities in Atlantic Canada, helped me clarify my arguments, and address neglected theoretical issues. They, along with my other my other professors—the late David Buchan, Diane Goldstein, Peter Narváez, Paul Smith, Gerald Thomas, Diane Tye, and visiting instructor Leonard Primiano —helped develop my thinking and aided me in various ways during my student years. The department secretaries, Sharon Cochrane, Karen O'Leary, and Eileen Collins provided both practical help and moral support.

Most of all though, I would like to thank the residents, expatriates, and summer dwellers of the Gabarus-Framboise region—a most hospitable community—without whom this project would not have been possible. These people became my friends and teachers, welcoming me into their

homes and educating me in their culture, while sharing stories, laughter, and countless cups of tea (in Cape Breton, a "cup of tea" refers to a spontaneous meal served to guests). My one regret is that because my study took so long and was concerned primarily with the elderly, a number of people who helped me (and whose names are marked with a "d," for "deceased," below) did not live to see this work completed. I would like to express my appreciation to all of the fine people of this region. I hope that I have earned your trust and respect. *Móran taing. Tha mi gu math fada 'nur comain.*

Special thanks are due to the many people who allowed me to interview them. The stories and cultural knowledge shared by Lloyd MacDonald, Dan Alex MacLeod (d), and Arthur Severance (d), all fine storytellers, became the core of my work. My hosts, Jimmy Dan E. (d) and Patsy MacLeod and "J. C." and Sheila MacCormick truly made me feel at home. I appreciated the quiet warmth and wisdom of Jimmy and Patsy who treated me like a son, Patsy even insisting that I wear an ironed shirt when visiting her friends. John Neil and Christene MacLean, whose home is a source of wonderful fiddling and fine food, also became good friends. Alex and Annie MacLean were very supportive of my work, even searching out dates on gravestones to contribute to my research. Mary Maggie MacCormick (d), Sarah "Belfry" MacCormick, Philip (d) and Margaret Ann (d) MacDonald, Jimmy Philip (d) and Lena MacLeod (d), Roy and Flora MacLeod, Maggie MacQueen, Haidee Pearce, and Bruce Smith (d) all offered friendship and assistance which I valued highly.

Many people helped in other ways—by filling out questionnaires, allowing me to record their words or copy photographs, tapes, and papers,

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Chapter I

Introduction

On the southeastern coast of Cape Breton Island, well off the highways preferred by tourists, truckers, and Cape Bretoners with places to go, are three small villages with houses strung along the adjacent roads. The people of Gabarus, Fourchu, Framboise and the surrounding area virtually all know one another and share a culture and heritage. Like countless other rural Canadian communities, the Gabarus-Framboise region has become insignificant in the view of those who judge a place by the size of its population or by its contribution to the Gross National Product. In fact, many Nova Scotians were outraged when their provincial government chose to spend taxpayers' dollars paving the road through this sparsely-populated region for the first time in the mid-1990s. However, for the permanent residents of this area and for those natives who return every summer, this is home.

The year-round dwellers are people who have consciously chosen not to pursue economic opportunities elsewhere and who, in most cases, have been willing to sacrifice income opportunities as well as some modern conveniences for the privilege of dwelling here. The residents know the land, they know the sea, and most importantly, they know the people–not only their neighbours but those who are buried in local cemeteries or whose

bones are lost forever on the ocean floor. As well as having a common history, these coastal people share rich musical and storytelling traditions.

In this thesis, I will demonstrate that in the Gabarus-Framboise region, storytelling keeps the past close to the present. The stories told by local people are aspects of their creativity, ways of entertaining themselves and enriching their lives. The area's residents do not tell tales in order to escape the drudgery of daily life; rather, their storytelling enriches what is to many an already satisfying existence. Most of the narratives stand on their own as entertaining stories, yet they are vitally linked with their tellers and with the community's perception of itself. Stories provide roots for the people of this rural stretch of eastern Cape Breton, connecting tellers and listeners, even as they entertain.

1.1 Approach and Methodology

I use repertoire analysis to examine the oral narratives of this rural folk community (the concepts "narrative," "repertoire analysis," and "folk community"will be explained in Chapter II). In attempting to understand the relationships among the community, its storytellers, and their stories, I have asked the following questions: What is a "story" to the people of the Gabarus-Framboise region? What narratives are told and how can they be categorized? How do these stories speak to community members? Who are the storytellers and what are their social roles? Are narratives connected more with the community and its traditions or with the individuality of the tellers? What does the collective repertoire tell us about tradition in this folk community?

To answer these questions, I analyzed data gathered during two field trips to eastern Cape Breton: a two-month trip in 1992 and a two-week one in 1995. The main purposes of the first trip were to gather narratives and to observe and participate in the life of the community. The goals of the second trip were to gather stories from storytellers whom I had not been able to interview previously, to re-interview some of the best storytellers, and to fill in gaps in my findings by seeking further information regarding historical and contemporary storytelling contexts. These trips resulted in over ninety hours of audio recordings as well as copious fieldnotes.

During both field trips, I boarded with couples living in the community. I interacted with other people through informal visits, chance meetings, and prearranged interviews. My interviewing style was flexible, ranging from using a list of predetermined topics to recording whatever stories arose in general conversation. I made tape-recordings in a variety of situations, including one-on-one interviews, interviews with couples, an interview with two sisters and a cousin, a house visit involving two couples, a house party, and one unique interview which took place during a drive, a walk, and a breakfast with two local people and two strangers, American tourists who had been put up for the night by the man I was interviewing. I also made several informal visits to the Gabarus-Framboise region and corresponded with a number of residents. In addition, I consulted a few former residents of the community and their progeny in order to learn more about the oral history and former storytelling traditions of the region.

In the course of my research, I found that storytelling is a common pastime in the area. Many residents, male and female, use narratives skilfully to entertain or to illustrate points in conversation. However, the

meaning of the word story is not self-evident; instead it is variable and culturally constructed. From a local viewpoint, "stories" are often concerned with the past (1950s or earlier) and "storytelling" is associated with both elderly people and Gaelic speakers, who in many instances, are the same people. With one exception, a man in his late forties, it was to these people that I was directed. My attempts to collect stories from younger people resulted only in my being referred to their elders.[1] Therefore, my thesis will focus on the community's own concept of storytellers and its designation of the elderly as tradition bearers.[2]

Because I was directed toward the elderly, I was not privy to particular storytelling situations. As one couple with whom I stayed was elderly and the other did not have children, I spent little time around children or youths. I did not hear either the stories shared among the young, adults' stories for children, or any kind of private telling within younger families. Furthermore, a number of men in the area are fishermen. Although I had regular contact with some and visited their homes, I was neither invited onto fishing boats nor to the fishermen's shanties, which are known to be social places. My one drop-in visit to a fishing shanty was brief and awkward so I have little sense of what stories are told within. As in any community, there were numerous social occasions at which storytelling undoubtedly took place, from which I was excluded because of factors such as gender, age, the intimacy of the occasion, or because I did not know they were happening. In my boarding situations, I heard many stories in conversation. However, as I was in these houses as a boarder and guest and not as a collector, these stories were off the record. However, I did spend considerable time with and heard

many stories from those that the community itself designates its storytellers —the elderly.

I had the privilege of spending most of my time with old people, garnering stories primarily in either one-on-one interviews or interviews with couples, during which one person dominated and the other played a more supportive role (neither sex dominated consistently). In recent years, folklorists and others have acknowledged that the introduction of a tape recorder changes most folklore events, making participants more self-conscious and sometimes stimulating them to alter their performances for an imagined audience. However, the Finnish folklorist Anna-Leena Siikala (1990) provided another viewpoint when she addressed criticisms of collecting stories in interview settings rather than in their supposedly proper context.

> The telling at an interview has a tendency to expand into narrative entities containing several motifs and narrative units and to incorporate descriptive and assessing episodes into the narrative proper. 'Long telling' of this kind is thought to be the product of an artificial situation. In my experience it is able to be found in natural telling contexts when there is only one competent tradition bearer. (207)

Siikala gives as an example of such a "natural" context, her grandmother's telling stories to children.

My experience supports that of Siikala. In rural and, to a lesser degree, urban Canada, older people commonly tell long, detailed stories to children or younger adults. Before becoming a folklorist, I spent many hours in conversation with my grandparents, great aunts and uncles, and other elderly people during which they told stories and dominated the conversation while I mostly listened and asked questions.[3] The gap between this sort of

conversation and a tape-recorded interview is not as great as many folklorists imagine. In addition, my own interviewing style has become flexible and conversational over the years, lessening the gap between interviews and conversations even further. However, there are still notable differences between the two, such as the interviewer's self-consciousness and goal-orientation as opposed to the conversationalist's usual focus on the immediate experience. The fact that people sometimes asked me if the tape recorder was still on or mentioned forgetting that it was playing indicates that, for them at least, the interview setting was not formal and alien but comfortable. The scholarly acceptance of the idea that only public or group storytelling events among peers (as in Chapter V of this thesis) are "real" or "natural," suggests that many folklorists lack familiarity with either rural society or informal storytelling in private settings. Due to their own inexperience, these scholars idealize one type of storytelling situation while rejecting another common one.

The stories which I have gathered do not comprise the region's complete repertoire, nor have I recorded the entire repertoire of any individual storyteller. What I have collected is a sampling of the narrative repertoire of the Gabarus-Framboise community. The area's storytellers are all individuals who have spent their lives interacting with people both inside and outside the area; therefore, one cannot assume that all their tales originate within the community or are part of its communal property. Undoubtedly, I missed some good storytellers for reasons ranging from health difficulties to pure chance. One highly-praised man in his late nineties had a bad fall in his home and was moved to Halifax on the day before I planned to

visit him. I was unable to cross paths with a few and probably never heard of others.

Although I interviewed an equal number of men and women, I noted that the community was more likely to label men as storytellers. Barbara Rieti found a similar situation in Newfoundland: "It seems that men acquire a reputation for story-telling more often than women, and are more likely to put themselves forward to be interviewed" (1991:214). Like Rieti, though to a lesser degree, I was sometimes sent along a male "referral chain, where one contact suggests another—a man tends to send one on to another man" (214). Folklorists have observed that, in many cultures, public storytelling is generally men's domain while women more often participate in a "private tradition" of household storytelling.[4] This private role for women often leads to their not being recognized as storytellers. Lena (Rafuse) MacLeod, of Belfry, was an entertaining storyteller, quite capable of holding her own in an intimate group of two couples (see Chapter V). Nonetheless, another community resident described her as being "quiet" and was surprised that she had stories to tell. I was unable to record certain other women in the community who are also good storytellers, for example, my first hostess, Patsy MacLeod, who told me personal experience stories about her life and travels, and my second hostess, Sheila MacCormick, who related many humorous narratives about community happenings. The reasons included reluctance to be recorded, lack of self-identification as storytellers, and, in the homes of my hostesses, my primary role as guest rather than researcher. However, I did record other women telling stories or relating non-narrative descriptions of the community's past.

Although most of the people of this region are competent storytellers,

neither men nor women are consistently good. However, since men have the reputation of being public storytellers, they are more accessible to a researcher with a tape recorder. A list of deceased storytellers to whom contemporary residents (male and female) of the region referred in conversation provides evidence of the community's perception that storytellers are male (see Appendix 1). Less than one-seventh of these past tradition bearers were female. Among contemporary storytellers, the more prolific narrators and those who had the lengthiest stories were, with few exceptions, male. However, extensive fieldwork over a longer period would allow more documentation of storytelling in households, where women often excel as narrators.

Obscene or scatological stories are absent from this collection. Folklorists often criticize the absence of such material, arguing that a researcher's delicacy about such matters prevents a proper understanding of a community's values. The lack of off-colour material in this collection exists for the following reasons:

1) I heard very few obscene stories. This was due in part to the fact that most of the stories that I did hear were being passed from older people to a younger interviewer and not among age mates. A taste for such humour certainly exists in the area. One elderly man sent me two pieces of photocopier lore which contained off-colour narratives. Another man entertained me with stories of the sexual peccadilloes of a deceased fiddler—but only after the tape recorder had been turned off. I heard a few ribald jokes but, generally, this is not a community in which people tell such stories casually without carefully gauging their audience in order to avoid giving offence. The popularity and acceptance of obscenity (as of

alcohol use) varies greatly among folk groups and communities whether rural or urban, especially in regard to its acceptance in public forums.

2) Country people, including those of the Gabarus-Framboise region, are usually self-conscious about both their own and their community's image. Reputation is paramount in rural areas. When an outsider who moved to Framboise was charged with a crime that was repugnant to the people of the village, they were disturbed both by the alleged act and by the fact that their village's name appeared in newspapers in connection with this crime. Though the issue of obscene stories ranks much lower on a scale of importance, many area residents would not like to see off-colour stories, which are normally told between specific individuals in private situations, portrayed as representative of the community. One area woman told me of having a "girls' night" at which she and a friend told "dirty jokes." Her elderly, straight-laced mother-in-law would not go to bed because she was having such a good time. However, the older woman could not forget her public image and stated, "I'm glad the girls [her other daughters-in-law] can't see me."

3) When stories are printed, storytellers lose the editorial control which exists when they relate narratives orally. Here, context is the foremost issue. When obscene stories are put in print, they are removed from accepted settings and placed before general audiences, not all of whose members are as blasé about obscenity as are many folklorists. This, in turn, offends those storytellers who originally told their stories to a restricted group and not to an undifferentiated audience.[5]

I respect the values of these people. At the same time, I am committed to academic integrity and do not wish to present a simplistic and idealistic

view of the Gabarus-Framboise community. The elderly storytellers with whom I spent most time rarely, if ever, related obscene stories to me. Therefore, I am unclear as to the popularity or importance of such stories in this community but I can say with confidence that they are reserved for private forums. Because I heard so few of these stories and was given no basis for judging their significance, I will not focus on obscene materials in this thesis.

In analyzing those stories that I did collect, I listened to all my tapes, classifying narratives thematically in order to see what it is that people regularly talk about. As will be shown, many of the stories deal with the community and its past. Residents often engage in a type of many-layered, conversational storytelling with which I was already familiar from time spent in other rural areas. For instance, in Chapter V, Jimmie Philip MacLeod begins to tell of the wreck of the *Afghan Prince* in 1912 but ends with a related incident which took place in 1939. In Chapter VII, Lloyd MacDonald tells a story of the tidal wave of 1929, which includes an anecdote about his aunt's narrow escape. This story then develops into a narrative about a great-aunt, who had a stroke the same night, and eventually turns into a ghost story, which in turn leads to a related tale about a psychic prediction. The story covers a period of years and ends with an incident considerably removed from the tidal wave. Both Jimmy and Lloyd run one narrative into another without any clear breaks.

In other instances, a storyteller seemingly abandons a story, while expanding on some sub-theme, only to return to the main tale later. Any decision to categorize such accounts as either one lengthy narrative or a series of short narratives strung together is highly subjective. Such storytelling,

without concise beginnings and endings and with one narrative overlapping another, defies attempts at precise classification and categorization. In keeping with this style of storytelling, I am looking for patterns of narrative themes rather than counting exact numbers of stories. Therefore, numbers throughout this thesis are intended to indicate thematic patterns rather than provide exact data.

My analytical approach is an extension of the work on oral narrative done by the Budapest and Finnish schools, which will be examined in Chapter II of this thesis, as will other theoretical issues. However, my basic approach to folklore is eclectic, borrowing ideas when they contribute to understanding. Eclecticism is one of the great strengths of folklore as a discipline. The field of anthropology, despite such recent theoretical interests as reflexivity, postmodernism, politics of culture, and empowerment of indigenous peoples, has been dominated by structuralism and functionalism for most of the twentieth century. Attempts to replace these theories have often led to the development of other grand, all-encompassing theories of human behaviour which tend to either incorporate or react to structuralism and functionalism (e.g., structural-functionalism, Levi-Straussian structuralism, culture and personality, Marxism, and ecosociology). Folklore studies, rather than being dominated by any one theory, are generally based on fieldwork combined with various theories of human communication. Robert Baron (1993) pointed out that folklore's "multi-paradigm, inter-disciplinary" approach predated many current trends in scholarship: "Just prior to its mid-century point, folklore was, in spite of itself, kind of proto-postmodern in its peculiarly pluralistic, rather laissez faire eclecticism; in its hybrid accommodation of different perspectives; and in the absence of widely

overarching theories" (242). Despite the disciplinary dominance of performance theory in the late twentieth century, folklorists still use a variety of approaches (e.g., minute analyses of performances, sociolinguistics, structural analysis, feminism, postmodernism, type and motif analysis, political theories, aesthetics, and comparative studies). Although many folklorists have attempted to promote one grand theory and some lament the lack, others regard such an absence as a positive attribute of our discipline.

Leonard Primiano, in his study of "Dignity," a gay and lesbian Catholic organization (1993), explained that specific theoretical interpretations fail to explain the complexity of the individuals with whom he worked:

> I have tried to <u>understand</u> their lives and while that process does involve explanation, I do not feel that I can explain them or the entirety of their religiosity through my own scholarly theory. Such an attempt is impossible, for such a process of explanation reduces the profound, complicated, and mysterious realities of their lives." (478)

Primiano's words are equally true for the people of the Gabarus-Framboise community.

Despite my criticism of anthropology's quest for a grand theory of human behaviour, my own intellectual approach has been strongly influenced by my studies in social anthropology, a discipline which has always specialized in the study of small groups; even urban anthropologists usually work with sub-cultures in which they can develop personal relationships. My anthropological and folkloristic influences are both reflected in my interest in community, people, and stories and in my approach to analyzing them. Although, I focus on human vitality and creative expression as reflected in a community's oral art, in this study, I am also well aware of difficult and negative aspects of human existence and their

folkloric expressions. As a boy, I received a thorough oral education in prejudice, violence, and criminal behaviour from both rural and urban peers. Nonetheless, I have a great interest in how people use traditional arts, such as storytelling, to enrich their lives.

My approach is strongly influenced by Barre Toelken who emphasizes the importance of creativity and communication, tradition and innovation, and community and culture in folklore. Toelken explains:

> ...*folklore* is a word very much like *culture*; it represents a tremendous spectrum of human expression that can be studied in a number of ways and for a number of reasons. Its primary characteristic is that its ingredients seem to come directly from dynamic interactions among human beings in communal-traditional performance contexts rather than through the more rigid and fossilized structures of technical instruction or bureaucratized education, or through the relatively stable channels of classical traditions. (author's italics; 1979:28-29)

I hope that this thesis embodies the warmth and respect which both Toelken and Edward T. "Sandy" Ives show toward those who share their folklore with them. I also share the humanism and holism—the belief that people are something more than the sum of their parts—of many of my predecessors in folklore. Like William Wilson, I believe in the existence of "good people" (1991:133) and, like Henry Glassie, I value "the gentle wisdom of old men" (1982:xiii)—and women.

1.2 The Gabarus-Framboise Community

The Gabarus-Framboise community, like so many other ethnographic-research areas is, to some degree, the researcher's construct. The people in the area all know and are connected with each other and none objected or even raised an eyebrow when I used the term, "Gabarus-Framboise region."

However, the expression is my own, which I use for the sake of convenience as the residents have no encompassing name for their community. Actually, each individual stands at the centre of his or her own social world. People in Gabarus in the north of the region have networks that extend into Big Ridge and Marion Bridge while those in Framboise in the south and Stirling in the southwest have connections in L'Archeveque, L'Ardoise, and Loch Lomond. People in the north are more likely to go to Sydney to shop and bank while people in the south travel to St. Peters. Nonetheless, the people who live in the Gabarus-Framboise area have many interconnections and share a sense of community, even if that community does not have clear borders.

The Gabarus-Framboise region is unquestionably rural (see Plates 1.1 to 1.5). The North Atlantic pounds its shores and the land is dominated by woods, barrens (bogs), and fields now grown wild. The coast itself contains harbours and coves close to a series of lakes, many separated from the ocean by only a couple of hundred metres of sand. Wild animals—seals, foxes, deer, rabbits, and coyotes—are seen and heard throughout the area, their numbers varying according to the hunting patterns of humans and the cycles of nature. Loons call on the lakes. Eagles and ospreys fly overhead.

About three-hundred to three-hundred-and-fifty people live in the Gabarus-Framboise community. Because this community crosses census boundaries, an exact population figure would require either a door-to-door survey or a lengthy analysis of census statistics, both of which would be time-consuming and of minimal value. However, both statistics and oral testimony make clear that the local population has declined considerably since the beginning of the century. According to census statistics, in the eighty years from 1911 to 1991, the population of Gabarus and Gabarus Lake

alone fell from over eleven hundred people to less than two hundred (see Appendix 2). Most current residents are middle-aged or older. Less than thirty school-aged children live in the community. During my visits, I met one-third to one-half of the residents and interacted with more in public gatherings. I interviewed thirty-six residents, over a tenth of the population, and discussed storytelling and other aspects of local culture with many others. In addition, I interviewed six people who were former residents or had strong family connections with the region. I recorded hundreds of stories on audiotape and heard a great many others that I usually attempted to write down later from memory.

In the past, work in the Gabarus-Framboise region was usually related to farming, fishing, and their supporting services, although other industries (e.g., mining and shipbuilding) have come and gone—all are gone at present. A few families still take part in the inshore fishery, lobster being the most important catch. Although a couple of cows roam unfenced beside the road through Gabarus Lake, only one farm still exists along a forty-kilometre stretch of coast from Gabarus to Framboise. Many of the contemporary residents are elderly and retired, living on pensions and savings (see Plates 1.6 and 1.7). The region presently supports one store that has recently changed hands. The former owners made most of their money selling army surplus goods to hunters and road crews rather than by supplying groceries to local residents. Local people, depending where they live, may drive as far as fifty kilometres to supermarkets in Sydney or St. Peters although general stores in Marion Bridge and Grand River supply some needs (see Maps 2 and 3). A woman in Framboise Intervale has recently converted an old school bus into a fast-food restaurant. Gabarus has a post office and a little elementary school

and Framboise also has a small school (high school students ride buses to schools outside the region). These three institutions each employ one full-time worker. One man commutes forty kilometres to Sydney to work as a carpenter. Others survive through a combination of living off the land (hunting, fishing, berry picking, gardening, cutting their own firewood) and working at a any of a variety of seasonal or part-time jobs (helping neighbours fish, housecleaning for war veterans on pensions, commercial wood cutting, building, repairing roads).

The fact that there are few outward signs of prosperity reflects the values of the community as well as its economic conditions. Ostentation is unacceptable and those few "who've got it," do not "flaunt it." Even those former residents who return from distant homes in the summer live simply when they are in Cape Breton. There are also no visible signs of poverty in the region. Residents own televisions, cars, and household appliances. They keep their houses, which they almost always own, in good repair. Fortunately, their entertainment usually requires little money. Public events in the local halls have low prices. The theatres and stadiums of Sydney and Glace Bay are distant enough to make evening concerts inconvenient for most older people and for everyone else during the snowy winters. Furthermore, local people often seek their pleasures in their own social and physical environment. Many would likely agree with the philosophy of the Fourchu storyteller Arthur Severance who told me, "[M]ost of my wealth consisted of the things I could get along without" (RT92-47A, Aug. 17, 1992).[6]

1.3 My Role as a Folklorist in the Gabarus-Framboise Community

Contemporary scholars are unwilling to regard ethnographic writing as the disembodied voice of some expert speaking authoritatively about a particular group of people. Instead, academic readers are interested in who is actually speaking so that they can develop a better and more critical understanding of the viewpoint and biases that the ethnographer has brought to the study. Perhaps this has always been the case even if the idea has been articulated clearly only in recent years. Therefore, I will provide a brief outline of my background as it relates to my thesis and to my relationship with the Gabarus-Framboise community. In fact, my fieldwork situation, in which I was both a folklorist and an individual with family connections to this region, demands that I examine and explain my dual role.

My interest in small, rural communities comes out of my life experience. I passed my first seven years in Wallace, a mainland Nova Scotia fishing village located on the Northumberland Strait near the New Brunswick border, and have spent lengthy periods in farm communities throughout my life (including nearly every summer of my childhood). I moved from Wallace to Windsor, Ontario, an industrial city separated by a river from the American metropolis of Detroit. Although this move was accompanied by considerable culture shock, I have lived most of my life since in the cities of southern Ontario before spending eight years in St. John's, Newfoundland. My experience in city and country has made me aware of the differences and similarities of urban and rural culture and has shown me how rural society is often misinterpreted by urbanites due to negative stereotyping, idealization, or a basic lack of knowledge. The reverse is also

true, of course, but rural people are much less influential than city dwellers in disseminating their interpretations to the greater society. My research in rural folklore is influenced then, not only by a fondness for small, rural communities but by a desire to witness and communicate to others some aspects of real life in such communities. However, I am not a pastoral romantic. Not only do I enjoy city life but I have also spent enough time in the country to be aware of both the positive and negative sides of rural society.

My interest in storytelling as an academic pursuit has been influenced by my involvement as both a performer and audience member in the "Storytelling Revival" or "Storytelling Movement." (The latter title is more apt as it is unclear what exactly is being revived.)[7] This predominantly urban movement is focused on relatively formal performances of tales to silent audiences, sometimes in homes but more often in such public venues as church basements, halls, and varied festival settings. I enjoy hearing a good story told aloud and therefore respect what revivalists are doing. Nonetheless, having been raised in a family in which storytelling was part of daily life, I am aware of the great differences between revival and informal storytelling. Furthermore, I came to the Storytelling Movement after having first become immersed in Folklore Studies, so I approached the movement from a more critical viewpoint than that of most participants.

I am bothered by many urban revivalists' misconceptions and romantic images of traditional storytelling. For example, I object to revivalists' notions of storytellers as exalted figures held in high regard by their fellow citizens when the ethnographic record shows that, in fact, the tellers of Märchen are often the exact opposite. Such romantic attitudes

reflect both the commodification of storytelling—storytellers are artists who should be well paid—and the valorization of the role of revival storytellers as preservers of a "tradition." Revivalists, while doing an admirable job of bringing to life (albeit in a new context) certain narrative genres that have become rare in North America (e.g., Märchen and myths) are not, as many proponents claim, "reviving the dying art of storytelling."

If there is a hidden audience for this thesis, and my supervisor assures me that most theses have a hidden audience, it consists of storytelling revivalists. Like the folksong revival before it, the storytelling revival contributes to and argues with the discipline of folklore studies. Neil Rosenberg (1991) said of folk music enthusiasts, "Folklorists and folk revivalists often perceive themselves as being on opposite sides of issues. Ultimately, though... they form a community" (222). The same may be said of folklorists specializing in oral narrative and storytelling revivalists. Although we often disagree, we also contribute to each other's understanding. If my arguments at times seem obvious to folklorists, this may be because they reflect debates with a second audience, the revivalists.

My choice of the Gabarus-Framboise community as a research area was very much a personal decision. My paternal grandparents were from Gabarus and Malquish, a now-abandoned community located between Gabarus Lake and Fourchu. My father moved to the town of Sydney as a small child, when his father traded life at sea for a job in the steel mills. Although I never visited the Gabarus-Framboise coast for more than a few hours at a time, my relatives told many stories about life in this region, peopled with colourful characters bearing names like Laughing Johnny Alex, Rory Puddle, Devil Bill, Pig-bite, and the brothers Big Angus and Young Angus (see Appendix 3). My

curiosity about the area where my father, his sister, my grandparents, and my great-uncles and great-aunts (all people whom I loved and respected) originated, coincided with my academic interests in rural communities, oral narrative, and informal storytelling. Having noted the storytelling skills of former residents of the area, I speculated that the region would likely still have a strong storytelling tradition, which it, in fact, does. My research was disciplined and scholarly—I stayed up late many nights in Framboise, listening to tapes, making notes, and developing further questions—yet, my fieldwork trips were also part of a personal journey to the home of "my father's people."

My own relationship to the residents was influential in shaping the information given to me. I was a folklore researcher in a community which places great value on its traditions. Although I was not invited to do fieldwork in the Gabarus-Framboise region, my presence as a person recording the community's stories was accepted and even valued by many residents. Those who turned down my requests for interviews usually did so on the basis of factors such as shyness, deafness, and health problems or because they preferred that I record their elders. During my visits to the community, I received considerable encouragement and encountered no hostility. People were generally happy to have their stories recorded for posterity.

A second reason for my being accepted quickly into this community was that I was a relative, brought up elsewhere, working in a society which emphasizes the importance of kinship. Many Cape Bretoners, like other rural people, put great value on family connections. Those elderly people who were not related to me invariably had been friends with one or more of my

ancestors or relatives. My early conversations often began with my establishing family lines in response to the questions of local people. Jimmy Dan E. MacLeod (i.e., Jimmy, the son of Dan E.; see Appendix 3), my first host and a distant cousin, could trace my ancestry to my great-great-grandparents without books or records. Jimmy occupied a social role as a particular type of tradition bearer.[8] Another such role is held by my elderly cousin, Haidee Pearce, a Gabarus native who lives in Lachine, Quebec. Haidee attempts both to stay in touch with her extended family and to keep informed of their activities. She is responsible for both keeping relationships alive and connecting distant cousins who may never have met. Cape Bretoners often describe such a person, whatever her ethnic roots, as "very clannish."

In rural society, family reputation, like personal and community reputation, is extremely important. Within my lifetime, business deals in rural Canada were—and perhaps still are—often conducted at the side of the road. Animals or equipment were passed from one to another on trust of repayment as, in folk parlance, "a man's word is his bond." A dishonest person or a defaulter damaged not only his or her own reputation but the family's as well. Apparently, my ancestors were not scalawags. After establishing my genealogical credentials, I was warmly received. People of this community were both willing to share their stories with an academic researcher and use them to educate someone whose ancestors belonged to the community.[9]

Since my grandparents and great-uncles and great-aunts were fondly remembered, I was treated, to a degree, as an insider in the Gabarus-Framboise community. Undoubtedly, my family affiliations helped me establish rapport with the community's residents. Still, these same

associations may occasionally have limited the information given to me, as people could have withheld certain stories about my relatives either to protect me or to avoid insult. However, as my previous first-hand personal experience of the Gabarus-Framboise area was limited to occasional afternoon visits, often years apart, with people who are now dead or have moved away, I entered the community as a stranger and had to establish my own reputation apart from my family's. My knowledge of the area's history and stories was slight and the residents understood that they must express themselves clearly and assume little knowledge on my part. I can say with confidence that I received a warm welcome and people made every effort to support my work.[10] My analysis is probably affected by the fact that I was treated well and became quite comfortable in the Gabarus-Framboise region. I feel great affection and respect for the people of this community and hope to return to this place throughout my life but, as the proverbial natives said to the postmodern ethnographer, "Enough about you, let's talk about us."

1.4 A Note on Transcripts

Within the discipline of folklore, there is no uniform system for transcribing oral speech; therefore, one's transcription style always requires an explanation. My goals in presenting people's speech are to communicate what type of stories people tell and how they tell them. My analysis is thematic; I am seeking cultural and individual patterns in oral repertoires. Therefore, my presentation does not involve precise linguistic or structural analysis and, accordingly, I have chosen not to present verbatim transcripts. In the words of Richard Bauman, "My representation of spoken language is,

frankly, intended to have more expressive than linguistic accuracy in a strictly technical sense. I am more interested here in the narratives as oral literature than as dialectological data" (1986:x).

As many folklorists have observed, there is such a wide gulf between written and oral speech that a well-spoken and thoughtful speaker often appears semi-articulate when quoted word-for-word. Furthermore, the written word never properly captures the dynamics of performance. The ambiance of a storytelling session, the modulation of voices, the gestures, and the twinkling eye or the look of wonder on the face of the narrator are all lost in print. Ethnopoetic transcription styles, which involve writing speech in verse form and giving precise attention to the speaker's timing and emphasis, have their own complex grammars which require considerable familiarity before they are easily read (see e.g., Hymes, 1981; Tedlock, 1983). Ethnopoetics is certainly a valid technique for transcribing speech for linguistic analysis. However, this approach removes the fluidity of the stories being told and ossifies a particular performance for minute re-examination. Ironically, the more an ethnographer attempts to include all the details that accompany speech, the more stilted the transcript becomes.

In this thesis, I use a straightforward prose style of transcription, edited for reading simplicity. My presentation of speech is influenced by Sandy Ives's The Tape-Recorded Interview (1974). I share Ives's "conviction that the tape is the primary document and anyone requiring that level of accuracy would be a fool to trust someone else's transcription" (97). Furthermore, while my original transcriptions (available in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore Archive) are transcribed as accurately as possible, quotes used in the thesis have been edited for the benefit of readers.

I generally eliminate "uh's," "backing-and-filling," "false starts" and "tag questions" ("you see" or "you know what I mean") unless they add something to the reader's understanding. As much as possible, I use standard grammar (e.g., commas and periods) to indicate both pauses in speech and the conclusion of ideas. Words removed from the transcript are shown by three dots (...) or four if a full sentence or more is missing (....). Non-standard grammar is used as follows:

- Although a speaker's emphasis is often indicated by exclamation marks (!), I also use capitalized words to show (like THIS) that a speaker is purposefully emphasizing words (as opposed to stressing words as part of a dialect; native Gaelic speakers accent English words differently than do anglophones).
- A sudden stop as a speaker changes thoughts or allows the listener to reach an obvious conclusion is indicated by a dash immediately following a word (like this—).
- Long dashes represent a significant pause in speech (———). I use these dashes only when it is important that the reader realize that the speaker has hesitated or stopped to think about what to say next.
- Additional information added in mid-sentence is separated by dashes ("So then, John—John is my brother, he just returned from Sydney—walked in").
- Missing words and points of clarifications are included in brackets [as illustrated].
- Information that illustrates a non-spoken aspect of the speaker's performance is included in parentheses: (laughing), (chuckles), (claps).
- Brief interjections made by another speaker without interrupting the

original speaker are included in parentheses (John Doe: You don't say!).

- In my concluding chapter, I use bold type to emphasize words that I, and not the speakers, wish to stress.

The people of the Gabarus-Framboise region, like all English-speakers, speak in dialects. Presenting their speech in writing creates some problems. Most of the people who I interviewed had a low level of formal education (grade school) though many were well read. Some were self-conscious about seeing their speech published because they felt that it would make them look crude and inarticulate. (I am sometimes disturbed by how repetitive and clumsy my own speech looks in print.) One person refused to be interviewed or to let me interview her husband because she feared that having their speech written down would reflect poorly on them. Others asked me to "clean up" their speech. However, if I present the community as conversing with the "Queen's English," I am being dishonest. I am left with the challenge of presenting the quality and flavour of local speech without it's seeming condescending when put into print.

I use standard spellings as much as possible and avoid attempting to interpret pronunciations according to some imagined standard English. (In fact, something approaching "standard English" exists only in written form. There are great differences in pronunciation and word usage even among educated English speakers from different countries and regions.) Not only do non-standard spellings tend to make speakers look either ignorant or cute but such usage assumes a common basis of pronunciation among readers. Some writers have attempted to capture the Gaelic lilt by writing, for example, "It iss chust Chaymus" for "It is just James." (The Hebridean Gaelic accent is soft and closer to Irish than it is to lowland Scots.) However, such writing would

mean little to one not familiar with the dialect. It is unlikely that readers from St. John's, Toronto, New York City, Dallas, London, Capetown, and New Delhi would sound alike when reading the same "dialect" sentence.

However, I have attempted to convey the speakers' words so that someone who knew them would recognize the patterns of their speech. This is, admittedly, a subjective process. Therefore, I sometimes use nonstandard spellings when speech seems to demand it. For instance, the word "fellow" is pronounced "fella" by most Maritimers. "Fellow" has implications of formality and English private schools which would seem out of place in informal speech. As well, though I sometimes "correct" nonstandard grammar or word usage to protect the feelings of my sources, I limit this practice. For instance, some people use "saw" and "seen" interchangeably. To eliminate "I seen" from their storytelling would take away the flavour of their speech.

Like many folklorists before me, I have exercised my editorial prerogative in presenting oral speech. I hope that I have done a reasonable job. Folklorists, like linguists, recognize that nonstandard dialects are perfectly valid forms of speech. We do not judge speech as though the world were one great English class in which the teacher has all the correct answers. The tradition bearers with whom I spoke were intelligent and articulate. I have great respect for those people who shared their stories with me and if any feel that I have been condescending or patronizing in presenting their words, this was not my intention.

1.5 Interviewing Style

Interviewing, like transcribing, is a highly idiosyncratic process. My goal in conducting an interview is to develop a relatively informal and flexible situation in which the participants remain focused on the topic—in this case, stories and storytelling. By my questions and manner, I attempt to establish a spontaneous atmosphere that will encourage interviewees to relate stories that are important to them. Of course, this ideal is not reached every time. Despite my efforts to ensure informality, a folklore interview is never simply a conversation. Interviewing is a mentally-demanding process. The interviewer is listening, observing, thinking, making notes, anticipating the next question, trying to cover important issues, clarifying details, and translating gestures for the tape recorder (Interviewee: ...about this high. Interviewer: Four feet.). Furthermore, an interviewer is attempting to be sensitive to the interviewee's level of comfort, alertness, interest, and physical stamina, all while focusing attention on that person, listening actively, and responding to what has been said.

Fortunately, I came to this study as an experienced interviewer with more than a hundred interviews to my credit. Furthermore, I am able to engage my mind in several directions and can usually connect with a speaker while attending to the details of the interview process. My best interviews are "flow experiences" in which all participants make strong interpersonal connections while being absorbed in the immediate situation. These are deeply communicative events that sometimes pave the way to lasting friendships. However, despite such pleasures, the process of interviewing is always work, followed by more work. After leaving a recording session, I

immediately make notes and, as soon as possible, listen to my tapes, writing outlines and comments clarifying matters that might cause confusion later and identifying topics to pursue further. My interviews varied in length from under twenty minutes, when I was re-visiting someone to get a specific story, to three hours. A recording session was typically sixty to ninety minutes long. I conducted as many as three interviews a day when I felt under time constraints.

Before recording the tradition bearers in this study, I phoned or visited so that they would be prepared for my interview and more likely to be comfortable with me. However, I kept my tape recorder in the car, easily accessible in case I encountered an irrepressible storyteller like Arthur Severance. I conducted most interviews in homes, the interviewees choosing the room. I used Sony TC-142 tape recorders borrowed from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). I recorded on sixty-minute audio cassettes except when these were not available; then I used ninety-minute cassettes. I tried to make the tape recorder as unobtrusive as possible by placing it on a chair or table close beside me where I could glance at it without distracting the storyteller and change tapes with minimal disruption. During my first trip, I would place a remote microphone on soft surfaces to avoid noises caused by bumps and taps. Depending on the setting, for a microphone stand I used couches and easy chairs or a cushion, cap, or sweater placed on a hard chair or table. During my second trip, I used a small microphone stand that not only elevated the mike about eight inches but also made it easier to direct. I normally placed the microphone to one side so that it was not directly between the speaker and me where the speaker would be constantly looking at it and thinking about its

presence. However, I aimed the microphone toward the interviewee so that if anyone's voice was lost, it would be my own, though this seldom occurred.

Recording situations varied considerably. I often conducted interviews in kitchens, the kitchen being the main social space in the rural household. These rooms are often large and may contain appliances, cooking space, a table and chairs, a couple of easy chairs, and a day bed or couch. Sometimes I sat in an easy chair eight or ten feet away from a speaker in a kitchen or living room, while at other times we both sat at a kitchen table. Usually I interviewed only one person but I did record as many as four at once. In some cases, while I interviewed one person, a second—often a spouse-—would sit quietly, listening but rarely speaking. In other sessions, family members or neighbours moved in and out of the room, often unobtrusively but sometimes interrupting for unrelated purposes. During the recording session with the two MacLeod couples in Chapter V, we all sat in a kitchen, some at a table, others in chairs nearby, with the microphone placed centrally on the table. People moved about during this lengthy interview, getting up to use the phone, go to the washroom, or make tea. During another interview with Michael MacKinnon, we drove to the shore, went for a walk, returned to his store, and eventually to his home upstairs where he made and served breakfast—with the tape recorder running the whole time. While we moved about, I stayed close to him, holding the microphone near his mouth like a reporter on the television news. In almost all cases, speakers can be heard clearly on the recordings.

Individual reactions to being recorded in an interview situation varied considerably. The tape recorder was always present as a silent listener during an interview. However, its effect on individuals differed: some simply

conversed with me while ignoring the machine, others showed awareness of it either by gazing uncomfortably at the microphone or attempting concise oral explanations of visual points that would normally be indicated by hand motions. Although some people were so relaxed that they claimed to have forgotten the tape recorder was running, a few were so tense that the interview was essentially a failure. I found it difficult to identify the causes of the tension for the individuals involved. It could be any or several of: nervousness about being recorded, self-consciousness about the formality or perceived importance of the occasion (despite my attempts to create a relaxed atmosphere), a lack of self-identification as a tradition bearer or expert on storytelling, or discomfort with either my personality or approach. In most cases, people who were reticent during a recording session were relaxed and talkative with me in other social situations. Sometimes, stories flowed when the tape recorder was turned off after a stiff interview. Most interviewees were reasonably relaxed and told me stories on tape. No interviews failed to garner some useful information. Even interviews which seemed awkward and uncomfortable at the time sometimes contained good stories. I am both a generalist and an optimist so if I could not elicit narratives, I would ask other questions until, in most cases, I found another folklore topic, such as folk medicine or folk music, that interested the speaker.

During tape-recording sessions, I kept a clipboard with a list of topics and some blank paper in front of me. The list served as a guideline rather than a structure. I might ask about early settlers, experiences at sea, or the supernatural in order to inspire narratives but when the stories began, I tried to follow the flow of storytelling rather than depend on my list. However, I was there to collect oral narratives so if the speaker got into a discussion of

local politics or what's wrong with today's youth, I would listen for a while—the attitudes expressed might tell me a great deal about the community—but if this talk did not lead to more stories, I would attempt, through questions, to get the interview back on track. As I listened, I would occasionally jot notes when the storyteller made a point that I wanted to clarify or expand on later. Some people were so distracted by my making notes while they spoke that I put down my pen and kept my eyes on them. Others paid so little attention to my actions that I felt comfortable enough to take photographs while they told stories. I ended my interviews with a series of biographical questions (name, birth date, occupational history, etc.) which, as I discovered in the past, create a formal atmosphere if they are introduced at the beginning. Finally, I had the interviewees sign a release form, allowing me to use the recording. I usually turned the tape recorder off at the end of this process but occasionally kept it on, with the storyteller's permission, through tea afterward.

As mentioned above, I took photographs of most of the people I interviewed and of houses, boats, landscapes, and various other aspects of life in the region. I did this in order to provide further documentation of the Gabarus-Framboise community and to emphasize that its stories are associated with real people. I used thirty-five-millimetre, black-and-white film as black-and-white photographs have greater durability than colour. As a photographer, I am competent at best so the quality of my photos is uneven. I do not have photos of all storytellers due to my initial nervousness about photographing people, troubles with a flash, the occasional lack of film, and one exposed roll coming out blank. Furthermore, some photos were so unflattering that I avoided using them. For instance, none of my photos of

Arthur Severance in his later years captured his spirit and vitality in the way Ron Caplan's photo of him at a younger age did (Plate 6.1). The camera, like the tape recorder, can both add to the tension of the interview and be a distraction to all parties involved so I usually waited until after recording to take pictures except when I was very comfortable with the other person.

Another important part of fieldwork is the writing of field notes. My anthropological training has resulted in my being thorough about noting not only the circumstances of the interview—was he nervous? did she tell me more stories when the tape recorder was off? did they dress up for the occasion?—but observations of daily life around me—what do people joke about? what are their concerns? what do they work at? These notes, which I keep in my personal files, help me place local storytelling in a broader cultural perspective.

Finally, I have a strong interest in both folk music and preserving many aspects of local folklore. As a result, I recorded fiddle sessions at John Neil and Christine MacLean's home and borrowed people's home recordings of singing and instrumental music for duplication and storage in MUNFLA (with their permission, of course) where they are available to other researchers. Tapes and photographs with indices and accompanying documents are permanently stored in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive in St. John's (accession number 93-277).

1.6 Names and Pseudonyms

In my experience, people expect to be acknowledged in print for their

contribution to a folklore research project and are disappointed if they are not. Moreover, in a small community people are readily identifiable even if a writer gives them pseudonyms. For this reason, I have obtained permission from my sources to use their proper names and I generally do so. However, in those rare instances when information may be deemed prejudicial to anyone involved or in cases where a person might suffer embarrassment, I have deleted names or provided a pseudonym which I acknowledge at the point in the text where I use it.

1.7 References to Motifs

I have not attempted to locate precedents for either tale-types or the use of traditional motifs in every narrative. However, where such information came to my attention, I have included it in my notes. Many of the stories that I recorded are from the community's oral history. In most cases, I use motif references to show that narratives contain traditional themes and not to imply that the stories are either unoriginal or untrue.

1.8 Maps

All locations in Canada's Maritime provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, to which Cape Breton belongs, and Prince Edward Island) and in Scotland referred to in this thesis, with the exceptions of those that I have not been able to place, are included in two groups of maps. For the reader's convenience, Maps 1-5, of the Maritimes, Cape Breton, and the Gabarus-Framboise region, and Maps 6-8, of Scotland, the Outer Hebrides, and the Uists are all together at the end of this chapter.

1.9 Photographs

Photos are placed at the end of the chapter in which they are mentioned. Many were given or loaned to me through the generosity of others or are from my family collection. I took all uncredited photos.

1.10 Thesis Outline

In this thesis, I analyze the repertoires of the Gabarus-Framboise community's storytellers, including those of the kind that Juha Pentikäinen refers to as "tradition-oriented personalities" (1976, 266), to show the relationships between the community, its storytellers, and its narratives. In Chapter II, I explore a number of theoretical issues related to the study of oral narratives and rural communities—symbolism and meaning in oral narrative, the concept of "folk community," and esoteric and exoteric views of rural and Cape Breton culture—and review the scholarship on repertoire studies. In Chapter III, I describe the settlement patterns and social history of the region in order to provide a cultural setting for its former and contemporary storytellers. In Chapter IV, I examine storytelling traditions in the Gabarus-Framboise community to create a picture of the changing roles of storytellers and their repertoires in an unsteady social and economic climate. Many of the area's settlers came from the Hebrides, especially the Uists, a region whose narrative traditions are well documented. Other residents have English origins, many being descended from soldiers stationed at Louisbourg. Using oral history and my own observations, I will show past storytelling traditions in this community in order to establish the basis of today's

storytelling. Finally, I will classify the various categories of contemporary storytellers.

The next four chapters (4-8) focus on active storytellers and their repertoires. Although I concentrate primarily on a few individuals, other storytellers will be drawn on where relevant. In Chapter V, I use the example of a house visit to show how people use oral narratives to entertain themselves. I examine the roles of the storytellers involved and the dynamics among them and also analyze the narrative content to show what these people talk about and how they express themselves. Chapters VI, VII, and VIII are studies of individual creativity and tradition in the repertoires of three men the community deems its outstanding storytellers. Each has a repertoire that contains his own preferred narrative genres. For instance, while Arthur Severance and Lloyd MacDonald (Chapters VI and VII) both relate many humorous stories, Dan Alex MacLeod (Chapter VIII) specializes in telling tales of the supernatural. I show here that because the community has a language for discussing unusual occurrences and because respected citizens tell of them, there is a public tolerance for and acceptance of ideas which are treated more secretively in much of western culture.

I present my conclusions in Chapter IX. Here I examine the importance of the process of storytelling, the storytellers in their role as tradition bearers, and the narrative repertoire itself, to show the importance of both tradition and individual creativity in the storytelling practices of this rural folk community. The results of my analysis indicate that for the residents of the Gabarus-Framboise region, their community's storytelling traditions are important in developing a sense of their being a people who belong to a place.

Notes

1. This attitude is not limited to Cape Breton. Carl Lindahl says,

   > If you were to ask to meet the best taleteller in any given Louisiana community, you would usually be led to an older man or woman whose art has been formed and refined by decades of performing for the entertainment of neighbours and friends. More often than not, this person would be respected in his or her community not only as a narrator but as a recognized expert in other skills. (Lindahl, Owens, and Harvison, 1997:8)

   Barre Toelken also regards age as a determining factor in the performance of particular folklore genres within families: "Others in these families know the same traditions and perhaps can perform them as well, but the actual centrality of the performance focuses on a particular person because of age, talent, interest or because of simple family custom." He credits traditional roles with as much importance as skill: "deference to tradition-bearers helps to determine who will perform in certain genres, and at what intervals in time" (1979:158). See also: Dégh, 1969:169; Ortutay, 1972: 218; and Mullen, 1992:2-3.

2. Folklorists recognize that tradition bearers come in all ages. For instance, the best active tradition bearer of skipping rhymes would likely be a girl about ten years of age. Furthermore, different age groups have different storytelling traditions.

3. Laurel Doucette (1985) explains: "Accustomed as we are to the idea of transmission of cultural knowledge from older to younger generations, folklorists usually picture this as a spontaneous process, not the self-conscious, purposeful one seen among these [i.e., her] informants" (296).

4. See: Butt, 1986:93-94; Dégh, 1969:92; Holbek, 1986:173, 181; Lovelace, 1998: 4-5; Robert, 1983:105; Thomas, 1993; and Wilson, 1991:132. Ives makes similar observations regarding folk singing, 1977:21-23. Calum MacLean said of the Hebrides, "Men as a rule are the storytellers but there were quite a number of women storytellers too" (1952:129). Lysaght provides an example of a female Irish storyteller who was considered an equal by her "predominantly male" peers (1991:27). Lindahl says men dominate public storytelling in the U.S.A. but adds: "Another reason for the imbalance is that women's storytelling often tends to be collaborative: every woman in a small group may lend a hand in a communal performance. Such small-scale group productions are often difficult for

fieldworkers to collect and, once collected, are even more difficult to translate to the written page" (Lindahl, Owens, and Harvison, 1997:26). (A husband and wife's collaborative tale appears in Chapter V of this thesis.) Marie-Annick Desplanques (1991) suggests that differing values lead women to express themselves in their own social gatherings: "among her peers a woman is first a woman, and then a storyteller" (335). In considering the public tradition of men and the private tradition of women, one must question whether domestic is equivalent to private, especially in those instances in which domestic storytelling involves groups of women and children. However, some of the situations referred to in these works are both private (family) and domestic.

5. Mary Amanda Dargan encountered a similar situation in her study of family folklore in South Carolina (1978): "Certain kinds of narrative, such as off-colour stories, were also difficult to collect. Not only is there a general feeling against telling these stories across generations, but certain family members were also reluctant to have such material included in a study of the family" (18).

6. In an essay entitled "Born Modest," Loyal Jones (1989) presents rural Appalachian Protestants as having values and humour which are similar to those of this Protestant Cape Breton community: "Somebody asked my grandma if she had seen Halley's Comet in 1910, and she said, 'Well, only from a distance'" (15).

7. The use of the terms "storytelling movement" and "storytelling revival" are undoubtedly influenced by the "folk song movement" or "folk music revival" of the 1950s and 60s. Neil Rosenberg discusses the history and implications of the latter terms in Transforming Tradition (1993:17-21; see also, 194-95, and Rosenberg, 1991). However, in storytelling circles, the word "movement" does not have the political implications that it did for folk song "revivalists." Nonetheless, the "storytelling revival" is regarded as a social movement by many of its participants. I heard one storyteller describe this "revival" as a "spiritual movement" while another said, with sincerity, that he planned to "save the world through storytelling"—not by himself, I assume. Individual participants in both movements or revivals have widely varying attitudes toward the idealistic rhetoric that sometimes accompanies their art, yet, just as leftist politics are never far from the folk music revival, beliefs about psychological healing through narrative are always close to the storytelling revival.

8. Jeff MacDonald, a fluent Gael but not a native speaker, from Kingsville, Cape Breton, says that a person such as Jimmy with his knowledge of

genealogy would be described as a *seanchaidh* (shanachie) meaning a "tradition bearer" (personal communication). However, Catriona Parsons, originally of the island of Lewis in Scotland, uses the same word to describe a storyteller specifically (personal communication). Perhaps the Scottish Gaelic usage is inconsistent. Delargy said of Irish storytellers:

> The Gaelic story-teller, properly so called, is known usually as *sgéalai* or occasionally *sgealtóir*. *Seanchai* (also *seanchasai*) is applied as a rule to a person, man or woman, who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies, social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings. This type of narrative, now often called *eachtra* or *seanchas* approximates the German *sage*, the Swedish *sägen*, and the Danish *sagn*. (1945:6)

The word "shanachie" is usually used by English-speakers to refer to a Gaelic storyteller.

9. Gerald Pocius discussed the concept of "belonging to a community," as is reflected in the title of his book A Place to Belong (1991): "In Newfoundland generally, you do not live in a town, you "belong to" a place; you are not asked where you live, but rather where you belong to" (3). In Cape Breton, one also belongs to a place. Though this expression is also used in Gaelic, in Newfoundland (and perhaps Cape Breton) it probably has roots as well in the dialect of the west of England (M. Lovelace, personal communication).

10. Contrary to the experience of many folklorists researching among less-educated people, local people did regard what I was doing as work. Patsy MacLeod, at whose house I boarded, not only referred regularly to my "work" but even packed my lunch in a lunch pail.



Plate 1.1 Gabarus from across Gabarus Bay (July 1992).



Plate 1.2 Fishing boats at Gabarus (July 1992).



Plate 1.3 Fishing boat and lobster traps at Gabarus (July 1992).

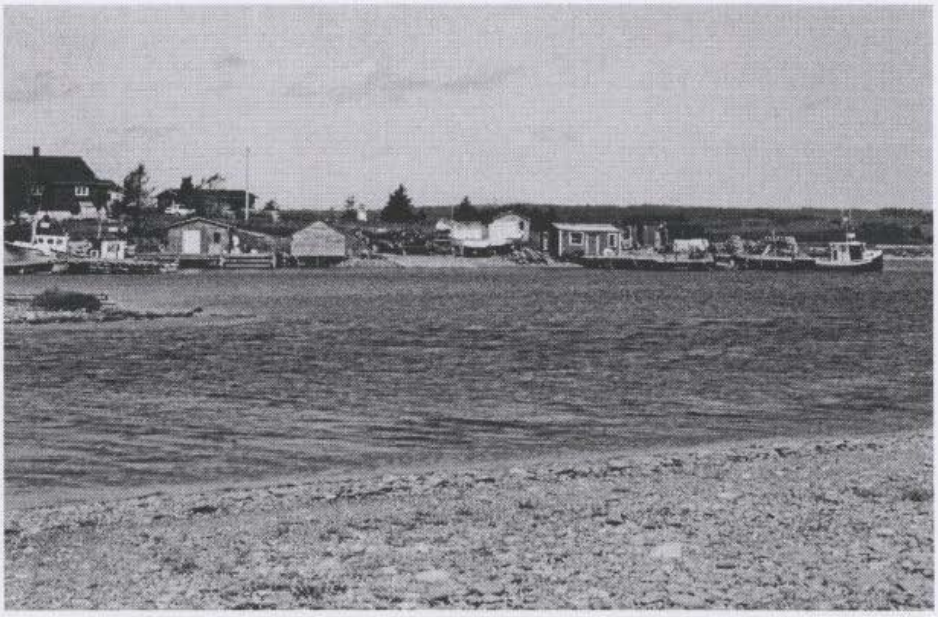


Plate 1.4 Gabarus (July 1992).



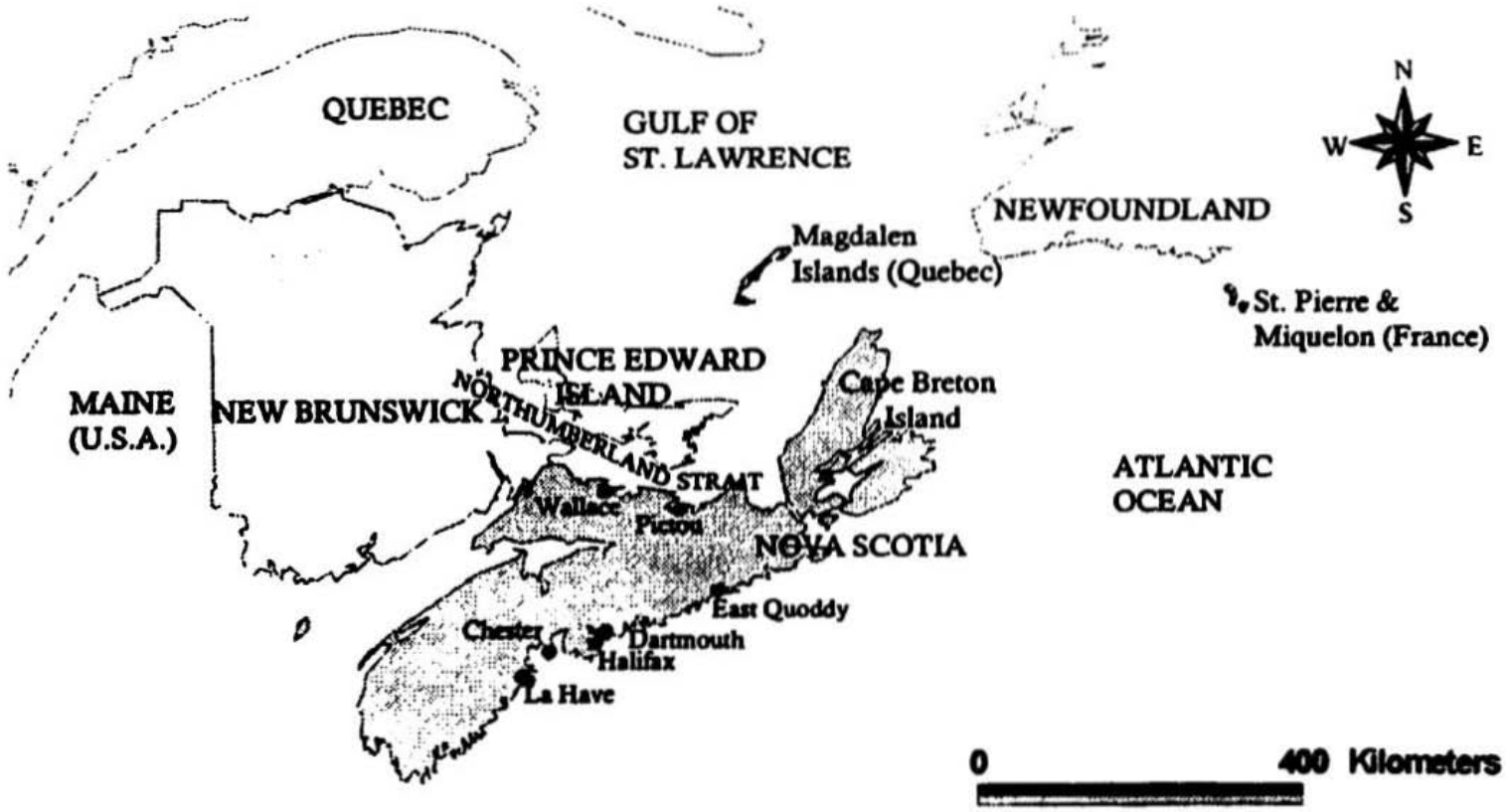
Plate 1.5 Former Presbyterian manse in Framboise, now a summer home (July 1992).



Plate 1.6 Framboise Senior Citizen's gathering at Framboise Hall (Aug. 1995).
Back Row: Ann MacLeod, John Neil MacLean, Ramsay MacLeod, Philip MacLeod
Third Row: Soutor Strachan, John James MacLeod, Roddie Shaw, Roger Sanderson (Massachusetts), Jimmy Dan E. MacLeod, Mary "Donald" MacDonald, Christene MacLean, Angus MacLeod, Alex MacLean
Second Row: Unknown, Donna Hayes, Wilma Strachan, Maggie MacQueen, Eunice Sanderson, Annie Shaw, Jean Hennesey (Sydney), Annie MacLean, Jessie Mitchell, Norman D. MacLeod
Front Row: Edith Strachan, Dan Alex MacLeod, Eunice MacLeod, Peter MacLeod, Patsy MacLeod, Rhoda MacAuley, Bessie Morrison, Annabel MacDonald, Hector MacAuley (Sydney)
(Thanks to Patsy MacLeod for assistance with names.)



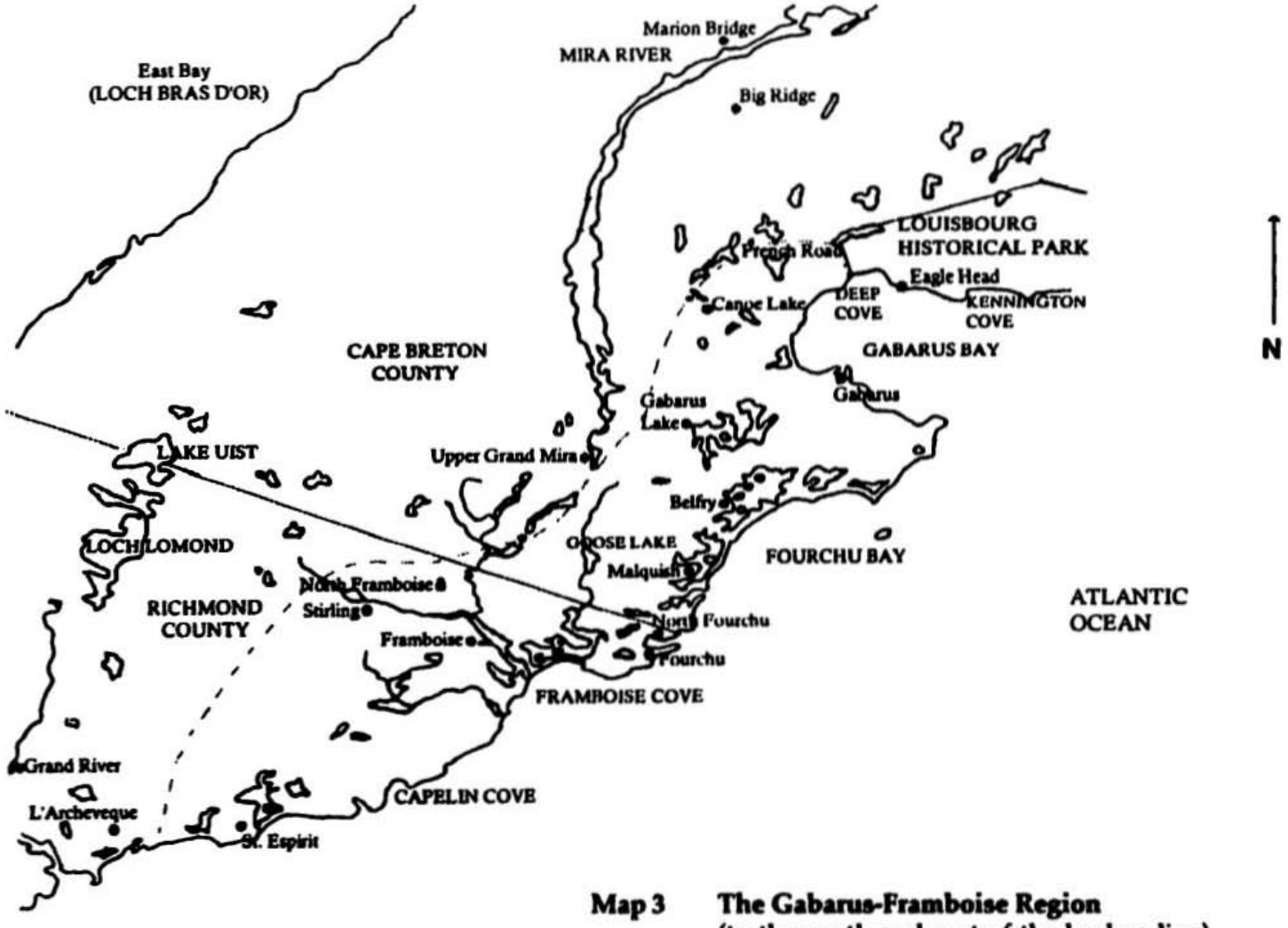
Plate 1.7 Local musicians at Framboise Senior Citizens' gathering (Aug. 1995). (l to r) Ann MacLeod, John Neil MacLean, Philip MacLeod



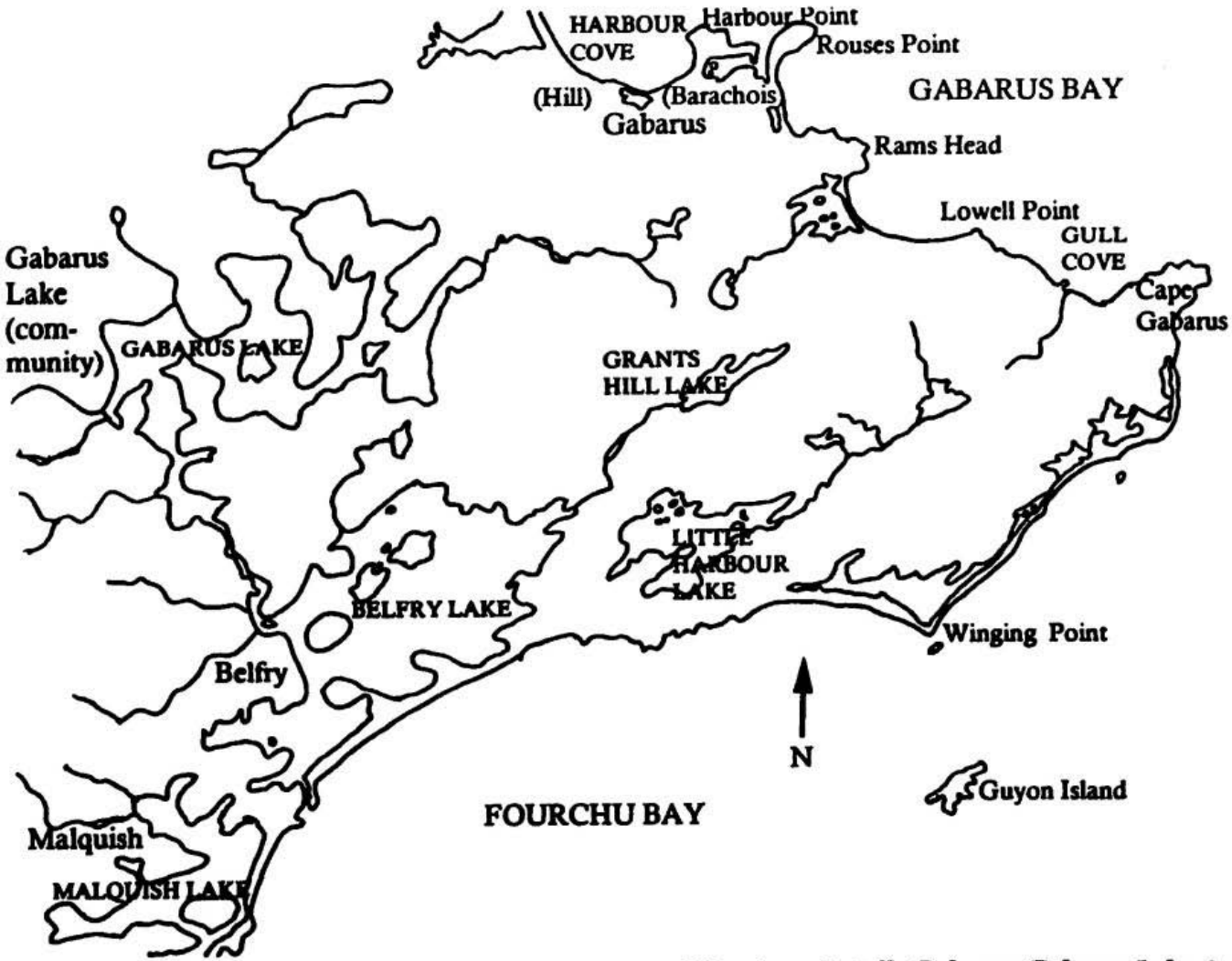
Map 1 **The Maritime Provinces: New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia (darkened)**



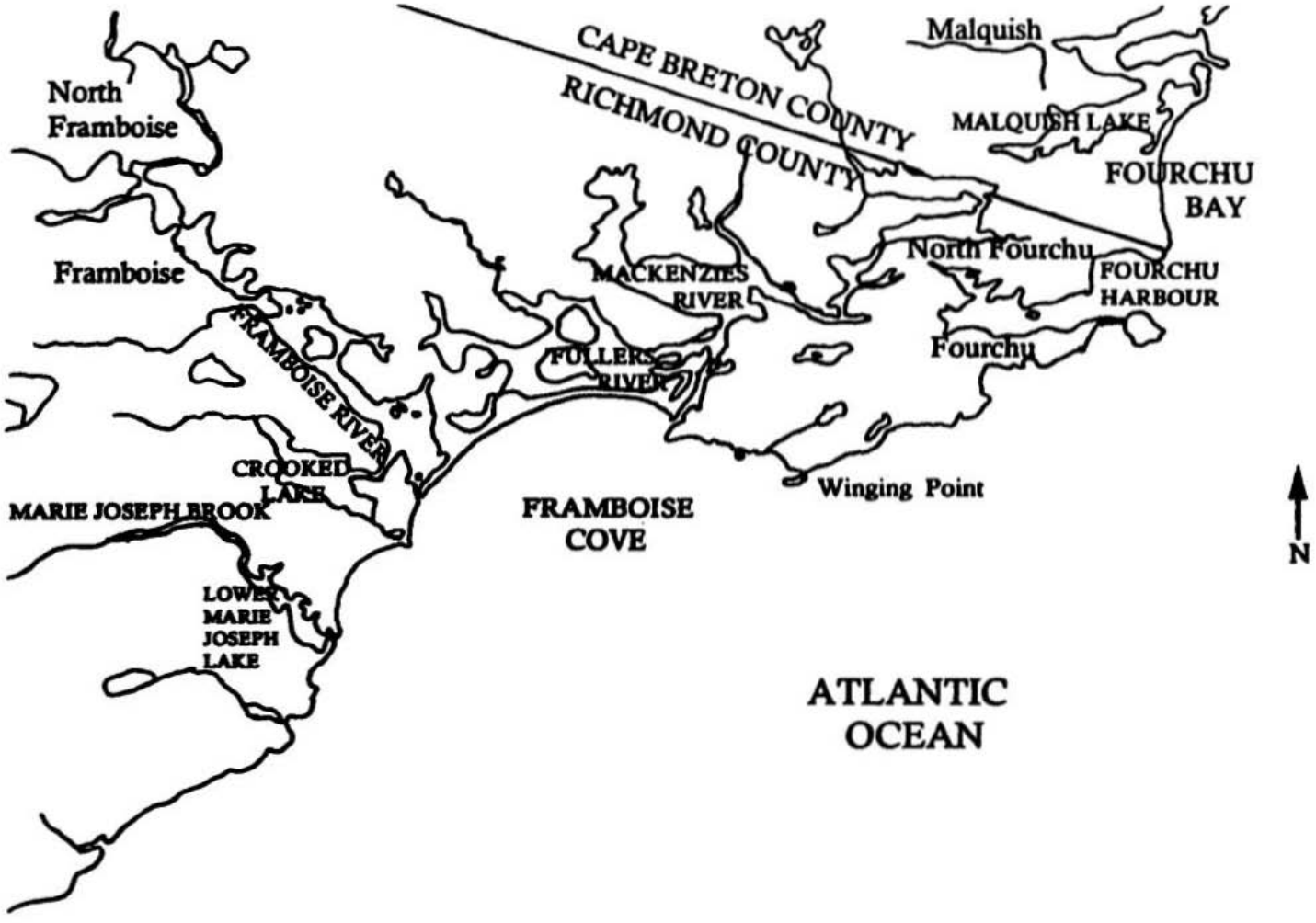
Map 2 Cape Breton Island



Map 3 **The Gabarus-Framboise Region**
(to the south and east of the broken line)



Map 4 Detail: Gabarus-Gabarus Lake Area



Map 5 Detail: Framboise-Fourchu Area



Map 6 Scotland



Map 7 The Outer Hebrides (Western Isles) and Skye



Map 8 The Uists

Chapter II

Rural Folk Communities and Storytelling: Theoretical Issues

In this chapter, I will locate my research in a broader intellectual context by examining analytical issues related to the topic of storytelling in the Gabarus-Framboise community. The chapter is divided into five sections: the first two deal with folk communities and rural society and the next three with narratives and storytelling. In the first section, I explain the concept of "folk community," which I apply to this region. In the second, I question various images of both Cape Breton and rural communities. In the third, I explain what a narrative is. In the fourth, I examine symbolism and meaning in narratives. In the fifth, I review the literature on repertoire analysis and show how it has influenced this study. Finally, I show what theoretical assumptions I have used when approaching my topic.

2.1 The folk community

The American folklorist Richard Bauman explained that, "Among the most formative concepts of our discipline is the classic notion of folk society, the traditional, agrarian, homogeneous, localized, face-to-face community considered to be the privileged locus of those forms of expression we call folklore" (1983:153). The Gabarus-Framboise region of eastern Cape Breton

closely resembles such a community. However, the expressions "folk society" and "folk community" create discomfort for contemporary folklorists. There are valid reasons for such uneasiness. The concept of a class of people who are called "the folk," who live in isolated societies and preserve valued oral traditions, is heavily weighted with the baggage of European history. Since the eighteenth century, privileged élites, inspired by Gottfried Herder's Fragments (1764, in Menze and Menges), sought a "national soul" in the "folk poetry" of the peasantry. Herder's philosophy of "romantic nationalism," along with such philosophical movements as primitivism, pastoralism, romanticism, and anti-industrialism helped create an idealized image of peasants not only as carriers of the national soul but as people akin to Rousseau's "noble savage." As Dorson said, in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe and Britain, "the folk are transformed from a superstitious backward peasantry to a pastoral people attuned to nature and glowing with a natural morality" (1968:91). While romantic nationalism inspired extensive folklore collecting and research, it also led to to unrealistic views of rural society and to considerable cultural chauvinism which sometimes resulted in political extremism and abuse of minority groups.[1]

Robert Redfield (1947) popularized the term "folk society," applying this concept to one end of a rural-urban continuum. A folk society was an "ideal, a mental construction" (294) characterized as "small, isolated, nonliterate and homogeneous with a strong sense of group solidarity" (297). It was organized around tradition and less secular and individualistic than its urban counterpart. George M. Foster (1953) later refined Redfield's model, emphasizing the interdependence of folk and urban culture and acknowledging the possibility of folk societies existing within urban centres.

Foster explains that, by his time, in anthropological terminology:

> ...a folk society is not a whole society, an isolate in itself. It is a "half-society," a part of a larger social unit (usually a nation) which is vertically and horizontally structured. The folk component of this larger unit bears a symbiotic spacial-temporal relationship to the more complex component, which is formed by the upper classes of the pre-industrial urban center. In this sense folk and urban are not polar concepts; rather, they are both integral parts of the definition of a certain type of socio-cultural unit in which the pre-industrial city is a focal point. Far from threatening the folk society, this type of urban unit is a precondition for its existence.... (163)

However, Foster states that, in his view, a folk society is not part of the developed world:

> ... it can be assumed that folk cultures will disappear in those places where a high degree of industrialization develops. True folk cultures can hardly be said to exist in countries like the United States, Canada, England, and Germany, though in peripheral areas there are perhaps marginal manifestations. (171)

The Gabarus-Frambise community then is clearly not a folk society in accordance witth Foster's model.

In the latter half of the century, not only has the concept of folk society fallen out of vogue in the social sciences but, according to the authors of The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology (1988), "the notion of the rural-urban continuum has recently passed out of use, because there no longer seem to be significant differences between rural and urban ways of life" (see "rural-urban continuum" in Abercrombie et al.). The news of the demise of significant rural-urban differences would surprise the people of south-eastern Cape Breton, many of whom have returned to rural living after experiencing the contrast of residing in cities. It would also surprise the three people—two rural Cape Bretoners and an outport Newfoundlander—who told me within two days of my writing the above how different and difficult they found

living in the city of St. John's compared to their home communities. All three introduced the subject themselves and explained their difficulties in terms of differences between rural and urban people. Furthermore, this news would amaze the thousands of Canadians who resist pressures to seek employment by moving from country to city or, less commonly, vice versa.

Rural-urban differences are emphasized by the fact that the physical environments of either city or country can prove disturbing to outsiders. In 1992, when I visited Michael and Carolyn MacKinnon, who ran the only store in Framboise, they were hosting two American tourists who stayed in their home for the night. These tourists had stopped for help because the woman, a resident of Reno, Nevada, had become nearly hysterical, fearing that they would not escape this area, dominated by woods and abandoned fields, before nightfall. I also know an elderly woman from a Cape Breton village who had a panic attack while walking with her daughter during a visit to Toronto. The unfamiliar environment with its imagined dangers so overwhelmed her that she turned and ran back to her daughter's home. If near-terror can be induced in one person by a landscape that is familiar and safe to another, it is evident that we are dealing with a formidable cultural gap.

With the abandonment of the concepts of folk society and urban-rural continuum, there also came a change in the use of the term "community," not only in academic circles but throughout society. "Community" has always had varying meanings and has prompted numerous definitions. Yet, it has usually contained some sense of a limited geographical area and of people who are in contact with each other.[2] Currently, the term community is used in a vague and general way to refer to any number of people who have something in common. It is typically applied to communities of

interest whose members may or may not know each other on a face-to-face basis. Storytelling and folk music revivalists refer to the "storytelling community" and the "folk community." Participants in the women's movement speak of the "women's community." Other common usages include the "academic community," the "scientific community," the "arts community," the "sports community," and various "ethnic communities." Members of such "communities" often live at great distances from one another and in many cases would not recognize each other except in circumstances which accentuate their common interest (e.g., dancers at a dance, supporters of a political faction at a rally or demonstration, sports fans at a game). Popular usage has rendered the word nearly meaningless. The respected Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio host Peter Gzowski, now in his sixties, commented on the shift in the use of the word "community" in recent years. He had heard commentators speak of "the kindergarten community," "the bankruptcy community," and "the terrorist community," creating for him ludicrous images of men in balaclavas, carrying machine guns across bulletproof vests, nodding to each other on the way to work (CBC Radio, Aug. 3, 1998).[3]

George H. Schoemaker's definition of community typifies contemporary folklorists' usage of the term: "A *community* is a group of people who identify with each other and participate in large and small scale celebrations" (author's emphasis; 1990:232). Dorothy Noyes, in a "Keywords" essay entitled "Group" (1995), succinctly summarized, "Acting in common makes community" (468). The type of occasional community implied by these folklorists' statements is very different from a rural community such as the Gabarus-Framboise region, whose members not only interact regularly in

a variety of social situations but also share history, ethnicity, kinship, religion, dialect, occupation, and extensive oral traditions. Here, an individual's social universe extends well beyond the immediate area but is dominated by face-to-face interaction with other local people.

These changes in ideology about the relationship of rural and urban society and in the usage of the word "community" came about as Canada and the United States underwent mass urbanization. The discipline of Folklore also became urbanized during this period. In the 1960s, American folklorists debated the existence of urban folklore, a concept now accepted unquestioningly.[4] In fact, the folkloristic term "urban legend" has become part of common speech. The recognition by American scholars of rich oral traditions in urban settings is hardly surprising considering that major folklore programs are often located in large cities (e.g., Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Austin). For purely practical reasons—limited time and money, as well as difficulties in travelling outside the city regularly—students often sought fieldwork experience close to their universities and so were inevitably drawn to folk culture within their cities.

Judging by recent publications and theses across the U.S. and Canada, the acceptance of urban folklore has not led to an abandonment of studies of rural traditions. Nonetheless, there is a certain disdain for rural studies unless one goes to great lengths to prove them socially relevant. I have heard both professors and graduate students—clearly, a minority—employed as course instructors in my department explain, in satisfied tones, that their students who hope to "collect stories from Nan living up the bay" (i.e., Grandmother in rural Newfoundland) are instead given fieldwork assignments which involve collecting contemporary urban folklore. The

message given to these undergraduates is that the aspect of folklore which has aroused their curiosity and which they deem important—the oral traditional culture of rural people—is unimportant to folklorists.

In fact, rural life is regarded as archaic and irrelevant by a great many urban dwellers. Even folklorists who are attracted to the study of rural culture are sometimes apologetic. Richard Bauman has done significant research in rural areas and has an obvious appreciation of country people's traditions. However, in a discussion of the problem folklorists have in adjusting to post-World War II changes, Bauman described folklorists' interest in rural lore in terms which make it sound like a weakness:

> American folklorists appear to have had two principal responses to this problem. The first of these might be termed a retreat into tradition and homogeneity: some of us have intensified our efforts to locate the last of the relic areas and the declining forms and mine them for all they are worth. There's more than a touch of the nostalgic romantic in most of us, and we're still understandably attracted to the old stuff. (1983:154)

Bauman's words—"a retreat into tradition and homogeneity," "relic areas," "declining forms," and "a touch of the nostalgic romantic"—suggest that the traditions of rural people are of dubious value. Country dwellers are no longer the heart and soul of folklore studies, an idealized group whose wisdom must be garnered immediately—they are an embarrassment.

Bauman's comments about rural folklore are reminiscent of those of the nineteenth-century folklorists who were attempting to gather oral materials that they thought were dying out. Bauman speaks of wanting to "locate the last of the relic areas and the declining forms and mine them for all they are worth." William Thoms used an agricultural rather than mining metaphor in his 1846 letter to The Athenaeum in which he coined the word

"folklore."[5] Thoms called on readers to "aid in garnering the few ears which are remaining, scattered over the field from which our forefathers might have gathered a goodly crop." Thoms hoped that people would forward "some record of old Time—some recollection of a now neglected custom—some fading legend, local tradition, or fragmentary ballad" to the paper (5). Both this amateur mid-nineteenth-century folklorist of the "Popular Antiquities" school and the eminent and progressive late twentieth-century professional folklorist appear to share the belief that the traditions of rural people are disappearing. However, Thoms, unlike Bauman, was unapologetic about his desire to have them "rescued by timely exertion" (5).

Ironically, those folklorists who promote the view that studying rural culture is of dubious value are moving our discipline in precisely the direction that drove William Wilson from English studies into folklore. As he explained:

> By the time I had completed an MA...I had grown weary of the narrow elitism of the 'new critical,' or formalist approaches current at the time—approaches which jerked literature from cultural context and tended to look with condescension at the kinds of stories I had learned from the good people of my rural Idaho and Mormon youth. So I switched to and earned a Ph.D. in folklore. My research centred first on the land where I had served as a Mormon missionary, Finland, then switched to the Mormon and western culture that had produced me—focusing for the next twenty years not just on the privileged few whose works had made their way into university courses, but on the people next door and on the richness and artistry of the stories they told. (1991:134)

Like Wilson, I have great respect for the "good people" of my childhood and youth who shared their "richness and artistry" with me in such settings as the fishing village of Wallace, Nova Scotia, and the farm communities of Albany and Wilmot Valley in Prince Edward Island, Morrison Road in Cape Breton,

and Charteris in Quebec. These small rural communities still exist and are places where people live, work, and share many of the traditions of their elders. Although many such rural communities are threatened both economically and socially, their citizens are contemporary Canadians whose lives and practices are grounded in the present. It is invalid to suggest that one who studies their traditions is a "nostalgic romantic."[6] Folklorists agree that rural people do not hold the key to our national soul. But surely mature people in rural settings have as much to teach us about living as have urban youths who pierce their faces, hang around shopping malls, or engage in other popular culture trends and who are considered to be valid objects of folklore research.

Of vital importance to understanding folklore is the concept of the "folk group." Ben-Amos's well-known definition of folklore as "artistic communication in small groups" (1972:13) uses Homans's definition of a group as "a number of persons who communicate with one another, often over a span of time, and who are few enough so that each person is able to communicate with all the others, not at second-hand through other people but face to face" (Homans, 1950:I, quoted in Ben-Amos, 12). There are inherent problems in both Ben-Amos's definition and his use of Homans's concept of "group." Although folklorists would generally accept that a chamber music group becomes, over time, a folk group bearing its own traditions, few would regard a chamber music practice—undoubtedly artistic communication in a small group—as folklore per se. Moreover, contemporary legends and jokes which are regarded as forms of folklore are often transmitted outside groups which fit Homans's definition. Members of a small village would not be regarded as a folk group according to Homans's

restrictions, although these people share dialect and oral traditions and would be seen by an outsider to be similar culturally. Having lived in a village of under five hundred people, I have seen that although each person can theoretically communicate face to face with all others, each person does not. A housebound member of one social stratum might never come into contact with an individual from a different social group. Even families sometimes have quarrels and feuds which may result in one individual rarely or never seeing another. Though such a family might still share traditions and communicate indirectly through core members who get along with all, it would not, according to Homans, be a group.[7]

Folk groups, as Barre Toelken has explained, are complex entities. In his view, "the term should indicate a dynamic system of human interchange where the members of any group interrelate on a high context level of attitude, reference, connotation, sense of meaning, and customary behaviour, precisely as members and to be members, of that group" (1979:52). As an example of a folk group, Toelken used West Coast loggers who share many traditions including an esoteric vocabulary, repeated storytelling themes, occupational jokes, legends, nicknames, pranks, beliefs, customs, and attitudes toward their work. Toelken's description of a folk group is also applicable to people in small rural communities. Gerald Pocius showed in A Place to Belong (1991) that the people of the fishing village of Calvert, Newfoundland, share history and many traditions. In addition, their perceptions and understandings of the space around them, inside and out, are shaped by their common heritage. Like residents of many rural communities, they participate in what Toelken calls "a dynamic system of human interchange."

Carole Henderson Carpenter stresses the concept of folk groups in helping students gain an understanding of folklore. Carpenter uses the acronym "GLARESORTE" to help students understand what a folk group is. GLARESORTE stands for "geography, language, age, religion, education, sex (now gender, but 'glaregorte' doesn't have the same ring somehow), occupation, race, topography (though technology in terms of technological capability also fits) and economics" (e-mail communication, June 24, 1998). According to Carpenter, a folk group would share at least three of these features. As she explains, "GLARESORTE is actually my own term, but grows out of Alan Dundes' list in The Study of Folklore, which Henry Glassie used in presentations to us at the University of Pennsylvania. The specific coining as such is mine though...it underlies many of my written works, especially those on multiculturalism"[8] (ibid.). We might debate the specifics of this definition. Could we not fit in other factors such as political affiliation, social status, and economic position? Would ethnicity not be more inclusive than race? Nevertheless, the basic concept of GLARESORTE is useful in developing an understanding of what a folk group is. What folklorists label as folk groups virtually always fit this model. Furthermore, groups which have three or more of these features and which interact regularly tend to develop their own folklore.

The people of the Gabarus-Framboise region share geography, language (all speak English though they have two mother tongues), religion (two Protestant religions which co-exist without animosity), topography, and race (or ethnicity). Many community members have other commonalities in terms of technology, education, occupation, age (especially as this is predominantly a community of elderly people), economics, and sex. The

people of the region may be thought of as a folk group having a folk culture. Within that folk group are many smaller folk groups which share features of Carpenter's model (e.g., elderly Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian women, Fourchu fishermen, and children who attend school in Gabarus). However, small communities share a number of factors which distinguish them from most folk groups and lead to my describing them as folk communities. Of prime importance, are the facts that folk communities are delimited physical communities in which communication usually takes place at a "folk" level, that is to say, in an informal, face-to-face manner, involving familiars.

To further explain, the Gabarus-Framboise region is a folk community in that it has the following characteristics:

a) Its people live in a limited geographical region in which members can easily visit each other, that is, all people live within a half-hour drive of all others.

b) Virtually all people in the community know each other. Residents can with little thought name every child who rides the school buses. (Any time I named a resident who was unknown to another, the confusion was due to an error on my part.)

c) The people share a common history. Most community members are descended from families that came to the area at least a century ago. Some families have lived in this area for much longer.

d) Any two community members will share most of the following features: ethnicity, religion, kinship, language, dialect, economic status, education, and occupation.

e) An individual's family background and personal past are known to most

other members of the community and when they are not known, the information is readily available.

f) All people can—and most occasionally do—interact on a face-to-face basis with all other members of the community.

g) The people share attitudes toward and understandings of the local topography. This is expressed through shared names, communal patterns of usage, and stories about particular locations.

h) Although each individual's social network extends beyond the community, most members spend a considerable amount of time—in many cases, most of their social time—in contact with other community members.

i) Residents share a great many traditions which are reinforced by continual contact with other community members.

j) These people have a strong sense of being a community and, to a degree, recognize themselves as being apart from neighbouring regions. (Of course, identity is related to opposition so that someone from this region might identify himself as a Cape Bretoner when on mainland Nova Scotia, as a Maritimer when visiting Montreal or Toronto, or as a Canadian when abroad.)

k) Furthermore, strangers usually pass quickly through this particular region so that most of the people seen regularly are not only familiar but identifiable and approachable.

Central to the concept of a "folk community" is the continual contact among and the interconnectedness of all the community's members. A community with most of the above characteristics would, in most cases, be rural and have a low population. One thousand people would be getting

close to the upper limit if all were to know each other. However, it is possible to have a folk community in a city. For example, a small religious or ethnic group with a strong inward focus, which consciously attempts to keep a great social distance from its neighbours, would have most of these features.[9] However, a folk community is quite different from most urban folk groups or communities of interest in that its members are not only intimate with each other but with each other's histories and families. Within an urban community of interest, people may know each other very well and may openly express hopes and fears in less-guarded ways than would most rural people in their own communities; there exist, for example, ongoing consciousness-raising groups and therapeutic communities that are based on open communication of inner feelings. Still, most of these same people, who know each other very well on a personal level, did not know each other as children nor do they know each other's families. In a folk community, one knows a person's past as well as that person's friends, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins. There are, of course, many other types of community existing on a continuum between folk community and city. A town of ten thousand people or a stable neighbourhood within a city is closer in character to a folk community than is a high-rise district with a transient population.

Because of the degree of familiarity found in folk communities, reputation is paramount. In urban centres, one can—to varying degrees—escape the past by changing neighbourhoods and friends. However, in a group based on both locality and face-to-face interaction, such an alternative is not possible. An urbanite can have a number of reputations within different groups based on such interests as work, play, religion,

politics, and neighbourhood. A country person may possibly have more than one reputation locally—for instance, a person known as a storyteller among his peers may have no such image among his elders. However, these reputations are strictly limited and overlap considerably. A bad reputation can be escaped only by abandoning one's region. One young man from Framboise, whose story is told in Chapter 5, left Cape Breton completely after transgressing community values by informing the police about the illegal activities of local men. Though it is unclear whether he left due to disgrace, guilt, fear, or a belief that life in Framboise would never again be comfortable, it is apparent that he believed he had to make a complete break with his community to escape his unsavoury reputation.

Folksong scholars have long noted that one's foibles might become immortalized and widespread through the satirical songs of rural communities and other folk groups, "shantyboys" (lumbermen) being a notorious example. Edward D. Ives in his study of Larry Gorman (1965), the humorous but malicious song maker of P.E.I. and Maine, refers to some satirical songs as "simple joshing" (167) but describes others using such terms as "twenty-three carat invective" (167), "viciously funny," "stinging satire" (168), and "scandalizing songs" (170). These verses could be embarrassing and hurtful to their victims. In fact, Gorman himself became a socially marginal character due in large part to his reputation as a ruthless songster (82, 184-85). Doerflinger, who also wrote about Gorman, was told by his sources that Gorman had been driven out of P.E.I. by a neighbour after "Larry pilloried him in a song" (1951:255) (Ives provides no evidence to suggest that he subscribes to this theory.) Despite any public distaste for Gorman himself, his comic abilities ensured the survival of his songs and, with them, the

damaged reputations of his victims. His satirizing was remembered fondly by many who were fortunate not to have been targets of his wit. A relative of Gorman recalled a letter in which Larry criticized his sister-in-law, more than half a century after it was written: "'I wish I had that letter now,' he said. 'Everybody was laughing over it, it was so comical. He really carded her to a peak'" (Ives:84).

The Gaelic-speakers of Cape Breton participated in a similar tradition of satirical songs in former years. Charles Dunn (1953) says of the song-writing of these Nova Scotia settlers, "The satire of the Gael, like his humour, is inspired by the failings of human beings; but unlike his humour, it is stinging, biting, and often downright offensive.... The language of the best of these satires is so violent that, perhaps fortunately, they have not been recorded...." (69). Contrary to any functionalist theories which hold that such humour helps dispel tensions in a small community, Dunn cites a case in which three neighbours, all formerly friends, moved away from Sight Point due to the irrepressible song-writing practices of one of their number: "according to the historian of Inverness County, the sole reason for their separation was the rancour incited by the satires of Hugh MacLean" (70).

Nicknames among the Cape Breton Scots, as among other country people, could be just as damaging for those who, as Dunn put it, "had no relish for ridicule" (69). Neil MacNeil (1948) relates the story of Little Rory Donald Dhu (Little Rory, the son of Black Donald) who built the first outdoor toilet in "Washabuckt" (also spelled, "Washabuck") but destroyed it after his neighbours pointed at him and said, "There goes proud Rory what does it in a box." They bestowed on him a lasting nickname that "[t]ranslated into polite English ... was 'Little Rory the Backhouse,' which was frequently abridged into

'The Backhouse'" (24). If this story is true and not apocryphal—even if not factual, it accurately reflects Cape Breton humour—according to Gaelic nicknaming practices, Little Rory's family might well retain the name "Backhouse" (or rather its less "polite" form) for several generations despite Washabuckt's citizens having long since accepted not only outdoor but indoor toilets (see Appendix 3). Nicknames, like satirical songs, put a great deal of pressure on all but born nonconformists, who do not seem to care what others think, to adhere to community norms and values lest they become publicly shamed or laughingstocks among their peers.

Alan MacFarlane touches on the issue of shame in his examination of concepts of "community" in Reconstructing Historical Communities (1977:1-25). Among the many definitions of community which he lists is "the area in which guilt and shame are felt" (11).[10] This definition is rather simplistic, as one might expect in a broad review in which many ideas are not fully developed. According to this definition, for those who have a conscience that is founded on something deeper than "what the neighbours think," the whole world would be one's community. After all, if an individual commits an act which he or she deems immoral while in a far-off land, we would not expect the person's shame and guilt to disappear upon returning home. Nonetheless, the idea of a community being "the area in which shame and guilt are felt" has a sound basis if we consider only public shame and guilt. In one's community, one cannot escape either shame (which may be caused by an act immortalized in a story, song, or nickname) or one's guilt (which may be known to all). Closeness is both the prime virtue and vice of rural communities. The price of neighbourliness is a lack of privacy. Certainly, the shared knowledge of all individuals and their pasts helps create close-knit

and unpretentious environments in which a solid family reputation can be a valuable legacy. However, the same factors hinder one from making a new start by breaking from past behaviour or even from the reputations of deceased ancestors.

As this discussion of reputation indicates, folk communities usually have strong oral cultures. In the small rural communities of Canada, not only are traditions reinforced through constant contact but also talk is usually treated as a desirable pastime, with storytelling sessions looming close in every conversation. However, ethnic differences affect the quantity of talk. While most indigenous Canadians have a capacity for silence which is disturbing to those of European extraction, they too have rich oral cultures guided by different rules of communication.

The expression "oral tradition," like folk community, is a concept that is losing popularity among folklorists although it is still crucial to our understanding of folk communities. The term does not define folklore satisfactorily in light of our present understanding. We recognize today that various media including writing, books, television, radio, tape recorders, VCRs, and the Internet are all used in communicating such folklore genres as jokes, contemporary legends, instrumental music, and crafts. However, the people of the Gabarus-Framboise district, like most other rural people, would have little difficulty with Newell's once-popular definition which described folklore as "oral tradition and belief handed down from generation to generation without the use of writing" (Newell, 1890; quoted in Oring, 1986:8).[11] This aspect of folklore—perhaps expanded to include customs and material culture—is highly valued by a great many rural Canadians and reflects the traditions that they observe and participate in on a daily basis.

Folklorists should not simply regard the term "oral tradition" as an incorrect definition of folklore. Rather, it is one of a number of important elements that comprise folklore, one that is especially important in rural folk communities.

Folklorists can learn much by studying rural folk communities. Research in such settings helps one understand and appreciate approaches and methodologies developed by earlier scholars who worked primarily in rural regions. Moreover, the fieldworker in such communities becomes familiar with highly oral cultures which value their traditions and heritage. Finally, such research will assure the folklorist that folk communities are not strange anomalies left over from the past but vital components of contemporary society. Little can be said for our discipline if we, like the ancient Greeks, divide our world into civilized people, those who live in cities and are important, and barbarians, those who dwell in the country and whose culture is of little worth.

2.2 Images of Cape Breton and of Rural Culture

Having established that the Gabarus-Framboise community is a rural folk community, in which virtually all residents know each other and each other's family and friends, have a high degree of face-to-face interaction, and value their heritage, I will now explain what the Gabarus-Framboise community is not. Images abound regarding both Cape Breton's culture and rural culture generally. Whether these images involve romanticism, negative stereotyping, or social theory, many are misleading and, at best, accentuate partial truths, thereby presenting an unrealistic picture. In this

section, I will discuss some of these images and show why they fail to accurately describe or explain contemporary life in the Gabarus-Framboise community.

The philosopher John Ralston Saul (1997) has criticized the contemporary self-absorption of Canada's largest cities which he says are disconnected from the country's rural past and present. Saul argues that southern cities, especially Toronto, see themselves as "northern representatives of more southerly city-states" and "extensions or reflections of New York and Paris." He explains, "The only way in which this illusion can be made to work is if these cities are seen as their own reason for their existence—self-defining, self-creating, self-justifying—cut off from the rest of their provinces" (41). Such attitudes are not limited to Canada. Patterns in demographics and in urban control of media throughout the western world have led to a broad perception of city life as "normal." Urban-based media personnel often interpret and explain rural life to the public.

Even rural expatriates who write of their native communities may do so from a detached urban viewpoint. (In fact, some rural people become expatriates because they are unusually critical of or discontented with their own communities.) Two Cape Breton examples of this type of detached writing are Neil MacNeil's The Highland Heart in Nova Scotia (1948) and Angus Hector MacLean's God and the Devil at Seal Cove (1976), fine books in which the authors affectionately and entertainingly recall life in their home communities. In their accounts, the writers show where they gained their personal ambitions and how their values were shaped, while finding wry humour in the foibles of the people among whom they were raised. That these writers are looking at their home communities as partial outsiders

becomes even more evident when their books are compared to Mary Anne Ducharme's Archie Neil (1992) in which she presents the memoirs of the late Archie Neil Chisholm of Margaree Forks, a popular rural Cape Breton raconteur. Chisholm, who spent most of his life in rural Cape Breton, is certainly able to see the humour in his own life and the lives of his neighbours. Unlike the other writers though, he neither views his community as a place of the past nor presents its residents as unsophisticated or naive. Despite the fact that insider accounts like Archie Neil exist, the country is frequently described and interpreted by urban people.

People, whether urban or rural, often project their fantasies onto "the other," either idealizing or devaluing what is unfamiliar. Country dwellers may see the city as either a place of fun, opportunity, and escape from boredom or a dangerous place populated by criminals and immoral people, where neighbours never speak to one other. Many urbanites regard the country as either an idyllic, pastoral paradise filled with friendly people firmly rooted in their traditions or as a strange and frightening place inhabited by wild animals and wilder people. Raymond Williams has shown in The Country and the City (1973) that the idea of an idealized countryside goes back for centuries in England. On the other hand, two 1970s American-directed movies, Deliverance and Straw Dogs, depict strange and dangerous countrysides in which peaceful city people are viciously harassed by, in the first case, "hillbillies" and, in the second, residents of an English village, both of whose behaviour seems subhuman.

Other artists in various media have applied both negative and positive ideals to Cape Breton. The producers of Candy Mountain (1987), a New York art film, used rural areas of the island to depict an outpost at the frontier of

civilization, inhabited by strange, dangerous, and unpredictable people (a decidedly American outpost at that, though this was probably not the directors' intention). Writers of recent fiction have often portrayed rural Maritime life as "almost unremittingly grim," in the words of the Celtic Studies scholar Mike Kennedy (1998). In his review of the The Last Gael, a collection of short stories, by the Cape Breton writer Ellison Robertson, Kennedy summarizes this attitude:

> ...The stories feature struggles with physical deformity, familial dysfunction and betrayal, prostitution, alcoholism, wasting disease, unemployment, community decline, cultural death, personal failure and suicide.
>
> Unfortunately, this has become somewhat routine in the literary depictions of the Maritimes: Realism (sic) has replaced romanticism, but it is a realism of a narrow sort. The deeply-rooted sense of humor (sic) and the positive, often intriguing perspectives on life that are such a defining feature of the communities here remain curiously under-developed in our literature.
>
> Whereas a former generation of urban-based writers found solace in the exaggerated simplicity and innocence of our slower-paced life, members of the new generation seem equally enchanted by the imagined raw, elemental intensity of our existence—an intensity distilled by our struggle to survive in an environment where failure and destruction of one sort or another seem ever imminent. (9)

In the same review, Kennedy says that "the association of Gaelic culture with alcoholism, melancholia and dysfunctional behaviour has become so common in literature as to have reached the point of almost grotesque stereotype" (9). Two recent films set in Cape Breton, Margaret's Museum (1995)—adapted from Sheldon Currie's novel The Glace Bay Miner's Museum (1995)—and The Hanging Garden (1997), also portray the island as a grim and destructive place. Both are good movies but focus on both dysfunctional families and madness, leaving the audience with memories of disturbing images and events.

The Gabarus-Framboise community, on the shores of the North Atlantic far from any metropolis, is neither the last outpost of civilization nor a desperate place in which grim people struggle for survival. No doubt a few suffer from alcoholism or continually battle despair; after all, there are people with these problems everywhere. However, having met most of the residents, I observed that this is a community whose people show vitality, share a rich social life and oral culture, and regularly laugh heartily. Despite the problems inherent in living in a region no longer prosperous and populated mainly by the elderly, the people who live along this coast are anything but grim. Perhaps the depiction of desperate souls struggling for psychic survival is a literary device rather than a comment on reality. Well-balanced people living productive lives provide poor raw material for creative writers interested in psychological dilemmas. However, although fictional stories of rural despair may reflect the reality of some people—poverty and hopelessness certainly exist in the country—such writings contribute little to our understanding of the many healthy communities in rural Canada.

Although the Gabarus-Framboise region is not forbidding, neither is it a bucolic paradise. Various blends of Celtic, Gaelic, Acadian, rural, and Cape Breton romanticism draw many visitors to the island. Groups that profit from tourism—including governments, hospitality businesses, merchants, and entertainers—often promote romantic images of the island and its people. In the past, Cape Breton promoters encouraged what Ian McKay (1992) refers to as "'[t]artanism'—the reading of Nova Scotia as a sort of 'Scott-land' across the waves," (206), which celebrates a pseudo-Scottishness (in the style of Sir Walter Scott, as McKay suggests), symbolized by such commodities

as clan membership, tartans, and bagpipes. Today, these images, which appealed to tourists of an earlier generation, are being replaced by fiddles, farmers, work clothes, and Gaelic.

Pit Pony, a CBC Television dramatic series, typifies the more contemporary romanticism. In the show, the coal-mining town of Glace Bay is depicted as a pollution-free rural community. In one episode (aired March 12, 1999), the young fiddler Ashley MacIsaac plays "Cape Breton's best fiddler," an eccentric, itinerant musician who is treated like a priest or holy man. In an unlikely scenario, Glace Bay residents ostracise a family because their visiting aunt from Halifax refused the fiddler hospitality, causing him to threaten never to return to Glace Bay. Cape Bretoners, passionate as many are about their music, have never agreed as to who is their best fiddler nor do they treat fiddlers as demigods. Moreover, as the folklorist Ian MacKinnon (1989) has explained, the industrial region of Cape Breton was a dynamic area for fiddling. Musicians from all over the island migrated to the towns to work and taught each other their regional fiddle styles in their leisure time. The loss of a single fiddler, no matter how good, would not threaten the social life of Glace Bay. In reality, Ashley MacIsaac is a thoroughly postmodern performer who moves back and forth between traditional fiddling and experimental rock music. With tongue firmly in cheek, he creates a stage persona by manipulating symbols of his rural Cape Breton origins, tartanism, and the culture of experimental rock music. MacIsaac is a controversial figure who sometimes engages in outrageous public behaviour. He certainly does not expect to be treated like a holy man in Cape Breton despite his outstanding musical ability. This unrealistic television show panders to the tastes of those who want Cape Breton to be a place in which

musicians are exalted, urban decay is unknown, people are simple and straightforward, ethnic minorities do not exist, and turn-of-the-century miners' orphans were clean, well fed, and well dressed.

Cape Breton Island: The Video (c. 1995), a privately produced documentary, is another highly romantic show which presents Cape Breton as a rural idyll with more horses than cars. Rather than distorting urban existence as Pit Pony does, this video ignores cities completely. While Cape Breton Island is a beautiful film and provides an excellent sampling of the region's folk music, the producer's selectivity results in a distorted view of the island and its culture. No doubt, this is done partly for commercial reasons; after all, who wants to buy a video of shut-down industries, commuters driving to work, and unemployed people gathering at their local donut shop? Still, the result is romanticism. If this neo-romantic view of Cape Breton continues, the kilted piper who performs for tourists at the end of the causeway will soon be replaced by a fiddler in the work clothes of an earlier era.

Gaelic romanticism is evident at the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts in St. Ann's, Cape Breton, where I spent a week as an immersion student. Instructors at the college, which is attended by students from across North America, rightly emphasize the close links between language and culture. Elderly resource people are brought in so that learners will be exposed to native Gaelic speakers. Gaelic culture itself is generally portrayed as containing a great many of the virtues but none of the vices of the rural western world before the Second World War. When teachers told of "good Gaels" (a Gael being a Gaelic speaker) making their own entertainment, holding work frolics (parties or bees), dancing till dawn, and showing

hospitality to all, I recalled similar descriptions of rural life by elderly Canadians who knew nothing of Gaelic. The instructors never mentioned other aspects of early twentieth-century Cape Breton Gaelic communities, such as religious bigotry, alcohol abuse, family quarrels, longstanding grudges, and brawling for fun. The good Gaels who visit the College as resource people conform to the romantic stereotype in part because they are decent people; otherwise they would not have been invited. Furthermore, they are elderly and, like a great many older people, have mellowed with age. One is unlikely to be harassed by a drunken Gael in Cape Breton today simply because most native Gaelic speakers are senior citizens. I do not dispute that such a person as a good Gael exists. Having been raised among Gaelic speakers from the Gabarus-Framboise coast, I have an impressionistic image of a good Gael—warm, witty, soft-spoken, and quick to provide a meal or even put up a wayfarer for the night. However, a reading of Scottish history indicates that there were once a great many very bad Gaels as well.

Idealized fantasies of the other can be almost as destructive as negative projections. People who view some distant group as a romantic archetype will discover on closer contact that its people—whether they are indigenous Canadians, Romany people (Gypsies), city dwellers, or rural Cape Bretoners—are only human. Like other people, members of the idealized group have vices. Even their virtues may not be those longed for by the outsider. The resulting disillusionment leads romantics to become embittered, feeling emotionally betrayed by members of the idealized group. I witnessed a few instances of participants in the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s developing intense friendships with elderly farmers, only to cut off the relationships upon discovering the farmers' faults and weaknesses. The

old men were left feeling hurt and confused. I also saw non-natives develop relationships with idealized aboriginal people and then, as their romantic fantasies were shattered, transform their idealism to contempt. However, in both situations, others persevered in their relationships despite any initial disillusionment and developed long-lasting friendships. These solid friendships were possible only after the romantic projections had been reduced considerably. In summary, romanticism tells us little about the people of rural Cape Breton or anywhere else for that matter. Residents of the Gabarus-Framboise coast—even those Gaelic speakers who would not let me leave their houses unfed and offered beds for the night if I had to drive forty miles—are contemporary people living on the eve of the twenty-first century and not conservative guardians of a past way of life.

Another, perhaps anti-romantic, stereotype depicts Cape Bretoners as simple, hard-living, hard-drinking, hard-fighting, and fun-loving people. This image may be used in either positive or negative ways by both insiders and outsiders. Many other cultures possess some similar stereotypical image which presents their members as simple, unpretentious, and hard-drinking (for example, the Irish, Highland Scots, Newfoundlanders, Canadian Indians, and residents of North Ontario, to name only a few). However, in all cases, many group members resent outsiders applying such a stereotype to them. Furthermore, the use of simplistic and limited self-images creates tension within societies since not all members conform to the stereotypes and some even see these self-images as promoting negative aspects of the culture concerned.

In the early 1980s, the expression "Cape Breton Barbarian" was often used in a pejorative way by people from other parts of the Maritimes.

Although many Cape Bretoners resented the term, others adopted it as their own, even wearing buttons saying, "I'm A Cape Breton Barbarian." In the 1990s, two Cape Bretoners living in Ontario used the name, "Cape Breton Barbarians" for their band. I received a piece of e-mail lore that had gone through a chain of Cape Bretoners which used humour based on a similar self-promoted stereotype. Entitled "Top 25 Things You'll Never Hear a Cape Bretoner Say," its messages include: "We don't keep firearms in this house," "No kids in the back of the pickup, it's not safe," "Wrasslin's fake," "I'll have grapefruit instead of fried baloney," "Moose heads detract from the decor," and "Please, no more beer, I'm too drunk." The people of the Gabarus-Framboise community are rural, unpretentious, not prone to following fads, and sometimes scornful of government rules and regulations. Furthermore, many hunt. The over-all image presented in the list contains some truth and thus works as humour. However, it is only humour and not an accurate description of Cape Breton life. As elsewhere in Canada, many people in the Gabarus-Framboise region and throughout Cape Breton are either moderate drinkers or do not drink at all.

The historian Ian McKay challenged another simplistic view of Nova Scotian folk culture in The Quest of the Folk (1994), his neo-Marxist, postmodern critique of concepts of folk culture in Nova Scotia. In this, the most extensive analysis to date of approaches to folklore in the province, he examined and criticized the role of the provincial government and various élites in their use of "the Folk" in the public presentation of Nova Scotia as a place of innocence and a tourist destination. McKay explains:

> Innocence denotes the local development of antimodernist conceptions of history and society through a network of words and things diffused by the urban middle class and corresponding, in a

> complex, indirect, and general sense to its social and cultural interests. (31)

McKay's work is important, not only for its thorough documentation of issues of concern to folklore scholarship but also for bringing to the forefront the importance of folklore to cultural issues, even if he regards the influence of folklore in Nova Scotia as damaging. McKay has provided the only critical analysis of the role of folklore in Canadian culture to be read by a broad public. The Quest of the Folk has already become influential among Nova Scotia's intellectuals, many of whom are unfamiliar with other analytical works about issues in folklore.[12] McKay rightly criticizes the romanticism and exclusivity of folkloristic approaches in Nova Scotia. However, The Quest of the Folk is essentially a conservative history which credits a few important individuals and élite groups with extraordinary ability to influence ordinary Nova Scotians.[13] McKay's analysis invokes the contemporary trend toward political activism in scholarship, using Marxist and postmodern theory to advocate a new social vision which he argues is being expressed by a body of Maritime intellectuals (308-10).[14] However, in developing this vision, McKay provides no place for the voice of less-educated people in small rural communities—the people whose culture has usually been documented, however selectively, by folklore researchers in the Maritimes. Neither his argument that élites have a powerful effect on the self-image of Nova Scotians nor his postmodern and Marxist interpretations of contemporary society work particularly well when applied to the Gabarus-Framboise community.

McKay shows little understanding of cultural dynamics outside of élite circles. He fails to establish what effect "the image of an antique Nova

Scotia made up of slow-moving and slow-talking Folk, resistant to change" actually has on either the people of Nova Scotia or the tourists who visit the province (271). Indeed, attempts by such bodies as tourist boards to portray rural people as symbols of innocence in order to appeal to urban desires are usually either rejected or simply ignored by those same country people. Gerald Pocius (1991) said of the village of Calvert, Newfoundland and its relationship to change:

> Old and new artifacts, old and new songs: the tensions of old and new are not tensions at all, for what is meaningful is appropriated. Indigenous forms have meaning only if the group deems it so; the actual items (be they objects or attitudes or verbal utterances) cannot be abstracted for middle-class fantasies about a past and a culture always more desirable and more golden than our present. (288)

The people of the Gabarus-Framboise region similarly choose what they value in their own folk culture and take what appeals from outside while showing little, if any, interest in what others feel they should be.

The use of Scottish symbols by residents illustrates their attitudes. According to McKay's argument, tartanism, which involves the appropriation of the symbols of pseudo-Highland culture by Nova Scotians (206), was developed by an élite and is an all-encompassing philosophy. However, people in this community have varying relations with Scottish symbolism. One or two belong to pipe bands and have all the affiliated regalia, some own a plaque or teacup with a clan emblem, while others possess no Scottish symbols at all. However, this Scottishness is not something pushed on these people by élites. The symbols which they have appropriated are meaningful. Many area residents are, after all, Gaelic-speaking descendants of Hebridean Scots (see Plate 2.1). Furthermore, kinship is valued not only in eastern Cape Breton but on the islands from which their

ancestors emigrated. Though McKay's surname may have little significance to him, to be a MacLeod, a MacDonald, a MacQueen, or a MacCormick from the Gabarus-Framboise region opens doors not only in Cape Breton but across the ocean, especially among Gaelic-speakers. Moreover, the community has an unbroken tradition of piping, although piping in the past was usually done by lone pipers at dances. Nevertheless, in my experience, no residents have boasted of clan affiliations nor have they, with the exception of pipers when performing, dressed in kilts. The evidence of symbols of "tartanism" does not imply the acceptance of an élite image of Nova Scotian culture.

While rejecting the concept of "the Folk" as middle-class romanticism, middle-class Marxist scholars like McKay and the British historian Dave Harker (Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong' 1700 to the Present Day, 1985) replace the Folk with a simplistic, romanticized picture of "the workers." McKay rightfully emphasizes the absence of industrial workers in the promotion of an official version of Nova Scotia's culture. However, he fails to show that working people's lot has been affected greatly by the cultural politics which he examines in his book. When Nova Scotians debate the desirability of creating a new factory in a community, they tend to focus on issues of environment and economy. They do not resist economic change because it contrasts with their self-image as "folk." A great many Maritime historians (including McKay in earlier writings) regard economics and politics, not cultural debates, as the important factors in understanding the serious issue of Maritime underdevelopment.[15]

Narratives from the Gabarus-Framboise district show that the residents, like many other Maritimers, have complex relationships with the world of work, moving in and out of industrial labour and other jobs for

periods ranging from weeks to years at a time, identifying more strongly with such concepts as region, family, and ethnic origins rather than with either class or industrial occupations.[16] Certainly, many Cape Bretoners living in industrial towns and mining communities have a strong identification with the working class and with organized labour. Nevertheless, only occasionally did I hear references to the labour movement and never to class identification. This was due in part to my research interests. Had I been focusing on work history, I would probably have heard more about these issues. Still, I was quite open to interviewing people about their interests and they often did talk about their working lives. I also took part in many informal, unrecorded conversations but heard nothing to indicate that the people of the Gabarus-Framboise region identify themselves as "the workers" any more than they regard themselves as "the Folk."

The Quest for the Folk is flawed in other ways, the most glaring of which is perhaps McKay's application of "postmodernism," which, according to his philosophy, describes the present state of the world, conveys a picture of life in which the major values are almost totally opposed to those of this rural Cape Breton community. Here, religion, kinship, oral tradition, and history are of vital importance and elderly tradition-bearers are highly regarded. McKay says of postmodernism:

> Its attributes include skepticism about the great metanarratives of social theory and religion; the acceptance of fragmentation and the celebration of ephemerality and discontinuity; the loss of historical continuity in values and beliefs, and consequently in the possibility of "historical subjects" and a reading of "reality" as a series of texts intersecting with other texts and producing yet more texts. (277)[17]

Scholars using postmodernism as a model for interpreting the contemporary

western world ignore the existence of rural communities, whose members are consciously resisting those powerful urban voices that insist that they abandon both their communities and their values.

The Gabarus-Framboise region shares with the rest of the Maritimes a long history of emigration. The contemporary adult residents have chosen to remain in or return to this rural community, knowing that other economically-desirable alternatives are readily available. These people appreciate the beauty of land and sea and value time spent outdoors. A great many know woods, barrens, lakes, and sea intimately and pick berries, cut firewood, hunt, and fish close to their homes. Most local people value the closeness of small communities and spend generous amounts of time associating with neighbours. This socializing often involves storytelling focused on the community's past. Most of the people to whom I talked, both young and old, were churchgoers. Religion is an important part of their lives (see Plate 2.2). They also share a strong sense of their past. Though this community has undergone considerable social change, it cannot be described in terms of "the loss of historical continuity in values and beliefs."

John D. Dorst in The Written Suburb (1989) also emphasized that postmodern society lacks "a meaningful past," as McKay expressed it. According to Dorst, "[p]ostmodernity is above all a regime of surfaces" (104). He found it to be a useful theoretical approach for analyzing Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, a village twenty-eight miles from Philadelphia which has been re-created in recent years as an attractive suburb. In Chadds Ford, "The General Store" is a gift shop, "The Barn Shops" is a mini-mall housed in former farm outbuildings, and a refurbished barn contains offices (9). The Gabarus-Framboise region is totally lacking in such false fronts. Tourism and

urban redefining and reclaiming of rural spaces have barely touched this stretch of Cape Breton's coast as they have many other areas of the island.[18] There are no "tourist traps." Louisbourg, once Gabarus's neighbouring village, is now, with its rebuilt fortress, a major tourist destination. However, government expropriation of land created a sixty-kilometre drive between the two communities. The coastal road through the Gabarus-Framboise area is unpopular with tourists going to Louisbourg or anywhere else. And since Patsy MacLeod closed her Bed and Breakfast, in which she and her husband Jimmy occasionally accommodated travellers in their house in Framboise, there have been no tourist-oriented businesses in this region. Here, a barn is simply a barn and not a souvenir shop. A fishing shanty is a fishing shanty and not a restaurant.

Residents of the Gabarus-Framboise area have produced a number of community histories in recent years, as have people in numerous other rural communities.[19] Postmodern theorists would claim such community histories as proof of their interpretations of contemporary culture. Dorst (1989) explained, "the culture of advanced consumer capitalism or, less acceptable but more fashionable, postmodernity, consists largely in the process of self-inscription, indigenous self-documentation and endlessly reflexive simulation" (2). These community histories are indeed examples of self-documentation. However, the type of reflexivity expressed in these books is not new to rural communities. In their oral narratives and historical ballads, people have always looked at who they are and whence they came. Rural community histories are better seen as extensions of the community's storytelling and song-making traditions rather than as completely new phenomena resulting from "advanced consumer culture." In fact, literary

examination of one's own culture is not new at all. The Scottish stonemason Hugh Miller explored the folklore, oral history, and tradition bearers of his community in two thorough and delightful community histories which were published in the nineteenth century (My Schools and Schoolmasters, 1854; Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland, 1835). Martin Lovelace, in "The Presentation of Folklife in the Biographies and Autobiographies of English Rural Workers" (1983), discussed similar works written in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England. Folk culture continually adapts itself to new media. The recent popularity of writing community histories is a reflection not so much of a shift in values as it is a response to mass literacy and to accessible publishing technologies.

Local histories of the Gabarus-Framboise area do not represent, as McKay put it, "the celebration of ephemerality and discontinuity; the loss of historical continuity in values and beliefs." A major purpose of these books is to educate local people in past values by preserving oral materials in print. The following quotations from the introductions to three such books illustrate the authors' conscious attempts to promote community values through local history.

> It is true that hardships were common and that families lived without many of the luxuries we today take for granted. However, our ancestors had one luxury that neither progress nor money can provide and that was a strong sense of community. May our modern affluence never blind us to that which brings *real* comfort. (MacGillivray et al., A History of Fourchu:7)

> ... there is... a rich, full history of the many families who came and made these shores their home. And that history is part of all of us who live in Framboise, part of the new and different lives we lead today. (Cumming et al., The Story of Framboise:viii)

> My first impressions were that I had the privilege of being in a peaceful community where citizens carried out their esponsibilities in a

> civilized manner. The passing of time has not dulled this impression. (Sullivan et al., Gabarus Schools Reunion '95:1)

Furthermore, what McKay calls the "historical continuity of values and belief," which supposedly existed before the so-called postmodern era, is ideal rather than real. Scotland and England, the countries from which most of the Gabarus-Framboise settlers originated, have histories of centuries of war, radical religious movements, continuous migrations of individuals and groups, urbanization, and technological change. Anthropologists recognize that change and adaptation are parts of the human condition, even among the most remote and conservative peoples. One would be hard pressed to find the last period which could be described as a "steady state" in either British or European, to say nothing of North American, social history. The people of Cape Breton negotiate their values, attempting to find a balance between the old and new, as their ancestors have done since time immemorial.

Indeed, the Gabarus-Framboise community, like a great many other rural communities, is—despite its low population—a complex society that defies any easy categorizations whether romantic, denigrating, or intellectual. Local people work (or, in the case of the elderly, have worked) in a variety of occupations, as labourers, civil servants, farmers, fishers, merchants, contractors, schoolteachers, and nurses. Certainly many are "workers"—some have been active in mining unions and fishing co-operatives—yet I saw no evidence that the position of "worker" was more important than many of an individual's other social roles. Furthermore, outsiders' stereotypes have little influence on the residents. The narratives in this thesis will illustrate the importance of tradition and continuity in the lives of

the local people. In the following chapters I, like other folklore researchers before me, will present voices of a small folk community—an important component of contemporary culture—and thereby challenge both the romantics and the urban hegemony which McKay represents.

2.3 What is a narrative?

A narrative is a story. Funk and Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary: Canadian Edition (1963) contains a typical definition, "[s]omething narrated, as an account, story, or tale, narrate meaning [t]o tell or relate, as in a story." The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998) further restricts the meaning of narrative to "a spoken or written account of connected events in order of happening."

Folklorists often define narrative in the sense used by Oxford. Linda Kinsey Adams (1990) says, "Like a story you read in a book, an oral prose narrative contains a plot; that is, it contains a series of events that unfold in a definite sequence over time. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end" (23, see also Oring, 121-22). The work of the linguists William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1967), cited by both Adams and Oring, has influenced folklorists' definitions of narrative. Labov and Waletzky explain, "We have defined narrative informally as one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred" (20).

Labov and Waletzky (who elicited many violent stories) give as an example of a simple narrative:

a Well, this person had a little too much to drink
b and he attacked me
c and the friend came in
d and she stopped it

They demonstrate that by reordering the sequence of events, in one case changing the words slightly, the series of clauses still describe the same event but no longer form narratives.

c a friend of mine came in
d just in time to stop
a this person who had a little too much to drink
b from attacking me

d A friend of mine stopped the attack.
c She had just come in.
b This person was attacking me.
a He has had a little too much to drink (20).

Regarding the smallest unit that can be called "narrative," Labov (1972) explains, "we can define a *minimal narrative* as a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered; that is a change in their order will result in a change in the temporal sequence of the original semantic interpretation" (author's italics; 360). Simply put, the clauses are ordered in time and changing their order will change the meaning. In the following example, clauses b and c are narrative clauses which must remain in the same order to maintain the narrative. Of clause a, Labov says, "It is equally true at the beginning and end that the narrator knows a boy named Harry" (361). (However, competent storytelling demands that this clause be placed at the beginning of the narrative.)

a I know a boy named Harry
b Another boy threw a bottle at him right in the head
c and he had to get seven stitches (361).

In deciding what is a minimal narrative, I use Labov and Waletzky's definition.

To Labov, a narrative is not simply a number of clauses "in the general present" that "refer to an indefinite number of occasions" (361). A narrative, whether truthful or fictional, must refer to a specific incident, thus, when Ruth Reid told of her reaction to ghost stories, she did not recount her experience as a narrative.

> My aunt by marriage, she was great for telling ghost stories—how they used to see a man with no head and different stories like that. I NEVER LISTENED TO THEM 'cause I had quite a ways to walk and where I live, it was all woods on both sides of the driveway and I wouldn't listen to the stories (laughs) because I had to walk home. (RT95-25, Sept. 4, 1995)

However, Lena MacLeod when telling of similar fears, related a simple narrative that recounted a particular incident.

> I remember the time we went down with Wellington. We were waiting for Wellington to come home and we were at Lauchie MacDonald's and he was a great one to tell stories. And he'd be stamping his feet sitting there. (Flora MacLeod: Yes, I can remember that.) Great one for telling stories and I was only about that high, I guess [gestures]. My father was carrying my brother and we started down the road and I was so scared from listening to Lauchie MacDonald's ghost stories that I pulled up the collar of my coat like this [pretends to cover her face]. I was scared I'd see a ghost on the way home. (RT92-4B, July 22, 1992)

Labov and Waletzky's model of narrative is simplistic, despite their complicated analysis. These linguists were concentrating on specific analytical goals which precluded the study of complex narrative forms such as "[m]yths, folk tales, legends, histories, epics, toasts and sagas." Instead, they focused on "the actual narratives of large numbers of unsophisticated speakers," that is, personal experience narratives (12). Though their basic

point, that oral stories are temporally ordered is generally true, as with any art form, there are exceptions to the rule. More complex stories sometimes involve moving about in time. For example in The Arabian Nights, Sinbad recounts his voyages within a greater story, itself existing within the story of Schezarade (though the latter could be primarily a literary device). Even in personal experience narratives, temporal order can be rearranged, without destroying the narrative, by either an incompetent storyteller ("...so he stepped up to the podium—oh, I forgot to tell you, in all the excitement, he hadn't remembered to finish dressing. Anyway, he stepped up...") or a competent one ("...so Dad and I were sitting there when his brother walked in. Now, back in the thirties, Dad and Uncle Jim had an awful quarrel over a girl and they never really got over it...").

Gillian Bennett found that most of the supernatural belief narratives that she collected in an English study did not conform to the Labov-Waletzky model.

> This sort of neat, rounded story...is rare—only 26 out of the 153 I collected conform to this pattern. A narrative with a "Labovian" structure is plainly not the norm for the context. It is much more usual for a speaker to tell a story which deviates from this classic pattern. Rather than relating a unique event, speakers may opt to describe a typical happening; rather than arranging an event chronologically, they may tell their story in circular fashion, beginning at the end or repeating key incidents several times over at different stages of the narrative; rather than tying up the ends in a neat dénouement they may leave it untidily open-ended; and rather than concentrating attention on events, they may give a disproportionately large amount of the story to describing circumstances and contexts. (1986:417)

Bennett argues that "insistence on details of circumstance" and "nonchronological presentation" in supernatural belief stories results "from speakers using narrative as a form of explanation" (417).

Furthermore, the Labov-Waletzky model suits simple stories better than it does complex ones. The Cape Breton storyteller Arthur Severance's multi-layered story of a tall tale session, containing narratives within a framing narrative (Chapter 4), does not fit neatly. However, most of the stories that I recorded in Cape Breton "involve matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events." Furthermore, most of these same stories can be broken down into the component parts specified by Labov: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution and coda (363).

Individuals sometimes refer to descriptive accounts as "stories." They may say, "Grandma has lots of stories," when, in fact, Grandma is more likely to relate generalized experience: "We used to carry our shoes to church...," "I used to help Mother bake bread...". However, when referring to specific stories, almost everyone refers to accounts of a specific incident, therefore, I do not consider non-specific recollections, like Ruth Reid's (above), to be narratives.

Often, the transition from general description to narrative is heralded by a reference to a specific time, "one time," "one day," "once," "I remember when," "there was a time," or, as Lena MacLeod said, "I remember that time." The word "so" is another important signifier used in the Gabarus-Framboise area and elsewhere. Bauman (1986) explains, "The...particle 'so' in Anglo-American storytelling signals the transition from orientation—background and potentiating conditions—to the actual first line of the story" (38). Roy and Jimmy MacLeod's use 'so' in mid-story to signify a transition from a discussion of details to the central action of the story (see Roy's story of the rum runners' arrests and Jimmy's stories of pranks in Chapter 5).

My use of narrative or story reflects what most Canadians, including those in the Gabarus-Framboise region, mean by the word story. A narrative is a step-by-step account of something specific that happened, whether factual or fictional. Although such an account is usually related in temporal sequence, this is not always the case. However, the steps within the narrative must combine to form a coherent whole which is evident and understandable to the listener and goes beyond mere description. As well, narrative—sometimes despite the narrator's intention—is a symbolic form. In Oring's words, "narrative has the ability to ensnare us"; "[i]t engages us intellectually" and emotionally (122). A narrative is something more than the clauses or statements that comprise it.

2.4 Symbolism and Meaning in Narratives

As I sat in Lloyd MacDonald's livingroom in Fourchu (see Plate 2.3), he told me the following tale:

> ... I heard about the Devil down in Gabarus, I guess you heard that. The old blacksmith down there used to like to play cards? Alex MacLeod, old Alex MacLeod, he was awful fond of playing cards. Always a game everywhere. He'd be down around the Barachois playing cards.[20] So, one night he was coming home after a card game and all of a sudden this fella caught up to him and he was talking to him and he said, "You like to play cards?" "Yes." He said, "How about a game?"
>
> Well, he went to the forge and he lit the lantern and they were playing away and he was getting beat. This fella was beating him. He was awful good to play cards but—. So anyhow, one of the cards dropped on the floor and he bent down to pick [it] up, here was this man he was playing with, with cloven feet on him. He looked at him, he said, "You're the Devil," and he said he went out right through the roof of the forge and he never played cards after that. Whether it was the Devil with him or not, he scared him anyhow (laughs). So if you're ever playing cards, don't look under the table if you got one (laughs). (RT92-37A, Aug. 13, 1992)

I begin with this story to make the point that most narratives can exist independently as texts. Stories are valid in themselves. A reader may enjoy this short tale without knowing anything about Lloyd MacDonald, Gabarus, or Fourchu. Nor does one need to be aware that there is a folktale tradition of encounters between blacksmiths and the Devil. Anyone familiar with the belief systems of western culture can understand this story. With changes in the particular sin or taboo and perhaps a different supernatural character, the basic story would be comprehensible to most of the world.

In fact, this story of the Devil is a migratory legend (Christiansen ML3015), a story told as true, which is widespread in the western world.[21] I collected another minimal version from Dan Alex MacLeod of Stirling near Framboise:

> Well, I don't know where it was at but I guess they were gambling or something and somebody looked under the table and saw hoofs on one of the players. There was something else that they seen, and the woman that saw it, she wasn't playing cards. She got the Bible and put it on the table and he disappeared, went through the walls. (RT92-22A, Aug. 6, 1992)

Contextualists (e.g., Dundes, 1964; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1975; Georges, 1969; Bauman and Paredes, 1973) would argue that in order to understand this story, we must have considerable knowledge of the community and its values or, at very least, of the "performance situation." In fact, this legend does concern what was once a point of contention in this community. A number of people mentioned to me that although some people played cards during their youth, their elders usually voiced strong objections. Mary Maggie MacCormick of Framboise Intervale linked the legend with local attitudes toward card playing.

Ranald: Have you heard anything about the Devil?

Mary Maggie: No, no. No. I heard, whether it was that some people are playing cards and there was hoofs under the table. Well I heard that but ——— We weren't allowed, my father didn't allow us to have cards in the house, or my mother. Hector [Mary's husband] didn't want cards. He said he seen so much cards in the navy, he said, "Many's the pack I burnt." He never played cards home. I used to. I still play solitaire a lot and I play cards too.

Ranald: So, was his feeling in the navy that people had lost a lot of money gambling or—?

Mary Maggie: Well, that's what it was. They were gambling, the minute they'd get money they were gambling it, so he used to burn the cards. But that kept up just the same. (RT 92-8B, July 27, 1992)

Mary Maggie's words confirm that this legend is related to community conflicts. Yet, this is hardly an enlightening observation as almost any reader in the western world would understand that this story involves people engaging in a pastime which has been deemed sinful. These narratives say little if anything about eastern Cape Breton which could not be said about hundreds of other regions.

Sociolinguists (e.g., Hymes, 1981; Tedlock, 1983) would insist that the above narratives be transcribed verbatim with every grunt, pause, and false start carefully recorded. Through careful analysis of the structure of the tellings, we would discover the real meaning that these legends bear for their tellers. But if we were to attempt this approach, our conclusions would be based on circular logic. We would be looking for an important meaning and we would probably find one. In truth, these narratives may have little meaning for their tellers. Lloyd MacDonald, Dan Alex MacLeod, and Mary Maggie MacCormick mentioned this legend only in response to my questions

about stories of encounters with the Devil (although Lloyd had previously been telling me about a man who thought that the Devil was chasing him in the form of a horse; see Chapter 7). The attitudes of all three narrators toward this story can be easily deduced by their comments. Lloyd ended the story with a humorous moral—"if you're ever playing cards, don't look under the table"—surely not the lesson his Methodist ancestors would have derived from this tale. Dan Alex told me, "Och, when I was growing up, I took it for granted and I still think it was just saying it to discourage young people from playing cards or something." And Mary Maggie, a very religious woman, stated that she played cards despite the attitudes of her parents and her husband and despite any warnings inherent in this legend. Obviously, none of these people attribute great meaning to this story. Lloyd MacDonald, the storyteller who became most involved in the narration, simply enjoys telling stories and tries to bring life to any tale which passes his lips.

This legend survives in eastern Cape Breton because it is a good story, one that works. The tale is simple but contains tension. Who is this strange gambler? Will the Devil snatch away a soul? Like many legends, it provides a vivid image—in this case, the cloven hoof under the table—which helps engrave the tale on the listener's memory.[22] Versions of this story could be published verbatim, edited, moved to other times or settings, stretched out to make a written short story, or turned into a film (as it has been)[23] and would still be effective. The legend has been localized, given a local setting and protagonist, yet one does not have to have a deep understanding of Gabarus-Framboise society in order to have some appreciation of this legend. However, localized versions of the story might have deeper meanings for those who knew the blacksmith Alex MacLeod or others to whom the story

was attributed and who understood the significance of the fact that Alex was gambling at the Barachois.

Anthropologists have had a great influence on the field of folklore studies, resulting in a search for specific cultural meanings in narratives and other folk art forms. Certainly a society may use stories for blatantly pedantic purposes. Dan Alex MacLeod thought that this legend was told in the past "to discourage young people from playing cards or something." But stories also have a symbolic dimension. Lloyd MacDonald's simple narrative contains ideas about strangers, nighttime, the Devil, disguise, transgression of rules, human relations with animals, and personal vulnerability. Many of these ideas exist outside the purposes of the storyteller.

Stories are not generally mere statements of fact but are symbols. They exist as symbols precisely because they cannot be readily reduced to a simple message. Dan Alex's elders could have just told him that playing cards is a sin and if you engage in it, you will go to Hell. However, their theology was not so simplistic. Besides, such a straightforward statement would not encompass all the concepts included in the legend.

Carl Jung, who devoted his life to the study of symbols, emphasized that there is no one final interpretation of a symbol to be discovered:

> ...a word or image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider "unconscious" aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. No one can hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason. (1971:20-21)

Many writers who have analyzed versions of oral narratives on a psychological basis imply that there is one correct interpretation of a story, an idea with which most folklorists would disagree.[24] While these writers

usually make persuasive points, their analyses are only interpretations and not definitive explanations.

The anthropologist Victor Turner said that "symbolic forms are multi-vocal," that is, symbols say different things to different people (1968:8). I once heard Joan Bodger, a professional storyteller and psychotherapist, tell a story in which a "bogle" attacked a woman in a mill at night. Bodger explained that she tells the same tale to groups of women who have been victims of sexual abuse. This listeners not only identify strongly with the heroine but equate the goblin with their attacker, taking strength from the story's resolution. This tale would not have the same meaning for others who had not undergone similar traumas.[25] The story of the Devil playing cards carries an obvious message about the sinful nature of card playing but, for some listeners, it could communicate equally important messages about the danger of strangers or the deceptiveness of appearances. Listeners might, using Turner's analogy, hear different "voices."

The Finnish folklorist Anna-Leena Siikala, while less interested in symbolism than Jung and Turner, also considered stories to have multiple meanings:

> The meaning of a narrative may not necessarily be manifest in the same way to all those present at its performance. The narrator may perhaps have some idea of what he is aiming at, or what he wishes to put across to his listeners. But his listeners may construe the story in a different way. For understanding a story is also a form of interpretation and depends on the nature of the listener's empirical and cognitive world. (1990:198)

Eastern European and Scandinavian folklorists, who were often recording complex and lengthy Märchen, have stressed the importance of individual narrators and how their personalities affected their stories (these writings are

examined in this chapter). They argue that individual tradition bearers are vital to the transmission of oral narratives, yet stories—less complex ones at least—exist to some degree independently of their tellers (cf., Finnegan, 1992:27-8; Wilgus, 1973). When variations of one traditional story are found across cultural and linguistic barriers, its reasons for existing go beyond its significance for any individual storyteller. Wonder tales and Jack tales were once kept alive by such peoples as European peasants and impoverished, rural Appalachian Americans. Today, these stories—sometimes in altered forms—are popular with educated urban North Americans who read them in books or listen to them at storytelling revival gatherings. Undoubtedly, specific cultural meanings are lost as stories move from one group to another. Martin Lovelace (1998) suggested that Jack tales in Newfoundland contain specific practical advice pertinent to young men employed in the fishery (15). Clearly, these stories would not transmit similar messages to their city audiences. However, a great many narratives have both entertainment and symbolic value which allows them to move beyond the society which created or preserved them.

William Wilson discussed stories of his rural American family in his 1990 Archer Taylor Memorial Lecture. According to Wilson, a folklorist trying too hard to discern meaning in family stories might be missing much more important issues.

> ...don't be overly concerned with meaning. What do family stories mean to those who tell them? As you seek to answer that question, I recommend the words of Paul Ricoeur: "Like a text, human action is an open work, the meaning of which is 'in suspense.' It is because it 'opens up' new references and receives fresh relevance from them that human deeds are also waiting for fresh interpretations to decide their meaning" (Ricoeur, 1973:103). In other words, stories like my mother's do not have fixed, determinate meanings, even to the narrator—and

> having once created the stories, the narrator becomes both teller and audience. They serve rather as the means by which the storyteller structures her life and presents it to the world. (1991:145)

Wilson argues that the importance of such stories lies not in individual narratives but in how they blend to form "both a *family* novel and a *personal* novel" (author's italics; 146).

> The unity in her family novel lies not in a linear plot leading from event to event toward any logical conclusion, but rather, as in some modern novels in the clustering of motifs around given themes with my mother always at the center. This process is also similar to what one finds in epic traditions where unity is derived from the accretion of narratives around cultural heroes and around dominant cultural values." (141-42)

The family novel becomes understandable because one learns the cast of characters and becomes familiar with such recurring themes as struggling against hardship, standing up for rights, and living with integrity.

A small community is like a family in that everyone knows each other personally and their stories share a cast of characters and communal themes.[26] As in the case of Wilson's mother's stories, the stories of the Gabarus-Framboise region are parts of an ongoing "novel" which tells listeners who they are and where they came from, and advises how they should live their lives. In this thesis, I discuss relationships between individuals, their community, and their storytelling traditions. However, I also emphasize that the narratives themselves are crucial to a study of storytelling. Despite the importance of contextual studies, numerous collections of tales have been compiled from oral narratives and published for distant audiences. Most of these collections are able to entertain whether or not they contain detailed analyses of the cultures which carried them. Nevertheless, there is an inherent contradiction in many of the tales of the

Gabarus-Framboise coast: they are stories and thus have symbolic dimensions and so can be enjoyed by people from different backgrounds, yet they are also local stories and, as episodes of the community novel, may carry messages specific to the local society.

2.5 Repertoire Studies

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, folklorists of the Finnish school were concerned primarily with the diffusion of texts and minimized the roles of individual folk artists in creating and transmitting folklore. Such an approach developed out of earlier European philosophies. Kaivola-Bregenhøj explained that for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romantics, often strong advocates of folklore collecting, "[f]olk poetry was thought to have evolved collectively, as the creation of a non-differentiated 'folk' and performers were naturally only the reproducers of texts, not their active users" (45). Through the influence of Stith Thompson, the diffusionist views of the Finns became important in North America, as they already had throughout western Europe. Folklorists of this school regarded tradition bearers as uncreative transmitters of oral forms. Lord Raglan (1936) declared, "No popular storyteller has ever been known to invent anything" and complained that narrators do "make minor changes, mostly for the worse" (130). Thompson stated that the folktale "is handed down from one person to another, and there is no virtue in originality" (1949:II, 408). He wrote of "the way the archetype... suffers modification" (1946:435), then listed factors causing changes in tales and preventing "perfect transmission" (436). In the words of Daniel Crowley, "So narrow a view of the nature of the handing

down of tradition does it a disservice by demeaning the contributions of individual narrators who are its only living exponents" (1983:2).

However, by the mid-twentieth century, many western scholars had recognized the importance of individuals to the transmission of lore. In the 1920s, Axel Olrik (1921:62-75) acknowledged the importance of individual tradition bearers, stating that "The alteration of the narrative may be conscious or unconscious" but he concluded that "unconscious alteration probably plays a much greater role" (67). Thompson, despite his earlier calls for emphasis on "pure transmission," also developed significant understanding of the complex dynamics between individuals and cultures, as is shown in his discussion of "The Folktale as Living Art" (1977:449-61).

Russian folklorists formulated an intellectual approach concurrent with but different from that of the Finns.[27] The Russians' search for an understanding of folktale structures was based on extensive fieldwork and led them to a greater understanding of the dynamics of oral storytelling. P. N. Rybnikov (1831-1885) wrote, "Telling a tale means putting it together," by which he meant not reciting a memorized text but creatively improvising using oral formulae and structural patterns (Jason, 1977:475). Rybnikov recognized that not only did individual Russian storytellers show great differences in their narrations of the same tale but one storyteller telling the same story twice "will render much [of it] in different words" (475, author's brackets). During the 20th century, Russian and eastern European folklorists continued to emphasize the importance of tradition bearers, as will be shown in this chapter, although the structuralist viewpoint led some of its proponents to hold that there were strict limits to creativity. Propp, for instance, recognized that there are areas in which the folk narrator "creates

more or less freely" but concluded, "It can be established that the creator of a tale rarely invents; he receives his material from his surroundings or from current realities and adapts them to a tale" (1928:4).

Today, western folklorists accept—almost without question—the influence of individuals on tradition. In fact, Venetia Newall has warned that the current of our times may be leading us to over-emphasize the individuality of folk artists.

> We live in a time when individualism is paramount, and self-expression is often quoted as a justificatory essential. What we must guard against is active tradition-bearing, in pursuance of ideals of this nature, being studied virtually as an end in itself. Therefore the type of repertoire and personality analysis we must welcome is that which augments understanding of the active tradition-bearer's social role. (Dégh & Newall, 1976:280)

Studies emphasizing individual folk artists or tradition bearers and their relationship to their traditions are not only acceptable but commonplace.[28] Repertoire analysis is one important approach to understanding this relationship. Although repertoire analysis developed internationally due to varying influences, its proponents have consistently stressed the importance of individual tradition bearers in the transmission of folklore. In this section, I will examine not only how folklorists have approached the study of repertoire but also how they have considered those individuals whose repertoires they studied. In order to understand the concept of a community repertoire, we must first deal with individual narrators and their selections of oral narratives.

2.5.1 Eastern European Approaches to Repertoire Studies

Eastern European folklorists were the first to analyze the role of folk

artists. Mark Azadovskii's A Siberian Tale Teller (orig. 1926) was the most important early study of this type and remains a preeminent work in the field. In his book, Azadovskii stressed the issues of relationships between tradition and individual creativity and between storytellers and their social group—still important concerns to folklorists. Azadovskii was following a scholarly tradition already established by his Russian predecessors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jason, 1970).[29] He wrote, "In contrast to West European research it is particularly characteristic of the Russian school of folklorists that they are interested in and pay attention to the personality of the singer or narrator" (1). Azadovskii predated the American performance school by four decades but expressed similar concerns, calling attention to "personal taste," "choice of tales" (7), "context," "the reciprocal relationship between narrators and audience," and "the attitude of the narrators themselves to the tales" (10).

Azadovskii classified Siberian narrators into three types, each with its own style and folktale preferences (23). He then analyzed the repertoire of Natal'ia Osipovna Vinokurova showing, half a century before Pentikäinen (1976) coined the term repertoire analysis, how her stories reflected her personality. Azadovskii regarded Vinokurova and her peers as artists: "The narrator is faced consciously or unconsciously, with the same assignment as the creative writer: the arrangement of his material, choosing and sifting the latter, and the formulation of his artistic intention" (12). His description of this illiterate storyteller's approach is reminiscent of the attitudes of the post-revolutionary, avant-garde artists of 1920s Russia: "Vinokurova is always trying to break through the limitations of traditional poetics. Her poetic feeling and artistic talent draw her instinctively to nature descriptions and

one can follow her attempts to expand the traditional framework, to destroy the obligatory norms and to find words and colors in order to portray her feelings for nature directly" (44). The main fault in Azadovskii's study is that in emphasizing Vinokurova as an individual artist, he failed to explain her social role. Unfortunately, The Siberian Tale Teller, a superlative work, was not accessible to most North American scholars until it was translated into English in 1974, by which time western folklorists had independently developed approaches similar to Azadovskii's.[30]

The Hungarian folklorist, Gyula Ortutay, was more influential in the west than was Azadovskii, primarily because his student Linda Dégh emigrated to the United States and through her teaching and writing at Indiana University, spread the ideas of Ortutay's Budapest or Hungarian School. Ortutay was the inheritor of approaches developed by Azadovskii and his fellow Russian folklorists but he also credited Cecil Sharp with emphasizing the importance of individuals in the transmission of folklore (1972:228, 226). Ortutay's renowned essay "Mihály Fedics Relates Tales" (1941:225-285) is a thorough examination of one storyteller and how his personality affected his traditional art. In this essay, Ortutay stated the theoretical issue which was of prime importance throughout his work:

> What I consider my principal task is to observe the lot of the sort of creative individual that was able to emerge in the conditions of the older, strict community order of Hungarian peasant society and culture: to what extent the individual was able to exercise his creative powers through the traditions sanctified by the community; and how far the development of epic material handed down from generation to generation can be influenced by personality and talent, factors whose creative role we have no right to ignore even though that popular culture which grows up and changes under the strict discipline of the community appears to be so much against personality. It is the special tension prevailing between the personality and the tradition preserved by the community that gives us the clue to an understanding of the

> essence of popular culture and a one-sided emphasis on any of the factors may well lead us astray. (226-27)

Ortutay, like Azadovskii, was concerned with portraying the artistry and creativity of the peasant storyteller. Mihály Fedics, like Vinokurova, was presented not as a conduit for tradition but as the equivalent of the bourgeois artist whose genius separates him from his peers.

> His personality, his complex and fantastic gift for telling stories, developed within these limits (i.e., his personal and social background) and elevated him far above the usual type of people who preserved the traditional tales. His example shows in fact that a soul can be really great, irrespective of its imprisonment within narrow limits and that creative ability is no exclusive property of the higher social classes. (254)

Ortutay recognized the complexity of the tradition bearer's relationship with tradition itself. He provided a much clearer picture than did Azadovskii of the storyteller's role in his society and demonstrated conclusively that storytellers were creative individuals. Though they were folk artists, they were not slaves to tradition: "[S]torytellers are well aware that although it is tradition at disposal that determines what they have to say, tradition is merely material that can be formed and re-created in the course of time, and its moulding depends on time, occasion and talent" (268).

Linda Dégh, like Ortutay, has studied storytellers as creative individuals in what she called "a narrator-centered approach to narrative performance" (1995a:7). Dégh emphasized the importance of studying "eminent " (11), or "prominent storytellers, not only because they reveal their personal talent but also because they are the most reliable custodians of tradition and represent public opinion and taste" (35). Mihály Fedics was a ne'er-do-well with a liminal role in his society. The Hungarian storytellers studied by Dégh, in some cases, also lived on the margins of society.

However, her North American narrators were more representative of the predominant values of their ethnic communities (see: Dégh, 1969, 1975, 1995, 1995a). In her work, Dégh interpreted the main goal of "folkloristics as a discipline" as "the study of human creativity" (1995a:26). She, like Ortutay, ennobled the experimental storyteller to the detriment of the more conservative narrator. Folklorists of the Budapest school often describe less experimental tradition bearers in judgmental terms. Dégh contrasted "truly creative narrators" with "simple bearers of tradition" (1969, 167), commenting, "We often find that those who anxiously cleave to past tradition are weak storytellers...and are not really creative" (168). Or, in P. V. Lintur's words, "Tale-repeaters, who have no artistic talent, slavishly adhere to tradition" (1978:443).[31]

Eleanor Long, who studied ballad singers, regards the conservative tradition bearer as an important link in the transmission of folklore. Long developed a progressive model which divided folk artists into four types, each with an important role in the preservation and transmission of a folk art:

> I Preservating (sic): This type is the conservative... ballad singer who insists upon faithful reproduction of his text....
>
> II Confabulating: The confabulating ballad singer often appears to be of the highest order of creativity... They stand in no particular awe of received tradition; they may *add* narrative themes... they may *revise* the text to conform to a tentative notion of "better sense" or greater appropriateness... they may simply *improvise* for the sheer love of improvising...
>
> III Rationalizing: ... Here the sense is one of "making the text conform to a previously-adopted, extra-textual system of values that is of significance to the singer."[32] It is a fairly expansive category, encompassing any ethical, political, or aesthetic stance which palpably colors the singer's treatment of his material...

> IV Integrative: The integrative folk artist is as aware of tradition as the preservator, as innovative as the confabulator, and as conscious of the need for organization and consistency as the rationalizer. He goes beyond all three, however, by *creating* texts that are unique and as often as not memorable. He makes use of traditional verbal formulae and narrative themes, but he is not enslaved by them: his value system is that of the poet, or "maker," not that of the craftsman, decorator or free-style artist.... (author's italics; Long, 1973:232-33)

Long's model allows a broad range of personal approaches to folk art, all with contributions to make. The creative persons discussed by Ortutay and Dégh are primarily confabulating and integrative folk artists, in Long's terms, whose traditional performance materials are grounded in the traditions of the preservators. Cultures, like individuals, have differing attitudes toward how specific genres of oral lore should be transmitted. Bahamian narrators are extremely creative in their telling of folktales (Crowley, 1966:1). However, Gaelic-speakers in Ireland and Scotland, although casual about the transmission of anecdotes, repeat Märchen and hero tales with nearly verbatim accuracy. [33]

Folklorists of the Budapest school generally base their analyses on ongoing relationships with storytellers. They do not necessarily live "in the field" for a year or more as was once the standard anthropological practice. However, they visit regularly and develop strong personal relationships and a familiarity with the community. Dégh summarized their approach: "If something is typical of the so called (sic) Hungarian school, it is the study of community story-telling, based on rigorous ethnographic fieldwork" (Dégh and Newall, 277). She wrote Folktales and Society (1969), arguably the most important analysis of traditional storytelling in a community context, after a number of fieldtrips to the village of Kakasd between 1948 and 1960 (ix).

Throughout her work, Dégh showed intimacy with and affection for the storytellers from whom she collected (e.g. 1995a:306-324).

Such ongoing studies allowed Hungarian folklorists to know both storytellers and communities and to get a thorough sampling of individual repertoires. Through familiarity with the community, they were able to place a storyteller's social role in perspective and to understand his or her relationship with locally inherited traditions. By collecting a broad repertoire, they could analyze stylistic and thematic patterns. By knowing the narrator, they could relate these patterns to the individual teller. The Budapest school has provided deep and insightful analyses of storytellers, their society and their tradition, stressing the creative aspects of their art.[34]

2.5.2 Finnish Approaches to Repertoire Studies

The Finnish scholar Juha Pentikäinen (1978) was the first to use the phrase repertoire analysis. He did not provide a definition but his approach to the study of repertoire was similar to that of the Budapest school. Pentikäinen, like Ortutay and Dégh, stressed the importance of the individual. He was influenced by both von Sydow (1948) who emphasized the role of tradition bearers in the spread of folklore and Malinowski (1948:238-242) who argued that communities have "specialists" possessing particular traditional knowledge (Pentikäinen, 1976:263-64). "When the communication of oral tradition is analyzed as social behaviour, one should examine tradition bearers not only as individual transmitters of tradition but also as possessors of certain social roles, who are expected by the community to fill those roles" (264). He was concerned with the process of transmitting

tradition (1978:22) and with the relationship between tradition bearer, community and tradition: "The individual deserves attention both as an idiosyncratic unit, who has a unique life history and personality, and as a member of a social group in his locality and cultural environment" (14).

Marina Takalo, the Karelian woman with whom Pentikäinen worked, asked him to record "everything I remember" (5). This request resulted in twelve years of fieldwork during which "[h]er life history as well as cultural and memorized knowledge was recorded in its entirety" (13). Oral Repertoire and World View (1978), the resulting book, contains not only various genres of narrative but beliefs, rituals, rites of crisis, and poetry from Marina Takalo's repertoire. Pentikäinen argued that different genres had different meanings for a tradition bearer and "Individual freedom of choice seemed to vary among the different genres" (331). Like the Hungarian scholars, Pentikäinen emphasized the creativity of the storyteller in her relationship with traditional materials:

> When a tradition is reproduced it is not only a question of the preservation of tradition which has been learned by the informant but also of transformation. A skilful bearer of tradition is not only able to reproduce what he has learned but also to change (transform) the material he is already acquainted with and to give it new forms. This he does partly by following certain rules he has learned and partly according to his own personality and his own view of the world as well as his Umwelt.[35] (333)

Anna-Leena Siikala (1980, 1990), a participant in a three-year fieldwork project involving sixty-three storytellers in a rural Finnish parish, investigated "how the personal features of storyteller [sic], their outlook and attitudes to the world influence their status and nature as tradition-bearers, and their capacity as media for putting across traditional information, i.e. as

story-tellers in their own community" (1980:165). She emphasized that these Finnish storytellers were all specialists who included in their active repertoires only a part of the collective tradition of their localities (166). Siikala, like Pentikäinen, emphasized the importance of the individual narrator. Showing how two storytellers brought contrasting serious and light attitudes to the same subject, Siikala stressed that each storyteller has a certain tradition orientation.

> The narrator's general tradition orientation is made up of his interests in various folklore motifs. It takes shape in the course of his life, just like other basic attitudes; like them, it may also shift with a change of life. His tradition orientation is visible not only in the positive selection and the additions to his active repertoire, for it eliminates uninteresting subjects in just the same way. (1990:202; c.f. 1980:168)

Siikala found storytellers' tradition orientations remarkably consistent: "Examination of repeated narratives show that narrators have a surprisingly fixed attitude to their subjects. This is interesting for research oriented toward performance has stressed the narrators' attitudes vary above all according to the situation" (1990:200). She argued that tradition orientation is a cultural construction, so that "every cultural milieu produces not only a unique tradition but unique types of narrators too" (207).

Siikala classed the parish's narrators into various types, using a model encumbered with psychological terminology which not only seems value-laden but contributes little to our understanding of these storytellers (202-205; 1980:169-72) . For instance, Type C narrators, specialists in belief traditions, are "socially passive and noticeably introvert" while type D narrators who are "interested both in folklore permitting social recognition and folklore as an experience" are "egoists in their social reactions" (1990:204). European writing on storytellers sometimes contains a psychological orientation which seems

far from the analytical approaches of most North American folklorists,[36] with the notable exception of Alan Dundes (see, e.g., Dundes, 1975, 1987, 1997). Siikala included in her research methodology, "testing of personality features using projective methods" (1980:166), Pentikäinen used "psychological tests" (1976:268) and Dégh called for "exact psychological observations" (though her writings show more evidence of her own personal observations of character than of psychological categorizations) (1969:61). Although some American folklorists used similar methods in the 1960s,[37] it is difficult to imagine a contemporary Canadian folklorist asking a storyteller or singer to take psychological tests without giving offence or arousing suspicion. Nonetheless, Siikala's work makes an important contribution to our understanding of storytellers, community, and tradition.

Two Finnish folklorists used repertoire analysis to examine the stories of storytellers from the past. Irma-Riita Järvinen studied the legends of Nastja Rantsi from whom Martti Haavio collected legends in 1934. Järvinen concluded that Rantsi's repertoire had two main themes; "one is that the world is a battleground for God and the devil, the other that there is constant interaction between this and the other world" (60). Gun Herranen (1989, 1989a, 1993) analyzed the repertoire of Berndt Leonard Strömberg or "Blind-Strömberg," a blind beggar who was an outstanding storyteller in turn of the century Finland. His life was unusually well documented by V.E.V. Wessmen who found the man "extremely interesting" (1989:65). Herranen was able to trace sources of some of the tales to books in his village library which had been read to Strömberg by schoolboys. He re-created these stories in accordance with local traditions (1989a:65, 68). Strömberg's personality and life experience came out in his stories. Being unable to do outdoor work, he

spent more time than most men sitting in kitchens visiting. Herranen looked at elements of his stories and "discovered that he had considerable knowledge of women's indoor and kitchen duties and frequently commented on his own situation and himself as [a] storyteller" (1990:114). In Strömberg's story about a man who lost his sight, the hero complains, "it is so difficult to be blind, nobody would believe how difficult it is to be blind" (115).

Like Herranen, the Canadian folklorist Diane Tye (1988) also analyzed the repertoire of a deceased folk artist. She applied a "retrospective repertoire analysis" to the ballads of the Nova Scotia singer, Ben Henneberry. Although Tye also examined issues of personality and community as evident in Henneberry's folklore, her work shows no direct influence of the Finnish school.[38]

Elli Köngäs Maranda applied structural analysis to the stories of the Lau people of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. She said that flexibility and choice were vital to "singers of tales" and that audience response was critical to performance. Köngäs Maranda questioned whether storytellers were as dependent on structures as Albert Lord (1960) believed. She argued that Malaitan storytellers were outstanding due to their belonging to a storytelling society rather than because they had internalized a formulaic system of creating tales. Of the relationship between personal creativity and structure, she said, "[t]he rules are the instrument provided by the tradition, and the storyteller is the fiddler who plays the tune" (261).

The Welsh folklorist, Robin Gwyndaf (1976, 1980, 1981) was directly influenced by Pentikäinen and Dégh, as well as by the American performance school. His first writings (1976, 1980) focus more on the process of transmission in context than on individual personality. He referred to the

ninety-one-year-old storyteller Lewis T. Evans as a "passive tradition bearer," thereby illustrating the shortcomings in von Sydow's categorizations. Although von Sydow's emphasis on tradition bearers (1948) was a major step in the movement away from concentration on folkloric texts, his division of tradition bearers into active and passive was an oversimplification. A once active storyteller like Evans is an inactive tradition bearer rather than as a passive one. Equating a masterful storyteller who no longer has opportunities to perform with a listener who retains stories in his mind is comparable to placing a retired professional hockey player in the same category as a fan who watches hockey on television and could play the game if asked. However, Gwyndaf showed the important role of a prime tradition bearer in a rural community, how his oral knowledge—some of it developed from literate men—was highly regarded by his neighbours: "Although the narrator had only 3 short years of day school and 2 terms of night school he soon became well known in the community for his high intellect, knowledge and culture. He was a good listener and learnt much from his father and other men of letters in the community" (1976:291). Many rural Canadian communities have people who occupy similar social roles.

Gwyndaf's other storyteller was Jim Goddard, an active tradition bearer, "well-known locally and far beyond as a kind, colourful character with a lovely gift of speech and humour" (1980:193). Goddard was a wit and a local character whose repertoire consisted not only of conversational narratives but clever remarks both traditional and original. Much of his oral repertoire emerged in response to immediate situations and needed to be placed in context to be meaningful. Gwyndaf demonstrated how Goddard masterfully manipulated his repertoire to suit particular occasions. Goddard's main

interest was in "people—people of all classes: their work, their interests and especially their behaviour. Almost his whole repertoire relates in one way or another to people—many of them people of his own community—to their behaviour and his own attitude toward that behaviour" (196). However, Goddard's humour hardly seems "subtle" and "gentle" as Gwyndaf describes it. Some sexist remarks about a "loose woman" (200) and a witty put-down of a fat woman who made the mistake of teasing him (198) appear blunt and rather cruel. Rather than being a gentle humorist, Goddard seems to be a particular type of local character well-known to rural Canada, i.e., the outrageous but good-natured humorist. Diane Tye (1987) has argued that local characters are not only tradition bearers but also carry traditional social roles: "A character is an individual whose dramatic performance, consistent within a particular context, is recognized as being in contrast to, or in conflict with, governing social norms. The character is seen as nonthreatening and often humorous, by most, if not all, other group members" (100-101; see also Tye, 1989). Tye's definition describes Goddard aptly. It would seem that because he is so good-natured and funny, Goddard is allowed to be outrageous—and is then forgiven for saying what would be unforgivable if said by another.

2.5.3 North American Approaches to Repertoire Studies

North American scholars have also concentrated on issues of individual creativity, community, and tradition. Daniel Crowley challenged the concepts of "tradition as fragile and change as synonymous with decay" in I Could Talk Old Story Good (1966:1) in which he examined creativity among Bahamian

storytellers. By analyzing and comparing their repertoires, he found that audiences not only allowed but expected great variation in the telling of folktales.

Catherine McClellan (1970) investigated the telling of a sacred legend by the Yurok people of the southern Yukon. She focused on storytellers as individuals and published a fascinating collection of eleven variants of a story. McClellan found that narrators emphasized different incidents and details, with their narratives being "linked rather specifically to the particular circumstances of the storytellers" (13). She showed that among the Yurok, as among Bahamians, there is a "rather wide latitude allowed to individual narrators in their choice and handling of episodes," even in the transmission of a culturally important story (13).

Leonard Roberts (1974:1983) gathered a broad repertoire of songs, folktales, and riddles from an extended family in eastern Kentucky over two years in the 1940s and 50s. His work is not highly analytical but provides both a good collection of oral lore and useful information about roles of tradition bearers in a family.

Richard Lunt (1968) compiled a biography of a deceased tall-tale teller and collected versions of his stories from oral sources. Lunt's comment on his first collecting experience summarized the effect of the textual orientation of his education: "At first I was somewhat surprised to discover that what is most important about tradition is that *people* bear it" (author's italics; 5). Lunt examined Jones Tracy's personality, repertoire, and the social context of his storytelling to "shed some light on the peculiar circumstances which channelled his creative energy into the realm of exaggeration humour" (5). He concluded that Jones, as a tall-tale teller, occupied a social role which has

since disappeared in his Maine community, as "[m]odern life doesn't have *reposeful* leisure but *active* leisure" (author's italics; 66).

Wm. Hugh Jansen (1976) looked at the repertoire of a recognized teller of humorous personal experience narratives, questioning "Wilson Hughes" (pseudonym) about his own attitudes toward and ways of classifying his stories. Jansen discovered that although Hughes was literate, the oral and written word occupied separate places in his life: "[H]e has lived most of his life on the fringes of oral tradition. For him, reading and hearing are really quite separate kinds of experience. He enjoys them both. But his repertoire for oral performance has come almost exclusively from what he has heard" (298).

James Leary (1980) analyzed the repertoire of George Russell of Wisconsin who "had apparently honed his stock into a manageable number to be performed again and again" (355). Russell's repertoire consisted of toasts, jokes, humorous tales, and local character anecdotes. According to Leary, Russell's choice of sayings and stories not only had personal meaning but also reflected and contributed to a positive attitude toward life:

> The man's appreciation of wit and humor sustained him throughout a long and sometimes difficult life. While many of his contemporaries fell prey to self pity, loneliness, drink, physical troubles, financial woes and fear of death, George remained his irrepressible self. Indeed, George Russell's repertoire reveals a personal philosophy. Forever sociable, delighting in ethnic diversity, a proud defender of rural life, with an eye for the ladies, and a glib phrase on his lips, George always strove to experience his small world fully and enjoy its every phase. (361)

Margaret Read MacDonald made a similar observation about the relationship between storytelling and attitudes to life in Scipio Storytelling (1996), an excellent performance-oriented study of storytelling in a rural

Indiana community: "The individual raised in a culture which favors the humorous anecdote as a set way to retell life's little misfortunes will have a happier outlook on life because of this" (102).

2.5.4 Criticisms of Repertoire Studies

Robert Georges (1994) rightly criticized folklorists' use of the term repertoire, as being vague and restrictive:

> ...most folklorists use *repertoire* to mean "stock" or "inventory." In speaking generally of a person's repertoire, most folklorists imply that *repertoire* designates the number of examples or items of folklore a person knows. But in referring to a singer's or narrator's repertoire, for instance, a folklorist actually means the stock or inventory of songs or tales the *folklorist knows the singer or narrator knows*. The nature and significance of the difference between implication and reality is obvious and important. (author's italics; 315)

Folklorists are justified in using "repertoire" to describe a "stock" or "inventory" of performance items—that is, after all, what the word means. Georges criticizes our discipline for borrowing a word "from the general lexicon" and incorporating it "uncritically" into our scholarly vocabulary (319-20). But surely we can use a common English word without redefining it until it becomes an exclusive piece of disciplinary jargon.

Georges's criticism of folklorists' treatment of individual repertoires as being what "the *folklorist knows the singer or narrator knows*" is nevertheless valid (author's italics). Many folklorists have claimed to record complete repertoires of tradition bearers or, by their unqualified use of numbers of traditional items, implied that they have collected entire repertoires (Georges cites examples, 315-17).[39] These claims to exactitude are puzzling, considering that most studies of repertoires emphasize the

importance of individual creativity. In 1941, Ortutay said of the storyteller Mihály Fedics: "When I once asked him about the number of stories he knew, he said: 'Anyone who knows only a few stories, even no more than ten, can make a hundred of them if he has the talent for it' " (268). Pentikäinen claimed that "[I]n the course of a decade (1959-1969), the memorized knowledge and folklore of Mrs. Takalo was recorded in its entirety" (1976:267). Yet, he also said that "Marina Takalo's repertoire of folklore did not seem to be any stable, unchangeable whole, rather it appeared to change in accordance with the individual personality and epochs of her life history" (332) and that "[a] skilful bearer of tradition is not only able to reproduce what he has learned but also to change (transform) the material he is already acquainted with and give it new forms" (333).

A folklore repertoire is, in most cases, a protean entity. There are those performers who have learned only five or ten jokes, one long story, or a small sampling of fiddle tunes and can sometimes perform them well. However, prolific performers generally have an ever-growing, ever-changing repertoire. As well, storytellers with large repertoires are inclined to have good memories for narrative.[40] They may relate stories which have been untold for many years if their recall is stimulated by a particular incident or by an interviewer asking the right question.[41] Defining an "active repertoire" is also difficult when dealing with storytellers, such as informal raconteurs, whose telling is sparked by the immediate situation.

Reimund Kvideland, in a criticism of repertoire studies (1993) stated: "Ideally a repertoire should include what a person has performed more or less regularly in the course of his or her life to one or more types of audiences (children and/or adults, men and/or women, in private or in public).

Nothing should be left out for any reason" (106). This is certainly a daunting task and takes into account neither the tradition bearers' choices about what to share with the interviewer nor the great differences in individuals' memories.[42] I can remember rhymes and stories which I learned as a preschooler and can easily draw a map of the village where I spent my first seven years. Other adults seem barely to remember life before high school. The difference in our repertoires tells us more about memory than about oral tradition. Kvideland does not explain the purpose of gathering such a complete repertoire. If one is not particularly interested in the children's folklore of another era or in the early development of an individual's personality, of what importance are the rude jokes still remembered from grade school? (I hope that my ability to recall such jokes says more about my faculties of memory than about my present mind set.) The search for a complete repertoire in Kvideland's terms is hopeless. In Canada, older people only half-jokingly tell the young, "I've forgotten more than you've ever learned."

Despite Kvideland's call to collect complete repertoires, both he and Georges criticize other folklorists for their preoccupation with large repertoires. At times, the eastern Europeans seem to be competing to collect the most narratives from one individual. Kvideland also objects to Dégh's and other eastern Europeans' focus on outstanding storytellers (108-09).[43] He argues:

> This concept was developed especially in the Soviet Union, where it was exploited in the struggle to raise folk literature to the status of popular art, and storytellers and folk singers to the status of folk artists. Here lies a large part of the explanation of the Russian interest in storytellers and folk singers.... The trend has exerted great influence on East European folklore researchers. (109)

Georges claims that the Russian interest in large repertoires "implies that repertoire size is in some way indicative of an informant's relative worth, significance, reliability, authenticity, and/or competence..." (321). Georges's accusation is overstated, considering that the Russians were studying individuals only as storytellers, not judging them as human beings. Kvideland claims that a person who tells even a single story is a storyteller with a repertoire of one tale (119-10). The reader feels caught in the opening fusillade of some topsy-turvy cold war, in which the eastern bloc elevates its folk artists to star status while the west promotes a bland egalitarianism in which none are allowed to shine.

In fact, the emphasis on large repertoires is not a creation of folklorists but an acknowledgement of folk aesthetics. The Finnish traditional storyteller Blind-Strömberg boasted of having three hundred and sixty-six stories, "one for every day of the year" (Herranen, 1989a:64). Kenneth Goldstein found that in doing fieldwork, "from the Adirondacks to the southern Appalachians, from England, Scotland, and Ireland to... Newfoundland, Labrador, and Australia," traditional performers were evaluated by their own communities according to the size of their "repertory" (1991:168). I was directed to people who told "lots of stories," not to those who had a good story to tell. An examination of the European literature shows that Georges's claims that most folklorists regard repertoires as "finite and closed" (317) and "culturally determined and culture bound (with individuals assumed to be conditioned products of their cultures)" (320) are simply wrong. Dégh summarized the attitude of the east European folklorists when she said, "...narrators are free to choose and shape their repertoire pieces. But there are limitations set by audience expectations" (Dégh &

Newall:271). This viewpoint is not unlike that of performance-oriented folklorists such as Georges.

Barre Toelken holds that people have multiple folklore repertoires (318-19):

> The tendency toward multiple repertoires assures us that the total quantity of folklore in a particular person's repertoire will be highly variable as will be the kinds of folklore in each repertoire; these variations will be as much a function of the person's own tastes as they are of differences in the people from whom the traditions were learned and the ages at which they were picked up.... Not only is each item of folklore subject to variation at every remove in tradition, but the traditions themselves and their role in the lives of each folk performer are in continual flux. (Toelken, 1979:159)

Toelken's comments further emphasize that folklorists are able to gather only a portion of any individual's complete folklore repertoire. However, one may be able to gather a significant portion of a specific generic repertoire, for example, folk tales, ballads, or instrumental tunes. I knew an Ottawa Valley fiddler who had written the names or other verbal reminders of almost all his tunes on a sheet of paper which he kept in his violin case. With the help of his list, I was able to collect most of his repertoire of fiddle tunes.

2.5.5 Summary

In summary, Pentikäinen did not define repertoire analysis and there are no strict limits on how the term is used. However, the main points concerning its usage are as follows:

1) The concept of repertoire analysis comes out of the focus on the role of the individual in the transmission of folklore. Repertoire analysis has its roots in Von Sydow's (1948) recognition of the importance of specialized

tradition bearers in the spread of tradition, as well as being influenced by early twentieth-century Russian folklorists.

2) Repertoire analysis involves collecting a large sample of a person's or group's folklore, generally limited to a few genres or (most frequently) one genre.

3) The stock of material can be analyzed for a variety of purposes. However, repertoire analysis is usually concerned with the relationships between one person's creativity and a collective tradition and with the relationship between an individual folk artist and his or her society.

4) Repertoire analysis usually deals with outstanding performers who have large repertoires—although it is not always clear whether they have been judged to be so by their social group or by investigating folklorists. There is no reason that this methodology cannot be applied to less recognized or less prolific tradition bearers.

5) Repertoire analysis often involves lengthy contact between a folklorist and a tradition bearer, hopefully resulting in the two knowing each other well. It can involve short-term association or even analysis of materials collected from a person who died long ago.

6) Repertoire analysis assumes the existence of tradition bearers in a dynamic relationship with a collective tradition. In Scandinavia and the West, the study of repertoires has been highly influenced by the American performance school.[44] Bauman (1986), one of the prime exponents of performance theory, summarized this approach:

> Briefly stated, I understand performance as a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. (3)

Repertoire analysis is, however, far removed from the existential end of performance theory which focuses entirely on the immediate situation. Rather, its practitioners assume that stories exist and texts usually have validity, even when removed from the actual performance situation. In the following section, I will explain my use of repertoire analysis in examining storytelling traditions in eastern Cape Breton.

2.6 Theoretical Assumptions

My examination of storytelling in the Gabarus-Framboise region rests on the following theoretical assumptions:

1) As both the Europeans and the performance theorists have shown, storytelling is a dynamic process and storytellers have active and creative roles in this process.
2) As von Sydow stated, a community has specialized tradition bearers who perpetuate parts of a community's folklore.
3) Communities are not self-contained. Their members have contact with the outside world and this affects both their individual worldviews and their storytelling traditions.
4) Actual performance situations are important to understanding folklore—the influence of the performance school is evident throughout my work. But texts are equally important and a great many of these can be understood without detailed descriptions of actual storytelling sessions. What people say is at least as important as how they say it.
5) As Toelken stated, individuals have multiple repertoires and these

repertoires are constantly changing. Rarely will a person's complete repertoire, even in a single genre, be collected.

6) Individuals pursue individual courses through life for their own reasons. The values of a folk community influence its members but neither dictatetheir behaviour nor subsume them. Both choice and tradition are paramount in the study of storytelling in small rural communities.

As stated earlier, my purpose is neither to interpret this community nor to divine meanings which the residents themselves do not understand. Symbolism, while important to understanding stories, is, like repertoires, protean. Attempts to capture meanings whether based on context, psychology, structure, or politics often omit alternate meanings. Like William Wilson, I see as my challenge understanding what the stories do. Wilson said of his family stories, "...the stories need no further justification for their being than their own existence. It is as personal stories of individual, breathing human beings—not as dots on a chart of social norms—that they speak of our humanity" (1991:134). It is the relationship among stories, storytellers, and community that I studied, keeping at the forefront the humanity of those who share their narratives.

2.7 Conclusion

I have dealt with a wide range of theoretical concepts in this chapter. In the following chapters, I will examine storytelling in a rural folk community, a delimited physical region whose residents know each other personally, communicate directly and informally, and share a great many aspects of both history and tradition. As a researcher, I am challenged to see

this small Cape Breton community as an entity in itself, removed as much as possible from the stereotypes and theoretical constructs of either insiders or outsiders. I will show that this region's oral narratives, although enjoyable and understandable at a basic level from an etic or outsiders' viewpoint, comprise part of the "community novel," carrying deeper messages about identity, relationships, and values at an emic or insider's level. My analytical approach to the study of the community's oral narrative repertoire is highly influenced by both eastern European and Finnish repertoire scholars as well as by North American performance scholars, all of whom emphasize the importance of individuals in communicating folk traditions. Therefore, as well as researching storytelling in the Gabarus-Framboise community as a whole, I will examine the repertoires and roles of particular storytellers. Using this approach, I will determine what is specifically characteristic of storytelling in this rural folk community.

Notes

1. The most extreme example is the Nazi movement in Germany, inspired partially by Herder's philosophy. Triumph of the Will, Leni Riefenstahl's classic propaganda film of 1934, contains numerous images of the political manipulation of folk culture for propaganda purposes. As well, Nazi leaders in her movie continually praise *"das Volk"* in their speeches. The current Balkan conflicts also use the rhetoric of romantic nationalism, portraying particular ethnic groups as "nations" entitled to a particular piece of ground and threatened by inferior neighbours (in reality, fellow citizens). For more on the interrelationships of romantic nationalism, folklore, and politics, see Roger D. Abrahams (1993) and William A. Wilson (1976, 1989).

2. Social science concepts of "community" are summarized in The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology (see Abercrombie et al. in bibliography).

3. A Canadian gun lobbyist spoke of "the firearms community" on CBC Radio News (Sept. 22, 1998).

4. See, for example, Dorson, 1970.

5. The word "folklore" had an earlier existence as the Anglo-Saxon *folclār* meaning "popular wisdom" or "common knowledge." However, the evidence suggests that Thoms was not aware of this history and actually did coin the term (Mazo, 1996).

6. Gerald Pocius (1991) in his ethnography of Calvert, a fishing village in Newfoundland, argued against what he called "an urban American postindustrial bias" (291) in approaching rural society:

> We must move away from what (Raymond) Williams called 'abstract chauvinism,' the belief that cultures like Calvert are different simply because they have not caught up to the postindustrial norm, that they, too, will experience the changes that large areas of the United States have undergone. (292-3)

7. Henry Glassie broke down the elements of Ben-Amos's definition and discussed their positive implications for folklore in "The Moral Life of Folklore" (1983).

8. See Carpenter, 1992, 1996.

9. Toelken stresses that some urban groups have strong oral traditions. While this is true, the groups he uses as examples (Blacks, Italians, Mormons, smokejumpers, and students) are much too large to have the face-to-face interaction and intensity of personal contact which is characteristic of a folk community. Toelken says:

> ...no doubt all our families and all our folk groups experience the idea of special roles and slots in tradition. If farm families seem to be more vivid examples of this phenomenon, it is most likely because they feature a necessary cooperation among members of a close group toward common goals. In the cities today, and among the members of that group often referred to as the middle class, individuation, individuality, independence and competition have been stressed over cooperation with the close group, while allegiances to the larger national or corporate groups have been encouraged. In addition, the rural life has become almost a mythic stereotype of the good old days for many Americans, and its images seem heightened in meaning when we encounter them. Nonetheless, we find many groups of people in the city and elsewhere that for various reasons have encouraged or thrived upon group interest rather than individual strivings.... (1979:170)

10. This classification of "community" according to its residents' emotions parallels the Canadian historian J. M. S. Careless's humorous but apt definition of a "region" as "an area of resentment" (quoted in Rosenberg, 1978:3).

11. Oring outlines the changing definitions of folklore in the English-speaking world in Chapter 1 of Folk Groups and Folklore Genres (1986:1-22). See also, "folklore" (Waterman) in Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend (1950).

12. Some are using The Quest of the Folk to support their attempts to re-create the province in an urban, industrial image. The fiction writer Carol Bruneau said of McKay, "he's been so instrumental in reviving our industrial history, our real history, the history of the *real* people who built the region: steelworkers, coal miners" (author's italics; Minard, Nancy. "Beauty Hides a Blade" In Atlantic Books Today 11 [Fall, 1995]:9.). McKay's intent was clearly not to dismiss people working in agriculture or the fishery from Nova Scotia's history but Bruneau's interpretation is understandable given his negating of these people's cultural expressions.

13. McKay takes the same position in his essays on J. F. B. Livesay (1988) and Angus MacDonald (1992).

14. Ironically, the inclusive cultural vision which McKay advocates is being realized in Cape Breton, partly due to the influences of such stage shows as "The Rise and Follies of Cape Breton Island" and "The Cape Breton Summertime Review" and by Ronald Caplan's Cape Breton's Magazine, all of which use folklore, oral history and appeals to the past to advocate for a united, multicultural Cape Breton which values both rural and urban societies. On the other hand, the outstanding short-story writer Alistair MacLeod who McKay calls "perhaps the best single example of the new voices that are unsettling the old truths of the Folk" (310), presents a picture of a Cape Breton which is rural, Scottish, and threatened by social change in his collections, The Lost Salt Gift of Blood (1976) and As Birds Bring Forth the Sun and Other Stories (1986).

15. See, e.g., Acheson, 1972, 1977; Alexander, 1978; Archibald, 1971; Careless, 1979; Clow, 1980, 1983; Forbes, 1975, 1977, 1978; Frank, 1980; Howell, 1977; McKay, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1988; Miller, 1971; Rawlyk, 1971, 1979; Smith, 1975; and Woodfine, 1963.

16. The word "class," not defined by either McKay or Harker, is of dubious value in dealing with North American society where labourers often consider themselves to be middle-class while some university professors claim to be members of the working class. Such self-identification is often evidence of attempts toward upward mobility or of particular political stances rather than of social and economic status. Currently scholars often use the expression "middle-class," rather awkwardly, to describe people with certain attitudes and behaviours which may have little to do with their economic status. There are certainly social and economic distinctions in most communities but the word class is so inconsistent in meaning and usage that it has no place in scholarly discussions unless it is clearly defined and then used consistently. Raymond Williams examines the various meanings in his essay, "Class" in Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, 1976:51-59.

17. This interpretation of postmodernism was succinctly summarized by one of the characters in Douglas Copeland's postmodern novel Generation X (1991) when he said, "...the world has gotten too big—way beyond our capacity to tell stories about it, and so all we're stuck with are these blips and chunks and snippets on bumpers" (5). Postmodernism is, of course, a term borrowed from criticism of art and architecture and applied by social critics to contemporary society in a model that changes the meaning of the word from an impressionistic description of élite art to a stage of cultural evolution. For an understanding of how vague the concept is, see "Postmodernism" by John McGowan in The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism (1994:585-87). McGowan says:

> What is distinctive about postmodernism is not something new but our attention to and interest in features of the past that until recently were most often ignored. Postmodernism, then, is just part of the very complex reading of history taking part in the current climate of a critical questioning of the Western tradition. Paradoxically, most of the materials for a radical questioning can be found in the tradition itself if we look in different places (noncanonical works) or with new eyes at familiar places. (587)

Folklorists have always studied those liminal spaces in our culture, usually neglected by other scholars.

18. David Whisnant in All that is Native and Fine (1983) examined how the popular image of Appalachia was created in large part by outside interventionists. McKay (1992) investigates similar issues of cultural politics in Cape Breton. What Whisnant termed "systemic cultural intervention" (13) resulting in the creation of a "romantic version of local culture" (265) is apparent in Inverness County where tourism is important and where American immigrants have had major roles in stimulating a Gaelic revival. The Gaelic language is healthier in Inverness County than in eastern Cape Breton, partly because of the efforts of these people. The Gabarus-Framboise region is virtually unaffected by such outside intervention. Here, despite some local effort, no one has inspired any significant interest in Gaelic among the young.

19. E.g., Clark, 1995, 1995a; Cumming et al., 1984; MacGillivray et al., 1985; MacLean, 1991; Mann, 1976, 1987; Sullivan et al., 1995.

20. The Oxford Canadian Dictionary describes a barachois as "a shallow coastal lagoon or pond created by the formation of a sandbar a short distance offshore from a beach. [Canadian French]." Eleanor Huntington says the term is possibly from Acadian French, *barre a cheoir* (35). Contemporary Gabarus is situated on the sites of two former villages, Gabarus Village and Gabarus Barachois.

21. Stith Thompson cites versions from Britain, U.S.A., Finland, Estonia, and Lithuania in his Motif-Index of Folk Literature. Vol. 3. (G303.4.5.3.1). Re: Ireland and Newfoundland, see Nuttall,1996. Re: Cape Breton, see: Caplan, "Stories from Visits Down North"; Creighton, 1957:93-83 (includes two from the Mira River, near the Gabarus-Framboise area, as well as versions from throughout the Maritimes); and Fraser,1932:98. A related legend of the Devil appearing at a dance (Thompson G303.10.4.0.1, Baughman G303.6.2.1) has current circulation among Spanish people of the American Southwest (Herrera-Sobek, 1988; Limón, 1994:168-86).

22. The idea that legends usually contain a strong visual image comes from Richard Tallman via Martin Lovelace (see Tallman 1974a, esp. 127-28, for his ideas on the importance of visual imagery in storytelling generally). Bengt af Klintberg also said of legends which survive and circulate: "The action is simple and highly visual, easy to remember and to pass on to third parties" (1989:72).

23. It appeared as an episode in the film, Bluenose Ghosts (1974).

24. E.g., Bettelheim, 1977; Bly, 1990; Éstes, 1992; R.A. Johnson, 1974, 1976. None says that there is only one interpretation, yet they offer only one and do not explain that alternate meanings exist.

25. In a telephone conversation on October 31, 1998, Bodger told me of another instance in which a man, who in his youth had been convicted of participating in a gang rape, took offence at a different part of this same story. Although Bodger did not know of his past, he believed that she was directing "The Lass Who Can Not Be Frightened" at him because of an episode in the tale in which a group of young men leave the tavern to "court" a maid in her house on the edge of town. Bodger believes that folktales are like "a Rorschach test or communal dream" and subject to a variety of interpretations. A chapter of her upcoming book on hidden-name stories will be devoted to this same tale.

26. C. W. von Sydow spoke of the importance of both the family and "the wider domestic circle made up by the former-day 'village home' with its work in common, feasts, entertainments, etc." in teaching folklore. The 'village home' was the village or community (1948:13).

27. The debate between the Russian structuralist and Finnish diffusionist schools is complex and can only be touched on here. For a thorough examination of this topic, see Jason, 1970, 1977.

28. See, e.g.: Barrick, 1974; Begin, 1981; Burton, 1981; Butt, 1988; Cothran, 1974; Dégh, 1995; Dorson, 1972; Doucette, 1979; Ferris, 1973; Glassie et al., [1970]; Halpert, 1976; Hutchinson, 1985; Inglis, 1984; Ives, 1964, 1971, 1978, 1993; Jones, 1989; Kane, 1983; Ladenheim, 1996; Lovelace, 1976; Lunt, 1968; MacDonald, M. R., 1996; MacNeil, 1987; Posen, 1988; Rieti, 1991; Steed, 1977; Tallman, 1974; Thomas, 1993; Tye, 1989; and Walker, 1996.

29. Ruth Bunzel, an American contemporary of Azadovskii, examined material culture in The Pueblo Potter (1929), addressing many of the same issues that he addressed in his study of oral narratives. However, Azadovskii was following the path of other late eighteenth- and early

nineteenth-century Russians scholars whose work clearly predates that of Bunzel.

30. James Dow (1982), the translator of A Siberian Tale Teller, examined the gap between European and American narrative scholarship. He believed the problem of folklorists being unaware of each others' work existed not as the result of a simple language barrier but because:

> *the sheer difficulty of reading and staying current with complex, theoretical studies in another language which are filled with a density of ideas, newly coined phrases, and an unfortunately high level of professional 'jargonese' has contributed to a general disregarding of some of our...most significant studies* (author's italics, 61).

This gap has been bridged somewhat since Dow wrote his article, due to the availability of more scholarly books in translation.

31. The American folklorist Carl Lindahl displays a similar attitude:

> *Swapping Stories* begins with a series of tales from some of Louisiana's most gifted narrators, people who stand out as oral artists in their various communities. Many tellers simply repeat what they have heard with little change, embellishment, or inventiveness. The narrators featured at the beginning of this book, however, are experts who have devoted much of their lives to storytelling: in the process, they have given their narratives a personal, artful stamp. (Lindahl, Owens, and Harvison, 1997:7-8)

32. Long does not provide a source for this quote.

33. See: Bruford, 1978; Delargy, 1945:27; Draak, 1958:48; D. A. MacDonald, 1978; and Calum MacLean 1952:127.

34. See also: Brill, 1978; Erdész, 1978; Faragó, 1971, 1978; Lintur, 1978; and Romanska, 1978. In addition, in two fascinating essays, Erdész (1961, 1963) explains how Märchen relate to the cosmological conceptions of the Hungarian storyteller, Lajos Ámi.

35. *Umwelt* translates as "environment."

36. I am using the term North America to refer to Canada and the United States. I know little of issues of folkloristic concern in Mexico.

37. The American folklorists Jerome Mintz (1961) and Ellen Stekert (1966), for example, utilized TATs (thematic appreciation tests) in their studies. However, what Dorson (1972) called the "psychoanalytical" approach to

folklore was dominated by Europeans who were not, in fact, folklorists (25-33). Nonetheless, North American folklorists have used psychological approaches to their analyses. One recent instance is the American Cheryl Oxford's analysis of a Jack tale from a conservative Freudian viewpoint (1994:61-68).

38. Another Finn, Satu Apo (1980), used what Tye called "retroactive repertoire analysis" when she analyzed Marina Takalo's tales using Proppian structural analysis (her results were also published in Pentikäinen, 1978:273-95).

39. See also Dégh 1969:168-69 (quoted in Georges, 1994:316) and Järvinen, 55.

40. Storytellers often develop good memories for narrative, many can learn stories at one hearing (see, e.g., Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 37). Gaelic storytellers honed this skill to a high degree, often telling stories with nearly word-for-word accuracy, e.g.: Bruford, 1978; Delargy, 1945:27; Draak, 1958:48; D. A. MacDonald, 1978; Calum MacLean (1952:127).

41. Leonard Roberts said of one of the Kentucky tradition bearers from whom he collected, "As is usual with performers, Tom sang his current favorites and needed to be coaxed back in time to his oldest" (1983:103).

42. Studies on the relationship between memory and oral narrative include: Bruford, 1978; Labrie, 1979, 1981; Leydesdorf et al., 1996; D. A. MacDonald, 1978; and Rubin, 1995.

43. E.g., Dégh, 1969:170.

44. Performance theory has permeated the thinking of most North American folklorists. Few could say that they have not been significantly influenced by this theoretical school. The definitive work on performance theory in folklore is Parédes and Bauman's Toward New Perspectives in Folklore (1972). Other influential works include: Abrahams, 1968; Bauman, 1978; Georges, 1969; and Schechner, 1977, 1985.

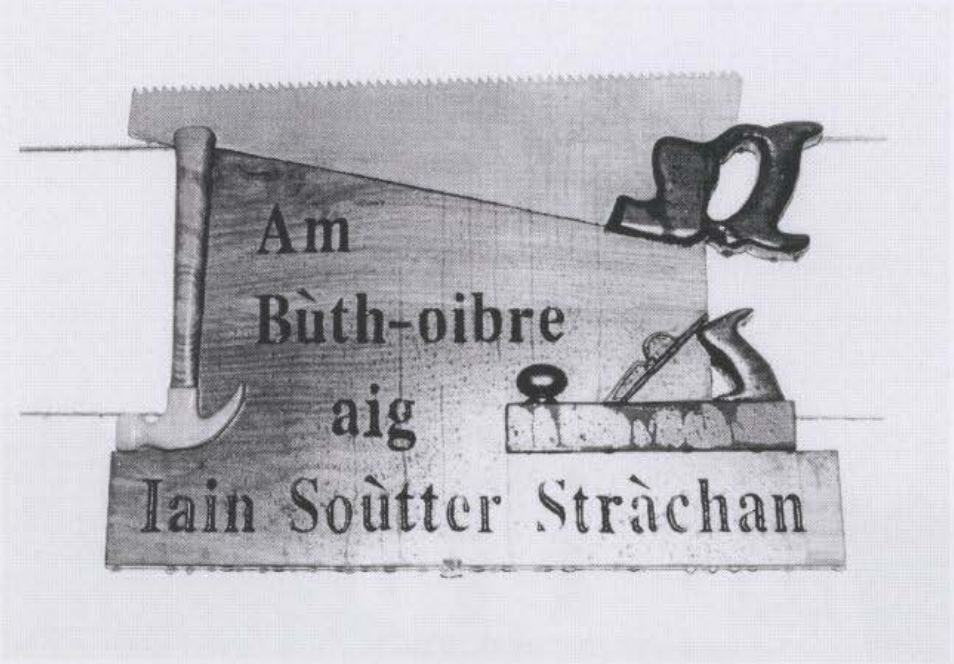


Plate 2.1 Homemade sign in Gaelic (translation: "The Workshop of Soutor Strachan"). Like most Gaelic signs in the Gabarus-Framboise area, this one is neither visible from the road nor does it mark a business. It acts only to communicate between Soutor, a native Gaelic speaker, and his friends and neighbours (Aug. 1995; see also Plate 5.2).



Plate 2.2 Gabarus Lake Zion United Church (1997), one of the two Protestant churches in the Gabarus-Framboise region (photo courtesy of Ron Caplan).

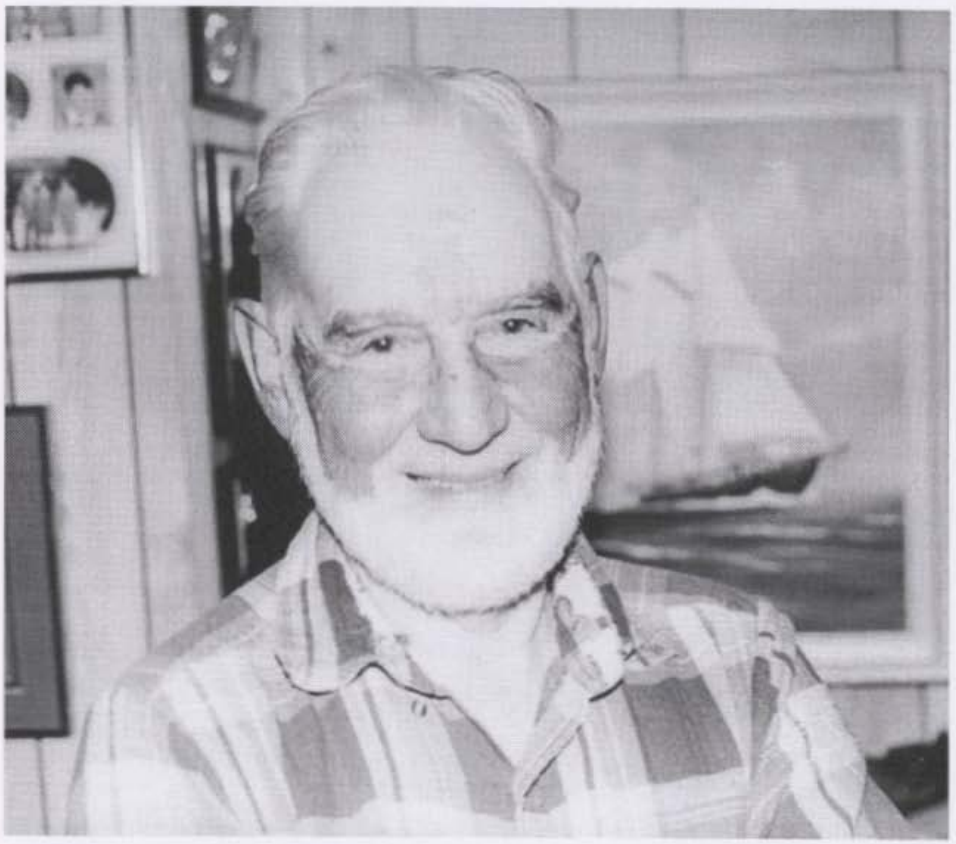


Plate 2.3 Lloyd MacDonald in his living room, Fourchu (Sept. 1995).

Chapter III

Social History of the Gabarus-Framboise Region

When I first told Ron Caplan, the editor and publisher of Cape Breton's Magazine, that I was going to research storytelling in the Gabarus area, he insisted that I visit Arthur Severance. I had heard of Arthur before. My wife, Katherine Grier, is a professional storyteller and perhaps the most unusual and delightful story in her repertoire is Severance's "Tale of Truthful Paul."[1] She learned this story from her friend Caplan who in turn learned it from Severance. I had not known that Arthur Severance was from the Gabarus area. However, during the week I arrived at Jimmy and Patsy MacLeod's house in Framboise (where I boarded for the summer), I heard over and over again that Arthur was "a good man for stories."

Getting hold of Arthur did not prove easy. After I failed in several attempts to reach him by telephone, Patsy advised me that I should let the phone ring for quite a while "as he's quite crippled up," a fact which no one had mentioned to me previously. I then allowed the phone to ring ten times but this part of Cape Breton was still on party lines in 1992 and I did not want to impose too much ringing on Arthur's neighbours. I decided to drop in on him. The next morning, I got directions from Patsy and drove to Arthur's house to see if I could arrange an appointment for an interview before going on to Gabarus.

Arthur, it turned out, lived at the south end of Fourchu, a small fishing village, in a modern bungalow. This house is located on a hillside overlooking

Fourchu Harbour and the wharfs where Malcolm MacDonald and Rodger MacLeod moor their boats. The bungalow shared a lane with a grand old house with peaked roofs, gingerbread trim, and a prominent gable. This house—one of the more impressive structures in Fourchu—was a reminder of the days when highly-skilled shipbuilders and ships' carpenters put their hands to many tasks in coastal communities. I later learned that this was the Severance family home and that Arthur had lived there for much of his life (see Plates 3.1 and 3.2). In the yard sat a dory with graceful curves (Plate 3.3), which I was to discover was a valued reminder of Arthur's years as a fisherman.

After willing the car up the steep drive, I parked and approached the door. Everyone knows everyone else in this region and people walk into each other's houses without knocking on doors. However, like many visitors to rural communities, I was not sure that this custom extended to me. I rang the doorbell but no one answered. After an interval, I knocked loudly. From somewhere deep inside, a man called, "Come in." I walked into the porch and hesitantly opened the kitchen door. Again he called, "Come in." I went into the kitchen, reluctant to enter the inner recesses of a stranger's house but he continued to call "Come in" from somewhere farther inside. Feeling obliged to identify myself as an outsider, I called, "Is this Arthur Severance's house?" My heart sank as I heard a groan followed by a complaint: "Oh, God." After much creaking and grunting, a powerful-looking old man supported by two canes made his way into the kitchen. Somehow I had gotten the impression that his physical problems were much less serious—perhaps he was slowed down a bit by arthritis—but now I realized that by my hesitation, I had forced a badly crippled man to walk a painful distance, hardly the way to create a favourable impression. He was obviously irritated.

I quickly introduced myself, saying that I was a friend of Ron Caplan and that Ron had said that I should talk with Arthur regarding storytelling in the area. At this, Arthur's expression softened and he invited me to sit with him at the kitchen table. However, he demanded to know whether I had been phoning and made it clear that I had not given him enough time to answer the phone. He then asked about my connection with Ron and about my family ties in the area. Arthur's affection for Caplan was obvious and he wanted to hear my news about him. He also had fond memories of my great-uncle, Ranald Murdoch MacDonald (Ranald, the son of Murdoch), after whom I was named. He soon got over his initial irritation and the conversation turned to one of his favourite topics—storytelling. He recommended a number of Fourchu storytellers, Arthur MacDonald, Malcolm MacDonald, Lloyd MacDonald, and Peggie (Bagnell) Kinslow, his next-door neighbour and "a real talker." I eventually interviewed all but one of these people (Arthur MacDonald). Lloyd MacDonald proved to be another outstanding storyteller and I interviewed him several times.

Arthur was telling me about old times and families in the area when I realized that our conversation was turning into a storytelling session. I said I would like to bring my tape recorder from the car. He commented, "I don't think we're saying anything worth recording," but he did not require further persuasion. I set up the recorder and he was soon telling me lengthy stories. He started with Truthful Paul MacLellan's fantastic tale of his experiences at a magical milling frolic. Arthur followed this with stories of the community's seafaring past, beginning with a tale from the adventures of Captain Donald Ferguson, Fourchu's ancient mariner who is reputed to have sailed ships until he was in his nineties and to have maintained an active lifestyle until his death at the age of one hundred and seven. This story led to an eyewitness account of the

wreck of *The Mikado* off Winging Point, Fourchu and the brave rescue attempts by local people.

Arthur was totally absorbed in his stories and looked me in the the eye throughout. He put each story in context, creating images of the people involved and the storytelling situations in which he first heard the tales. We were interrupted two or three times by people coming to the door but whenever we resumed, Arthur returned immediately to the point where he had suspended his narrative. Annie Shepherd, who was visiting from Toronto, joined us in the kitchen and was quickly absorbed in her uncle's storytelling. Jessie Tonet, a resident of Framboise, came in to clean the house and managed to find tasks within hearing distance of Arthur. I was clearly not the only one enjoying his stories.

After about fifty minutes of telling stories, Arthur finished his reminiscence of the wreck of *The Mikado* and told me to turn off the tape recorder. Annie, Arthur and I talked for a few minutes until I mentioned that my great-grandfather had drowned off Belfry, a nearby community. "Murdoch MacDonald?" he asked. "He didn't drown off Belfry." "Fourchu?" I ventured. I knew little about Murdoch MacDonald's death except that he died in a fishing accident not far from shore. Two older relatives had shown me where he supposedly had met his end. One assured me that it was off Belfry Beach and the other placed the accident in Fourchu Harbour. However, it became clear that Arthur knew a great deal about the drowning as Murdoch (Plate 3.4) had been fishing for Arthur's Uncle John Severance when it occurred. I asked to turn on the tape recorder and he told me the following story.

Ranald: Okay, you were going to tell me about when my [great-grandfather] and your—.

Arthur: Now that was when he was fishing with my Uncle John.

Ranald: This is Murdoch MacDonald, okay?

Arthur: Yeah. John Severance. And there was another man with them, he was from Mira, from Grand Mira. But Murdoch MacDonald lived down there, it's about four miles from here. There's a fella has that property now—he comes down in the summer from the States and puts a trailer on it.

Ranald: Roy MacLeod.

Arthur: Roy MacLeod. Yeah, that's the property.

Well, they were cod fishing, and they were what they called "making' a drift." They weren't anchored—[I] often did fish that way too. If you got conditions just right for it, you'd have a mainsail up, and that was just to hold the head of the boat in the wind there. It wouldn't be really windy, just a very light breeze, when you'd make a drift, eh. And the mainsail was up. And of course, the sheet would be fastened.

Well, it happened that this squall—an off-shore squall—struck. It came so quick that she hove down and, of course, ballast—, she was ballasted, ballast boat. But she'd be open, she wasn't decked. She hove down, and she sank.

Well, the three men—. ——— Fellow from Mira could swim. Well, they had no engines then. They had big long oars—eighteen foot oars. One oar, one man, that was it. When it would come flat calm you had to row. Well, there'd be three oars in the boat. One of them wouldn't be very big. Other two would be. And then the fish pens, covers for the fish pens—well, all these floated.

Well, Uncle John could swim but he wasn't going to try to swim from there ashore. They were way off on the bank, on Fourchu Bank. Be over two-and-a-half, three miles off, see? And Murdoch and the other fellow each had an oar. And Uncle John, I guess, had this little oar, and some of the stuff too.[2]

This fella from Grand Mira, he could swim. And he had the notion that he could make it. So he shucked the oar—he didn't keep the oar—he shucked the oar and he started to swim. Now, after that big puff that struck, you know, there was nothing—just a gentle breeze.

But they saw him go—Uncle John did. They saw [he] got so far, and he went down. Well, Murdoch was there with my Uncle John. And Uncle John had this other oar and then he got it instead of the boards. And Murdoch had the oar. ———

Well, there was no sign. There were no boats around them, you see—no other boats handy. There was a schooner picked my Uncle John up in the afternoon, coming down. You know that was the route for coastal schooners—freighters used to come down.

Ranald: What time was it when the boat—?

Arthur: It was in the morning. I don't know—it would be before mid-morning anyway. 'Cause they'd be out there not too long after daylight. They'd row out, perhaps leave at midnight and row out. Wooden oars—they said "wooden ships and iron men," but I guess that's what—the wooden oars—a wooden engine and an iron man.

Annie: So he drowned when he was with the oar, did he, this Murdoch?

Arthur: This Murdoch? He just gave up.

Annie: Fagged out, I guess.

Arthur: Now, Uncle John's talking to him, trying to get him to hang on, you know. But he was just losing courage altogether. He just gave up—threw up his hands and went. ——— That's how Murdoch MacDonald—.

It was along in the afternoon, quite a while after that. Uncle John still hung onto the oar. Along in the afternoon, this coasting vessel was coming down, a schooner. He was right in their track—they saw—they picked him up.

Annie: Did the boat sink right there?

Arthur: Oh, the boat sunk—she went complete, yeah. (RT 92-7, July 4, 1992)

Arthur followed this story immediately with a second one about his Uncle John surviving another accident in which he and his fishing crew were rammed by a schooner sailing up the coast without a man on watch. John Severance instructed the fishermen to run to the front of their boat and grab the bobchains of the schooner just as it struck. All survived this accident, much to the amazement of the man at the wheel of the schooner who saw three strangers

walking across the deck toward him. Lloyd MacDonald, another Fourchu resident, later told me variants of these two stories—in the same order—which had been passed to him by an uncle who fished with John Severance.[3]

As Arthur ended this story, my tape came to an end. I reached for my tape-recorder to insert another tape but Arthur said, "That's all. That's the end of the story"—making a clear break between the storytelling session and the conversation which continued for some time afterward. When I finally left at noon, I told him that I would like to visit again. "Be sure to," he responded.

Despite its inauspicious beginning, my first interview with Arthur Severance proved to be most valuable. Not only did I have the opportunity to record an outstanding storyteller, recognized as such in his own community, but I also filled a gap in my own family history. Arthur's account of my great-grandfather's drowning was not entirely accurate. For instance, the third fisherman—according to family accounts which were confirmed by Lloyd MacDonald—was not a resident of Grand Mira as Arthur stated but a Ferguson from Malquish and Murdoch MacDonald's brother-in-law. Lloyd also reversed the roles of Murdoch and the third fisherman so it is unclear which man swam for the shore and which clung to the oar. However, Arthur was able to provide a detailed explanation of this fishing accident, which was lacking in my family's repertoire.

I had many more encounters with Arthur Severance, both formal interviews and casual visits. He told me numerous stories—ranging from personal experience narratives to tall tales—as well as a great deal of oral history from the Fourchu area. Arthur was an aficionado of storytelling and enjoyed reflecting on the storyteller's art. He was a superb tradition bearer who was able to interpret important elements of a bygone era for contemporary listeners.

However, Arthur was only one of many tradition bearers who told me stories of earlier times. From these narrators, I learned that the community's stories were intimately connected with its social history. The elderly storytellers are also the carriers of the community's history.

When I asked local people for storytellers, it was—with very few exceptions—the elderly to whom I was referred. These old people now live in a sparsely-populated, marginal, rural community. Some, as their health deteriorates, have had to leave the houses in which they were born for the nursing homes and senior citizens' apartments of St. Peter's, Marion Bridge, and Sydney. Those who remain wonder whether there will be enough young people to run the volunteer fire departments in a few more years, whether their community will die before they do. Although school buses still travel the roads, local people can, with very little thought, name every child on them. More than one person has told me, only half in jest, "We're all senior citizens here."

The Gabarus-Framboise area is largely wooded. To the south of Framboise, a lonely stretch of road meanders through woods and past abandoned fields, causing strangers to wonder where they would turn for help if their cars were to break down. It was not always like this. My father recalls that during his boyhood in the 1920s and '30s, when the region was already past its prime, there were farms all along the road. Arthur Severance was born in 1905, in the middle of what one writer called Gabarus's—but also Fourchu's—"Golden Age," the period between 1880 and 1920 (D. Paufler, 1). At that time, the Gabarus-Framboise coast was a populous farming and fishing region with productive factories and shipyards. The coastal waters were busy with ships, many of which stopped to deliver cargoes to Gabarus, then an important port. Local people travelled to Boston for work while the region's seamen sailed the

oceans of the world. A contemporary observer, C. W. Vernon, described turn-of-the-century Gabarus in his book Cape Breton Canada which was published in 1903.

> Gabarus, an interesting fishing settlement of about a thousand inhabitants, is twelve miles to the west of Louisburg, from which it can be reached by road at all times, and in the summer by a small steamer which plies between the two places. Although there are no hotels, several private families accommodate travellers at moderate rates. The staple industry of Gabarus is fishing. The settlement is the centre of an important lobster canning enterprise. There are three factories in the place, the annual pack of which is 3,000 cases, representing no less than a million lobsters. Some one hundred and fifty fishermen are employed in the lobster fishery, and about the same number of persons in the factories. In addition to the lobster, cod, mackerel, and herring abound in the coast waters. The harbor (sic) is about five miles long and two miles wide, and is spoken of as one of the best in Cape Breton. A breakwater has just been completed by the government, and a cold storage system is in operation, which ensures a constant supply of bait to the fishermen.
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> Gabarus has three churches, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist, and two schools.[4] The dwellings of the people are considerably above those of the average fishing settlement in capacity, comfort, and appearance. The scenery, especially on the north side of the bay, is strikingly picturesque. Streams and small lakes abound in which trout are plentiful. Good shooting may be had all along the coast, especially in the spring, when sea-ducks are to be found in large numbers. (283)

Arthur and his peers were born into a prosperous region with its own unique culture. Many of the area's residents were British immigrants but others had been born and raised locally, some having local roots going back to the eighteenth century. By the turn of the century, two distinct ethnic groups had established themselves in the region—Gaelic-speaking Hebridean Scots who lived mainly in the country or "back lands" and English-speakers, mostly of English descent, who lived in the villages of Gabarus and Fourchu. In spite of any local importance placed on the distinctions between the two peoples, there

was considerable social interaction and intermarriage. Arthur himself came from both United Empire Loyalist and Hebridean roots.

It was from these Gaelic and English Canadians that the contemporary storytellers learned their art, in settings such as general stores, ceilidhs (pronounced cay-lees), and frolics. In order to understand the storytelling traditions in which these people were raised and the themes of their stories, which often involve the community's past, we must first look at the history of their society.

3.1 A Brief History of the Gabarus-Framboise Coast[5]

Very little is known about the original inhabitants of this region.[6] The Story of Framboise (Cumming et al., 1984), a local history, tells of *Iain Dubh an Innseanach* —"Black John the Indian"—and his wife "Black Mary" who camped in the Framboise area when the Scots first arrived, probably in the 1830s, more than a century after the beginning of European settlement. The book provides two written accounts of Black John and Black Mary, seemingly taken originally from oral tradition. A Gaelic story printed in Tha Fear na Ceilidh in 1929 and attributed to "Calum" tells of the Indian couple feeding weary and frightened settlers (Cumming et al., 4-8). A 1946 Cape Breton Post article states that Black John was "an Indian, who, having been ill-treated by the captain of a boat on which he was a hand, deserted the vessel when she docked at Louisbourg and decided to makeshift by himself" (4). He lived by hunting, fishing and trapping. He migrated among several camps and "having decided that his households lacked the touch of a woman's capable hands, made his way to an Indian settlement at Salmon River near St. Peter's, and was successful in winning the

hand of Black Mary who returned to Framboise with him." Their sons bore the French names, "Prospear and Grigwire" (4). Black John was probably the same John Ambrose whose wigwam beside Crooked Lake is marked on an 1839 map which accompanied John Strachan's Framboise land grant papers (4, 20). As the writers of The Story of Framboise have concluded, the evidence suggests that Black John was not a Native person at all but rather a French ship-jumper who adopted a *courier-de-bois* lifestyle. Mary, however, was probably Mi'kmaq (4). The nickname *Dubh* or Black tells us little about the ethnicity of this couple as Gaelic-speaking Scots are often nicknamed according to their hair colour. My great-uncle Ranald MacDonald, the dark-haired son of North Uist Scots, was called "Black Ranald."

Arthur Severance told interviewers how this couple used to visit his grandmother when they camped behind her home in Fourchu. One time she took her baby, Henry (Arthur's father) to visit them. "The Indian woman was cooking some trout and insisted that the baby might like some. And that was the first solid food that he had!" (8).[7] Maud White, at the age of 94, recounted in A History of Fourchu (MacGillivray et al., 1985:13) that her father had spoken of a Mi'kmaq family who lived in the village. According to her, the children were named Linda and Jim so this may have been a different family from John and Mary's (13). So far as is known, these Mi'kmaq people left no descendants in the Framboise area. However, the locations of three of Black John and Black Mary's campsites bear the names *Cnoc an Innseanach* (Indian Hill), Indian Field and Indian Barren (Cumming, 3-4). Another spot in Fourchu is called Indian Clearing and is associated with the family of Linda and Jim (MacGillivray, 13).

Although the indigenous people left few traces of their presence in this region, early European colonists left considerable evidence since the southeast

coast of Cape Breton was an important locale during the colonial struggles for North America. The area's history has been documented by Mary and George Lavery in Tides and Times: Life on the Cape Breton Coast at Gabarus and Vicinity 1713-1990 (1991). The Laverys, a United Church minister and his wife whose Pastoral Charge from 1967-70 included Gabarus, studied the region's history, thoroughly examining numerous historical documents as well as scholarly works. Their research shows that although fishermen from Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain had been fishing Cape Breton's waters since the sixteenth century, permanent settlement did not begin until the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. The Peace of Utrecht of 1713 divided the disputed territories of Newfoundland and Acadie (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and part of Quebec) between France and Britain. France lost all except for Isle Royale (Cape Breton), Isle St. Jean (P.E.I.), the small islands in the St. Lawrence, and some fishing rights in Newfoundland (Lavery, 1991:1-2).

In 1713, Monsieur de Constable became Isle Royale's first governor and founded a colony at Louisbourg on the island's southeast coast. He brought settlers from the fortified town of Placentia in Newfoundland and these were soon followed by Acadian fishermen. The evidence shows that settlement on the shores of Gabarus Bay, ten to twenty kilometres south of Louisbourg, ensued immediately. In 1713, two Recollect fathers from Quebec were serving Louisbourg and the surrounding area including "Gabory" or Gabarus (2). The 1716 census listed the population of Gabory as one habitant (farmer) and ten fishermen with two *chaloupes* (shallops, two-masted fishing vessels of about seven or eight tons) (3). No mention was made of women and children although they often were included in censuses of Isle Royale, so perhaps there were none. With the fortification of Louisbourg which began in 1720 and continued for

twenty years, settlements spread rapidly along the southeast coast as well as in other areas of Cape Breton. By 1723, there were two habitants, forty fisherman, and eight chaloupes in Barachois Fourche (Fourchu), the forked harbour to the south of Gabarus (4).

Although the fortress of Louisbourg was the pride of the French empire, it was conquered twice in its short history. During the War of the Austrian Succession, New Englanders seized the town in 1745 after a surprise overland attack from Gabarus Bay. With the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, however, the English returned the fortress to France, much to the dismay of New England colonists. During the Seven Years War, British regulars besieged Louisbourg by land and sea and captured it again in 1758. They used the town as the base for their attack on Quebec in 1759 and then razed the fortifications to the ground. Apparently, they did not raid other French settlements on Isle Royale as the New Englanders had done earlier (20). The war ended in 1763 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. France lost all her North American holdings except for Louisiana and the small North Atlantic islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, which were retained as fishing colonies. The era of French rule in Cape Breton had ended and the island was annexed to the British colony of Nova Scotia.

French colonists did not leave the Gabarus area immediately. The 1774 British census stated that "Chapeau Rouge" (Gabarus) had forty-seven inhabitants: eight men, eight women, fifteen boys and sixteen girls. Of these, thirty-three were French Roman Catholics, twelve were Irish Catholics, and two were English Protestants (29). Acadian families were still fishing and farming at Gabarus Bay in 1776-78 when Captain Holland surveyed Cape Breton (27; "Gabarouse Thrice Named"). Today, a great many French-speaking Acadians dwell in the coastal area from L'Archeveque to River Inhabitants, to the

southwest of Gabarus and Fourchu. However, if any descendants of French settlers live in the Gabarus-Framboise area, their lineage has been forgotten. Almost the only remnants of French settlement are the many place names, such as French Road, Belfry (*Bellefeuille*), Fourchu (*Havre de Fourche*), Framboise, Marie-Joseph Brook, and St. Espirit.[8] The other reminders of the French era are the many descendants of the conquering soldiers (e.g., Bagnells and MacGillivrays) and the stories of French treasure which are popular along the coast.

The British maintained a garrison at Louisbourg until 1768 when the troops were moved to Halifax; from there they were sent to deal with disturbances in Boston, precursors to the American Revolution. Many Louisbourg tradesmen went with them but others remained in Cape Breton. According to an official document sent to England by Nova Scotia's Lieutenant-Governor the same year, settlers named Richard Collins, Edward and Thomas MacDonald, John Clewley, Francis Joice, Peter Jervois, and John Perry built houses and fishing stages at Gabarus Bay (28). As well, John Bagneal and James Townsend (common Gabarus surnames) each built a house and stage at *LeBrasdor* (28; Richard Brown, 368). Bruce Fergusson (1967) refers to this settlement as *Labrador* and says that it is Little Bras d'Or at the northeastern entrance to the Bras d'Or lakes (357).

Rhodena (MacGillivray) Clark, a lifelong Gabarus resident and local historian (Plate 3.5), explained that three Gabarus families—the Bagnells, Townsends and MacGillivrays—are descended from veterans of the colonial wars. According to her account, William Bagnell may have been given a promotion by his progeny. Rhodena also related an interesting story about the

complications of bringing Bagnell's young German bride to the region during an attack on the French fortress.

> ...General Bagnell—they called him a "lesser general"—He was in the 1758 siege of Louisbourg. But through research and different people being interested in their history and the Bagnell family, they found that he was a paymaster. But anyway, General Bagnell—William Bagnell was his name—he was with General Townsend who was a general. General Townsend was given land at Louisbourg for services rendered and the Back Road, you know where you come around the lake there, down to over to the Harbour Point that was given to General Bagnell for his services rendered during the 1758 siege of Louisbourg.
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> And he...became acquainted with and married a girl from Lunenburg and she was...a German girl. I think she was fifteen or sixteen years old at the time and from around Lunenburg [Nova Scotia] and they had twelve or so children and some of them, they lived down around Quoddy[9] for a while. But now, there's folklore tells about General Bagnell bringing her, when they were first married, when they came to make the siege here in Louisbourg, they had her in a trunk with holes bored in it. And she had a whole lot of clothes on and one of the pieces, one of the garments was a plaid kimono and it was later made into a dress, a wedding dress for her daughter, Kate. This was where all the Bagnells originated, from General Bagnell, as we call him. He was a "lesser general," as they called him.
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> And the MacGillivrays came from Low Point [between Sydney and New Waterford, Cape Breton], Daniel MacGillivray and all the others when they retired from the American [i.e. British colonial] army.... And the oldest son, he was Daniel MacGillivray, he came to Gabarus and he married—I forget what her name was—so that all the MacGillivrays in the Gabarus area are Protestants. But his dad married a Catholic girl and the majority of the MacGillivrays are Catholics but we are all of the same stock. And Daniel MacGillivray, he exchanged his land down in South Bar for land up at Gabarus Hill... (RT92-4A, Aug. 28, 1995)

Following the American Revolution, United Empire Loyalists were forced to flee persecution in the new American republic either because of their political views or because they had backed the losing side in a war. Cape Breton's new Lieutenant-Governor, Frederic Wallet Desbarres provided a number of inducements so that, in the Laverys' words, "From 1785 to 1787 there was a great influx of Loyalists, disbanded soldiers and others, all eager to take advantage of

the free grants of land and the generous benefits" (31). Some of these people, including the Severances, moved to the Gabarus-Framboise area (MacGillivray et al.:13-14). A census of 1818 lists twenty-two men "of whom 12 were heads of families" (women were not counted) some bearing names which still existed in Gabarus in the mid-to-late-twentieth century: Bagneal, McGilvery, Turner, Mans, Cann, Armstrong, Ails, Stacey and Hardy (35-36). (Spelling of names was inconsistent in earlier times and many of these families now use different spellings: Bagnell, MacGillivray, Mann, Ayles.)

The next major migration to Cape Breton began in 1802 with the arrival of the ship *Northern Friends* bearing four hundred and fifteen Scottish settlers (34). Following the defeat of Charles Stuart, "Bonnie Prince Charlie," and his Jacobite followers at Culloden in 1745, the English with Scottish allies began to demilitarize the Highlands and break down the clan system. A number of the *lairds* or clan chieftains, realizing that their followers no longer were standing armies to be called upon when needed, decided that their clanspeople were of dubious value. Beginning in 1785 and continuing until 1854, many of these lairds evicted their tenants, renting out the lands, which before had been held in common for the clans, for the grazing of Cheviot sheep. The year 1792, during which particularly large and reprehensible clearances took place, is known in Scotland as *Bliadhna nan Caorach* (the Year of the Sheep).

John Prebble related the history of the forced removal of thousands of people from the Highlands and Islands in The Highland Clearances (1974). The brutality of the clearances came relatively late to the Outer Hebridean Islands known as the Uists—North and South Uist, Benbecula and the small islands off their coasts. Because of a profitable kelp industry, Hebridean landlords were importing labourers at the end of the eighteenth century when other lairds were

evicting their tenants. In fact, in 1803, these landlords secured the passing of legislation which restricted emigration. In 1811, however, the price of kelp began to fall and due to this and changes in import duties, by 1825, kelp was no longer a valuable commodity. As a result, the Hebridean lairds were being driven toward bankruptcy (248-250).

In 1813, Ranald George MacDonald, laird of Clanranald, sold South Uist and Benbecula to John Gordon of Cluny who later became, in Prebble's words, "one of the most ruthless removers in the Isles" (250). In 1851, Gordon's agents drove people to a public meeting in Lochboisdale, South Uist, and forced many aboard the transport ship *Admiral*. "Carts loaded with bound men" came from Benbecula to contribute to this human cargo bound for Canada (265). Fifteen hundred people were cleared from Gordon's estates in the Hebridean islands of South Uist, Benbecula, Barra, and Mingulay (266). Many Cape Bretoners are descended from natives of these islands, including people on the Gabarus-Framboise coast whose ancestors were expatriates of South Uist and Benbecula.

In 1849, Lord Godfrey MacDonald, fourth Baron of the Isles and descendant of the MacDonald chiefs of Sleat, began the eviction of more than six hundred people from Sollas on North Uist. He had acted humanely during the Potato Famine of 1846, spending all his resources on relief of destitution among his people (252). Prebble argued that MacDonald's motives for clearing Sollas were to a degree benevolent. The people of his island were destitute and he offered them a better future in Canada (253). However, his motivations were undoubtedly influenced by the fact that he had debts of two hundred thousand pounds and his creditors were acting against him (252). It quickly became apparent that his tenants, whose opinions on relocation he had not solicited, had no desire to leave.

The Sollas Clearances were bitter and violent. Women fought pitched battles against the police when men held back (261). Patrick Copper who headed Lord MacDonald's police constables decided to forcibly evict ten families as examples to other tenants. Copper's words provide a moving account of the Sollas people's reaction to the opportunity to better themselves through forced emigration.

> The ninth ejection was that of a family in Middle-quarter, named Monk, who had taken an active part in all the previous opposition to the authorities. It was found necessary to remove the women by force. One of them threw herself on the ground, and either fell or pretended to fall into hysterics—(fortunately, I have not had experience enough to know the difference)—uttering the most doleful sounds, and barking and yelling like a dog for five or ten minutes. Another, with many tears, sobs and groans put up a petition to the Sheriffs that they would leave the roof over part of her house where she had a loom with a cloth in it which she was weaving; and a third woman, the eldest, made an attack with a stick on an officer, and missing her blow, sprung upon him and knocked off his hat. Two stout policemen had difficulty in carrying her to the door. (260)

After these ten evictions, the tenants lost heart and resigned themselves to their fate, which for most, was transport to Canada.

Conditions on emigrant ships at the time were dangerous and disgusting. Ships were filled to capacity and passengers were kept below deck for the whole voyage. In the early nineteenth century, British slave ships—hardly models of humane transportation—were restricted to carrying four hundred and eighty-nine passengers but no laws governed emigrant ships. Some carried as many as seven hundred people (Prebble:193). Disease and death were common.[10] The wounds of these exiles were salted by the knowledge that the perpetrators were not foreigners or traditional enemies but chieftains of clans to whom their ancestors had often been loyal for generations.

Some Hebridean settlers emigrated to the Gabarus-Framboise region from

Harris, Lewis, and Barra. The Strachans were English-speakers from Aberdeenshire in western Scotland. However, the majority of people of Scottish ancestry whom I interviewed in east Cape Breton claimed descent from North Uist emigrants. Others simply said that their people came from "Uist." According to family records derived from the memories of my older relatives, our ancestors came from the three main islands of Uist: the Nicholsons were from South Uist; the McCormicks (or MacCormacks) from Benbecula; and the MacDonalds and Fergusons from North Uist, which they left in 1849, the year of the Sollas clearances. North Uist is primarily Protestant while Benbecula and South Uist are predominantly Roman Catholic. Since the Scots along the Gabarus-Framboise coast are solidly Protestant (although the nearby community of French Road is Catholic), we can assume that the majority of settlers from "Uist" were, in fact, from North Uist or the small islands off its shores.[11] Grenitote, Sollas's neighbouring community was cleared in 1841, resulting in the removal of MacDonalds, Morrisons, Fergusons, MacLeods, MacInneses, MacIntyres, MacDiarmaids, and MacLeans, most of whom went to Cape Breton (*"Naidheachd on t-seann dúthaich...."*:13). Scottish emigrants bearing all these surnames settled in the Gabarus-Framboise region. In fact, Dan Alex MacLeod's mother's family were MacDonalds who were cleared from Grenitote (Cumming et al.:13). Some of the Hebridean and other Scottish settlers in this region of Cape Breton likely came of their own will, following relatives or seeking a better life across the ocean.[12] However, a great many were refugees, exiled from their homeland, and forcibly separated from loved ones.

Memories of the Clearances are still alive in the Uists. When I visited the islands in the spring of 1996, museums in both North and South Uist had historical displays which included significant material on the evictions. The

small selection of reading material for sale in the general store in Bayhead, North Uist included a book on the Clearances. But my most vivid images of the Clearances came from the oral traditions of North Uist.

One distant kinsman in Lochmaddy welcomed me and gave me a tour of the island. (Despite numerous attempts, I have been unable to contact him for permission to use his name). He made a point of showing me Sollas, where the clearances were centred. As we drove eastward toward Newton Ferry from the tiny village that has grown up where the original Sollas once stood, we regularly passed sections of an old stone wall. My host told me that when he was a boy, this wall had been five feet high and four miles long. It was made from the small stone houses of the Sollas area. Its function had been to fence in sheep. During his childhood, the fence had become dilapidated and dangerous so that most of it had been torn down.

He later stopped the bus and pointed out a stone protruding from the ground like a grave marker. He said that he once asked "Old Angus" in whose yard the stone stood, what the rock marked. Angus told him that when the evictions were taking place, a young boy stood by, angry but helpless to aid his family. He swore to the police officer or landlord's agent in charge of the operation that he would come back and kill him. Years later, the same boy—now a young man—returned to the community as a stranger. "That rock," Angus told my host, "marks the spot where he killed the landlord's man."

Ironically, the stories of the Clearances are better preserved in the oral history of those Scots who were spared them than by the descendants of the actual victims. David Cameron, a Scot, researched the oral history of the "diaspora" of the crofters by interviewing their descendants throughout Scotland, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Cape Breton (where he visited

Loch Lomond near Framboise). In his book, On the Crofter's Trail: In Search of the Clearance Highlanders (1990), he explained that he and his wife Anne speculated about why stories of voluntary migration were much easier to find than those of forced migration. After recapping the brutality of the Clearances and the hardships undergone in Canada, Cameron said of the pioneers:

> There must have been a severe onus on them to repress all that suffering, need and humiliation and I have seen the shadow of it, like a reef darkening just below the water, on more than one face. John MacDonald at The Clan in Armadale on Skye knew that his maternal forebears had been cleared but 'My mother would not talk about it'— as he said this he looked down with a clouded face which must have mirrored his mother's expression and her mother's before her. (102)

The Camerons' theory is also held by the many residents of east Cape Breton who I visited. They can tell of their ancestors disembarking at Pictou and carrying children and possessions through the woods from Port Hawkesbury to their coastal settlements, a distance of about one hundred kilometres. However, they have virtually no stories of the Clearances other than what they have read in history books. In fact, most were unsure whether their ancestors had been cleared. However, they know that many of their immigrant forebears were not happy to be here and that they went through tremendous hardships in leaving their windswept, nearly-treeless Hebridean islands to build homes and better themselves in what one settler and songwriter immortalized as *"À Choille Ghruamach"*—The Gloomy Forest (Creighton & MacLeod:297).[13]

My grandmother, Dolena (MacDonald) Thurgood (1887-1981) was born in Malquish (or Mullcuish) near Fourchu and knew many of the Scottish settlers. Whenever she spoke of "them old people," my grandmother showed "a clouded face" such as David Craig attributes to John MacDonald of Skye. Their lives in Cape Breton were, according to her, full of hardship, sorrow and little else. I

once asked what she could tell me about our ancestors coming from Scotland. Dolena explained that these immigrants were "like displaced people today—they had to leave. Today we give them jobs and an apartment. Then, they went into the woods with an axe. Perhaps the government gave them some money." She told how one young person tired of Effie Ferguson, Dolena's grandmother, always talking about Scotland. She asked Grandmother Ferguson why she didn't go back if she liked it so much. Dolena explained, "She didn't understand. They had to leave. They were driven out. They didn't want to come here. There was nothing to live for back there" (notes made after conversation circa 1979). Although "Nana" Thurgood was a true Gael who considered Scottish descent to be a virtue and who always spoke of "the old country," Scotland itself held no romance for her. She had no desire to see the land that created such pain for her elders.

By the time the Hebridean Scots arrived, the other immigrant groups who had settled this region of Cape Breton after the British conquest—settlers from Louisbourg, disbanded soldiers, and Loyalists, all primarily of English extraction —were established in the villages of Gabarus, Fourchu and their immediate environs. Although life was hard for any of the area's pioneers, the English speakers probably had an easier adjustment than the Gaels. Many were adventurers seeking a better life and looking optimistically at their new land. Others were Loyalists, also refugees but ones who had had already experienced life in North America. As well, the English and American immigrants, moved into former French settlements, unlike the Scots, many of whom had to hack homes out of the forest on a new continent.

The Gaelic-speaking Scots moved into the back lands and the unsettled areas of the coast where most took up farming and fishing.[14] Charles Dunn

described work patterns of rural Cape Breton Scots in the mid-twentieth century in The Highland Settler (1953):

> The separation between these two occupations is very slight since the basis of existence for all of the people is their farm. Some of the men direct more of their time and energy on developing the farming possibilities of their property; others direct their attention more especially to fishing. But the fisherman keeps one or two cows, some hens, a pig, and a horse or two. And although he may do little on the land he at least takes in his hay each year in order to provide winter feed for his live-stock. (Dunn, 1953: 150)

Oral testimony indicates that the two occupations were practised in like fashion by the Scottish pioneers in the Gabarus-Framboise region.

The residents of these farming communities were Scots and Gaelic was their usual language. Although the English and the Scots have intermarried to a considerable degree, English names are still found primarily in Gabarus and Fourchu while the "Macs" dominate in Gabarus Lake, Framboise, and Stirling. In these Scottish areas, most people born before 1940 have Gaelic as their mother tongue though all are fluent in English.[15] Robert Morgan, the director of the Beaton Institute, told me in a personal communication that the Gabarus-Framboise region is presently the second-largest Gaelic-speaking area in Cape Breton after Inverness County.

During the time the Hebridean Scots were clearing land and building their homes, Gabarus and Fourchu were already established fishing villages with growing economies. Fishing was a family enterprise. Men worked in boats while women and children dried the catch on shore. Many local men eventually left the fishery to become sailors or sea captains on ships trading with, for example, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean (Dow, 2). The region also supported a shipbuilding industry.[16] In Fourchu, the first shipyard was founded by Josiah

Hooper, originally of Bristol, England. In 1826, he sailed to Guysborough, Nova Scotia where he learned shipbuilding from a Mr. Hart who later became his father-in-law. After developing his skills, Hooper moved to Fourchu where he built ships from 1855 until his death in 1867. During the nineteenth century, another Fourchu boat builder, John "Cooper" MacLeod, built smaller two-masted vessels weighing from fifteen to twenty-five tons (100).

Some discrepancies exist between accounts of Fourchu shipbuilding given by the Laverys and by John P. Parker in Cape Breton Ships and Men (1967:136). The Laverys claim that before his death in 1867 Josiah Hooper built eleven ships ranging from twenty-five to five hundred and eighty tons and that his son Albert built five more from forty to sixty tons (100). But they admit that "our source of information on Fourchu shipbuilding is no longer certain" (note 100, p. 156). MacGillivray et al. confirm the number but not the size of the ships, listing sixteen vessels built in Fourchu in the "65 years to 1914" but not their tonnages (26). Parker names only eight of these ships but does not claim that his list is complete. The ships named by Parker are all listed by MacGillivray though the spellings differ somewhat. However, the weights cited by Parker vary considerably from those of the Laverys. According to Parker, "the little *Sprat*" was only sixteen tons while the *L. C. Hooper*, "their largest vessel" was three hundred and eighty-two tons, a sizable ship but considerably smaller than the five hundred and eighty tons claimed by the Laverys' source (136). Whatever the case, it is clear that Fourchu had an active shipbuilding industry which provided employment for skilled craftsmen as well as for unskilled labourers. Albert Hooper also developed extensive mercantile interests which included lobster factories in Fourchu and Framboise and stores in Fourchu and Gabarus Lake. In addition, H. E. Baker built another factory in Fourchu so that in the mid-1860s

the village had two lobster factories, another source of employment for the recent immigrants (MacGillivray, 21).

Gabarus underwent similar development. Between 1854 and 1900, Gabarus shipbuilders—including Hugh Gillis, the Ormiston family, and the shipwright L. H. Stout—constructed seven schooners ranging from forty-five to one hundred and twenty-three tons (Lavery, 97; Parker, 136-38). Gabarus offered such services as a carding mill, stores, and numerous craftsmen including blacksmiths, a locksmith, a cobbler, and a weaver to the many people were employed in fishing and shipbuilding in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In addition, in the 1870s to 80s, a small copper mine employing about five men operated at Eagle's Head, North Shore (also known as Deep Cove) (Paufler, 4-5).

Though many Scots arrived as refugees, other British people immigrated because they were attracted by the prosperity of the villages. As well, migrants from elsewhere in Cape Breton and mainland Nova Scotia moved to Gabarus and Fourchu because of employment or business opportunities. John Rafuse of Chester, Nova Scotia went to Fourchu at the age of eighteen to help build the H. E. Baker lobster factory but ended up settling in the community (MacGillivray, 21). Samuel Clarke moved from St. Peters, Cape Breton in 1898 to open a shoe repair shop in Gabarus (Paufler, 4). In the late nineteenth century, Roderick Ross Morrison relocated from Loch Lomond, Cape Breton in order to run a general store (L. Morrison, 1). These Nova Scotians were able to return home if the economic situation was not to their liking. Their willingness to settle is a testament to the region's prosperity in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Although the Scottish settlers in this region were faced with the arduous task of hacking a living from the "The Gloomy Forest," this forest was for many

within walking distance of one of these two rapidly expanding villages. Some newcomers were able to take advantage of opportunities which presented themselves in Gabarus and Fourchu. According to my family records, John "The Weaver" MacCormick and his wife Effie (Nicholson) emigrated from Benbecula in the 1830s or 40s and settled in Belfry after living for a short time in Sydney Forks. MacCormick carried on his trade among his often impoverished Hebridean neighbours. According to Truman Clark of Gabarus, he supplemented his income by weaving for the people of Gabarus for a fee of ten cents a yard (Paufler, 3).[17]

For men and women without trades, seasonal employment could be had in the fishery, as well as in lobster factories and shipyards, for fishing families (despite stereotypes of their chronic impoverishment) were often employers. Many of the immigrants and their progeny were able to find work, often low-paid and menial, in the villages. In an interview with Cape Breton's Magazine, Lottie Morrison, who was born in Gabarus in 1890, discussed the work of "country" (Scottish, Gaelic-speaking) people in the village.

> ...in each house there would usually be two men from the country, and of course the man who owned the boat. (Were they in a fish shack?) Oh, no, no, no. They were homes. And each fisherman would have two men living in his home, fishermen—you know, during the week. They were all sent home Saturday afternoon and came back Sunday evening. And there'd usually be one or two country girls who would help the woman of the house take care of the fish. (L. Morrison:2)

The lobster factories in Gabarus and Fourchu provided temporary employment for many country people including a number of those I interviewed (see Plate 3.6). While he was discussing Fred Reid, a Gabarus storyteller, Clifton Bagnell commented on the profusion of rural workers at the factories:

> He [Reid] knew the whole history of the whole community of course from away back because he lived to be ninety-nine and anything that happened

> wherever it happened, he never forgot it. Well, he knew all the years before that, all the ones that used to work in the lobster factory, where they came from, the different places they came from and all. 'Course the local ones, well, they came from Gabarus Lake and they came from French Road and they came from [unintelligible] and they worked in the lobster factory for the summertime, worked for two months and they were gone and that made the population that much more, of course. (RT92-18, Aug. 5, 1992)

Bagnell was born in 1909, four years after Arthur Severance, in the fishing community of Gull Cove near Gabarus. At the age of four, he moved into Gabarus, then a thriving and populous village:[18]

> ... the population here, it's not quarter what it was when I was a teenager, no....In a lot of houses they had quite a big family. There was a lot of young people here then and I can remember when there was eight stores here. There was eight stores, they was all selling groceries and hardware and all kinds of things. You didn't have to go anywhere for anything, you could buy it all right here. Today of course, there's not one left. (RT92-18, Aug. 5, 1992)

Elsie (Reid) MacDonald and Jean (Reid) MacQueen and their cousin, Mildred (Grant) Gray were all born and raised in Gabarus. During a lively conversation, they shared their memories and a delicious chicken dinner with me. Jean told how the house her family bought in the mid-1920s (now owned by her brother, Rev. Herbert Reid) had belonged to "the resident doctor, if you can believe that!" She also related how in 1925 to 30, there were still people living in the now defunct community of Gull Cove, two or three kilometres from Gabarus. "In those years, I think there were three or four lobster factories between here and Gull Cove." Gabarus was large enough to have two post offices.

These women's descriptions of the village show clearly that it was still an important mercantile centre during the 1920s when they were small and into the 30s, even if, as many local people claim, its decline began about the time of the First World War.

Jean: Her (Mildred's) grandfather was a captain and Mildred knows stories about that and I think she should tell you—it's very interesting—and about his boats. And he was also a general merchant and he had a large store, a two-storey store and upstairs for a number of years, there was a Grant and Reid Undertaking Company. And that comprised of her grandfather, Captain John Grant, her father Wiley Grant, and our grandfather Albert Reid, and our father John S. Reid... And they sold caskets and my father did the business part and Uncle Wiley was the undertaker and he looked after the remains and they—dressed them and—.

Elsie: In those days, they sold shrouds. Nobody was buried in their clothes, they sold shrouds to be buried in.

Jean: Well we played in—not IN the caskets but we played around them for years.

Mildred: Better than that, there was an ice cream parlour by the casket [inaudible].

Jean: Well that was an ice cream parlour too, yes for [a year?]. That's right. Her mother ran the ice cream parlour from upstairs in that store. Big store...

Mildred then told me about her grandfather John E. Grant's ships but the conversation returned to the subject of Gabarus itself.

Mildred: In 1902, Grampa's last ship was called the *Minnie*. He had the *Hector MacGregor*, the *Pertoma* and the *Minnie* and the *Minnie* was the last one in 1902. And he was also sailing, coastal sailing, and he was carrying coal to Halifax and bringing back provisions for the merchants who—I guess there was probably seven or eight stores in the village at that time, seven at least. And in 1902, there was a Catholic church built over by the lighthouse—we call it [the Lifo?]—and there was also a lobster factory and a canning factory—.

Jean: They made their own cans.

Mildred: And there was also a lobster factory and a canning place to make cans just down here ... on this side of the Barachois [Mildred is referring to a second cannery and can factory within Gabarus]. And Grampa brought the bricks and lumber and that from Halifax to build the Catholic church over on [the Lifo?] and that was in

1902.... Just below the lighthouse. And that church was still standing, probably in 1975, and the people in Sydney bought it and built a house out of it.

Ranald: How long has it been since there was a Catholic congregation out here?

Elsie: Well, that was the last of the Catholic congregations here.

Jean: I can't remember of there being too many services in it.

Mildred: Well, occasionally a priest would come out from Grand Mira and have services there...

Jean: And then there was a Baptist Church up on the "Bank," we call it.

Elsie: Well, it was the Old Road, Jean.

Jean: It was the Old Road. Years ago, I can't even remember that road being there, only we'd walk up there and see where [inaudible].

Elsie: The original road was so near the bank that eventually the bank eroded and they had to change the road to approximately where it is today.

Mildred: But even in our day there were seven stores. And a barbershop and in my grandfather's store there was a barbershop. And then there was another barbershop. Leonard Bagnell had a barbershop down toward the boardwalk from there. And they were all doing business. I don't know! And Grampa had a general store. He was selling everything right from rubbers to glass, window glass, to yard goods for the ladies (Jean: Everything!) to buy for clothing and all kinds of clothing and—.

Jean: And before my time, I can just barely remember it but Morrisons had a big store.

Mildred: They had a big general store.

Jean: With clothing and everything like that you know. I can just barely remember that. (RT 92-23A, Aug. 7, 1992)

This image of the village as a thriving trade centre was confirmed by D. Dow when he described turn-of-the-century Gabarus in a government memorandum. His claim that Gabarus had a population of three thousand and was larger than Sydney at the end of the last century is not born out by census reports. (At the time of the 1891 census, Gabarus and the surrounding area had 1,339 people while Sydney without its surrounding towns had 2,247). However, Dow accurately presents Gabarus as a productive village.

> ...At its peak, Gabarus maintained 3 schools, 4 churches, 4 large stores and 5 lobster canneries.
>
> It exported, by means of a fleet of 27 large schooners, canned lobster, salt fish, lumber, eggs, bacon, lamb and mutton, beef, sheepskins and cowhide as well as vegetables fruit and other agricultural products as far afield as the Caribbean, Africa and Europe. Its major import was tinplate from which lobster cans were made at the canning factories and waterproof paper with which the cans were lined. (Dow:2)

These oral and written descriptions with their references to sea captains, shipping, and lobster factories show that the people of Gabarus and the neighbouring communities were mainly dependent on the sea for their livelihood. Even the farmers produced food which was shipped out of Fourchu and Gabarus.

This orientation toward the sea regularly emerges in conversation. As he discussed local storytellers, Clifton Bagnell (Plate 3.7) explained that many of the notable storytellers of earlier years were old sea captains:

> There were different characters, perhaps Evelyn [Clifton's wife] might know some of them. But some of the older ones, they were sea captains. Some of them owned their own ships. Some of them sailed on other, company, ships. But a lot of them now, there was a lot of sea captains here. Most of them, they had very little training, I tell you. And there was a an awful lot, they sailed from here to the West Indies with loads of fish and brought back molasses and all kinds of cargoes from the West Indies and different ones and she'd go in with coal from Louisbourg and so on. And, there was a lot of smart old fellas then that never had much training and not much education, only what they had picked up themselves.

> Today, of course, you got to have a lot of education, a lot of training to be, mostly anything. They were mostly, a lot of them were self-trained, they just trained themselves—not only here but, you know, all those small places, Fourchu, [unintelligible], Louisbourg. 'Course Louisbourg had, they had the coal piers and they shipped the coal from Louisbourg and that made it a different area altogether. (RT92-18, Aug. 5, 1992)

These captains provided employment on their own vessels and on "company ships" for both the men of the fishing villages and of the surrounding farms. Although some rural Scots did become sailors, they were more inclined to make their living from farming and from the inshore fishery. In spite of the mixing of rural people with villagers, especially as the rural people came to work, and despite considerable intermarriage between the Hebridean immigrants and the English, Fourchu and Gabarus remained culturally distinct from the surrounding area (see Plates 3.8 and 3.9). Even today, the accents of the two villages are quite different from the soft Gaelic tones of the back country.

In an unpublished paper, my mother, Lois Thurgood, recorded my father Charlie's comments on the nautical character of Gabarus during his childhood in the 1920s and 30s.

> "Well, of course," Charlie said, "Gabarous was not a Scottish settlement. It was populated by English families. Many of them were the families of men who fought with Wolfe at Louisburg.... They were a coastal, sea-faring people whose contacts were more with the outside world than with the interior of Cape Breton. The Scots clung more to little land holdings, raising sheep and getting food from their farms, and fishing for food generally."
>
> The Gabarous men sailed along the coasts, up the Saint Lawrence River, down through the Caribbean Sea with fish to exchange for molasses and rum; into New Brunswick, Halifax, and Charlottetown. Charlie's father and his mates were in Holland, in the Barbados, in fact, wherever a cargo was sent.
>
> Charlie often refers to the men sitting around discussing those days. "Off Cape Hatteras we ran into a heavy blow; we put into Vineyard Haven just in time!" and so on. "We were just three days out of Kingston (Jamaica) and we ran into a gale. Oh, man and boy, what a gale."

Charlie Thurgood is the grandson of Annie MacCormack, a nurse from Belfry who married (Samuel) Charles Thurgood, an English soldier stationed in Halifax. When the elder Charles retired from the military in the 1880s, he settled with his family in the fishing community of Low Point, near Gabarus and within walking distance of Annie's home community. Charlie was born in Gabarus but moved to the town of Sydney as a boy. He spent considerable time with "Gabaroosters" but because he was raised elsewhere, he was able to observe their speech patterns as an outsider. He described to Lois how the village accent differed from that of the surrounding countryside and how the everyday speech of the village was permeated with sailors' imagery.[19]

> Gabarous natives, many of whose families had been in the Louisburg-Gabarous area since the Seven Years War had their own eighteenth century version of English, almost incomprehensible to outsiders. Whatever accent was used by these (Thurgood) children, who had lived in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and had a mother whose first language had been Gaelic, they would probably have more difficulty understanding the English of the Gabarous residents than that of the Scottish Cape Bretoners. The Scots, Charlie said, were taught English as a new language in school, and though they always kept the Gaelic lilt in their voices, they generally spoke quite comprehensible English. Not so the English of Gabarous.
>
> The language of Gabarous was also peppered with the lingo of the sea. When I asked Charlie for examples, he came up with a few:
> Fore and Aft: Going up and down the road was "goin' fore and aft".
> Back and Full: Of an old lady going up the road in the wind with her petticoats blowing, someone might say, "She be's goin' back 'n full."
> Aloft: "I think he's aloft in the barn." Of a man upstairs, "He be's aloft."
>
> Nautical language was part of everyday language, used by women as much as by men...
>
> In Gabarous, a drunk was "three sheets to the wind". A drunk staggering past the windows was "comin' up the road with a heavy list to starboard, boiyee!" Oi was used for I; "Oi (oiy) saw eem."
>
> Gabarous vowels probably created the greatest problem for outsiders. "Him" was "eem": "they go' eem" for "they got him."
>
> So, according to Charlie, the Thurgood children, and no doubt their unsuspecting father as well, would be surrounded by two foreign

> languages: the Gaelic of the Scots, and the English of the Gabarous population. (Lois Thurgood, 1995:1-3)

Although there were cultural and linguistic differences between Gabarus and Fourchu and the country, these were not garrisons standing against each other. Residents of village and country interacted regularly through work, play, and commerce and romantic attachments regularly developed among the unmarried people. Although some of the contemporary Scots of the region claim only Scottish ancestry since the time of the first settlers, virtually all the English have Scottish forebears.

Many people to whom I talked made clear distinctions between the English culture of Gabarus and the Scottish culture of the country. Some described Gabarus Hill, located between "the Village" and the rural region, as a transitional community, being both English and Scottish with many Gaelic speakers "from the country" living there. However, according to Ruth Reid (Plate 3.10) who was born in 1906 and lived all her life in Gabarus, the division was not that clear. Her focus on the women of Gabarus contradicts the concept of the Village as an English enclave.

> Ruth: ...Well, Gabarus, it was a fishing village and from down below right up to The Hill, that was called "the Village" and up above, where Bruce Smith lives, was "the Hill."
>
> Ranald: ...The Hill was more Scottish than English, right?
>
> Ruth: Scottish?
>
> Ranald: Scottish.
>
> Ruth: Scotch.
>
> Ranald: Scotch, yeah.
>
> Ruth: Well, there were Scotch—. No, there weren't. No. The people at the Village was more Gaelic-speaking than they were at the Hill.

Ranald: Oh, really?

Ruth: Yes, my mother and Mrs. Bagnell, that was Mrs Ephram Bagnell, and Mrs. Russell Bagnell, Mrs. Reid, that'd be Jean and Elsie's grand-aunt, and then there was a Mrs. Harris, they were from the country. They came—Mrs. Reid and Mrs. Bagnell are sisters—they came from Big Ridge, My mother [Margaret MacKinnon Reid] came from Kennington Cove and the other Mrs. Bagnell, she came from Gabarus Lake. And then there was Mary, we called her "Mary Jim," she was a MacDonald—she had been a MacVicar—and she was from Gabarus Lake. And her cousin, she had been a MacLean—she was "Mary Dan," they always called her—she was from Gabarus Lake. Well, they were all Scotch people. They all could talk the Gaelic but I never could talk it. No.

Ranald: That's interesting because a lot of people told me that not many people spoke Gaelic down in The Village but they did up on The Hill and you're telling me the opposite.

Ruth: No, up on the Hill, there wasn't too many. I don't know anyone up there could [speak Gaelic]—probably years ago, before my time but not in later years. There was a couple of families moved down from Gabarus Lake, well they were Scotch people, yeah.

Ranald: I know my own family, Ranald [MacDonald] and Dolena [MacDonald Thurgood] were certainly Gaelic speakers who moved down from Malquish [to The Hill].

Ruth: Oh, yes. (RT95-25A, Sept. 4, 1995)

Although the villages had Gaelic residents, most if not all could speak English. However, in the early twentieth century many older people in rural communities such as Framboise, Stirling, and Gabarus Lake spoke only Gaelic. It is likely that Ruth Reid's country cousins began school without a word of English, as was true of many rural people right up to the Second World War.

The village and country people were connected not only with each other but with the broader world. Although inland people often think of fishing villages as being at the edge of the world, in truth, until the age of jet planes,

these villages were located on the world's super-highways, the oceans. The region's seamen visited distant lands and many other local people travelled to and from the towns and cities of Nova Scotia, especially Sydney and Halifax, as well as the metropolises of "the Boston states." Despite romantic images of a "Golden Age of Sail" in the late nineteenth century held by many Maritimers, since at least the 1870s many people migrated to American cities, especially Boston, for work. Fishing boats and ships from Gabarus and Fourchu (as well as from coastal villages throughout Atlantic Canada) carried both men and women to urban centres where labourers were badly needed and wages were much better than those paid locally. The prosperity of the local economy was not shared by all and the large rural families were often beset by poverty. Even villagers who were from neither merchant nor fishing families saw little chance of living comfortably, let alone prospering, in their home communities. As a young man in the Depression, the late Captain Bruce Smith of Gabarus went to sea because of limited employment prospects at home, especially for those who were not from fishing families.

> And you'd just work your day's work or two on the highway in the summer. It was $2.40 a day, I think, that I remember. That was government work. A few jobs like that—government projects, you know—but very little. The lobster factory if you could get in there. That was two months. And if your father or a relative [couldn't] put pressure on the manager of the factory—why, when the work would get a bit slack the last couple of weeks and there weren't enough lobsters for a full day's work, they would probably skip a day when there'd be no lobsters and the next day they'd go in and they'd have enough work pretty well all the day. Well, if you weren't represented by some fisherman, you were put on day's pay then, twenty dollars a month and day's pay. You only got paid for the day you worked. It was rough times, I'll tell you.
>
> I was on day's pay there one year, it was in July. As a fact, we were closed on the middle of July. The sixteenth, they'd have all the lobsters. The fifteenth was the last catch. And this day at noon, we used to take our lunch—. Most folks took their lunch and we'd go in the can shop at the back of the factory to eat lunch. And I went outside. It was blowing a

> gale of wind and the wharf was on fire underneath and it was getting in a bunch of crates that were piled there and the coal house and all. I ran back in and alerted the crowd. Came out with the buckets and there was lots of water. We had a hand-pump there you could use anyway and we got the fire out. When the boss come down at noon, he was told about the fire and he wanted to know how it happened and who had discovered it and all that. And the next week—I had one week to go before the factory would end—I was discharged. I was surplus after saving the darn factory from a lot of-. Well, at [the] LEAST there'd be a lot of damage! So that's the kind of conditions we worked under.
>
> (Ranald: What did you do at the factory?) Oh, I worked on the wharf that year and I picked arms [removed meat from the lobsters' claws] when I first went there. I think I got thirty dollars a month the last year I worked there but that was the only year. Before that it was twenty. But only one year I worked the two full months 'cause when things got slack, I'd be one of the first to let go because I wasn't represented by a fisherman. See, there was another buyer used to come in here to take lobsters and if a fisherman had children or relatives that he wanted kept on the job, he'd threaten them with his catch of lobsters. He would sell it to the competitor. Although he didn't have a factory here, he had a buyer here and took a few lobster. He didn't get too many, not very many, but some. Enough to be culled, he took away. (RT92-2A, July 22, 1992)

A great many Cape Breton women, whose history has yet to be written, worked as domestics in both Nova Scotia and New England. Mothers and grandmothers of Gabarus-Framboise area residents were in service while supporting families at home. When Bruce Smith's grandfather died, his widow went to the United States to work. In Sydney, "they'd get from eight to ten dollars a month, a woman. And I think they got one day off a month or one Sunday a month or something." However, in the States, "they'd get a day off a week and... I believe every Sunday, some of them. I think Grandmother had Sunday off and one day a week besides that off and they'd get thirty-five dollars to forty dollars a month" (RT92-2A).[20]

Dan Alex MacLeod, who was born in Stirling in 1904, is the son of a woman who worked in an American factory. Dan Alex explained that for an

earlier generation of young women, the daughters of the Hebridean immigrants, there was another powerful incentive for finding work in Boston.

> ...See, at that time, that's why the girls left here. Say you were after starting a farm and getting ready, you had a cow or something. It wasn't you that went looking for the girl, you took a neighbour or somebody and he went and asked for the girl, asked the old man. The old woman or the girl had no say whatsoever. And at some places if the old man said, "You can have her," they might sleep in the barn that night and it might be six months before a minister came around here to marry them—or a priest. That's why the girls started taking off to go to the States—they didn't have a say in it at all. But there was good marriages... (RT95-24A, Sept. 2, 1995)

Arthur Severance, who was born in Fourchu in 1905, began life during the region's heyday. Clifton Bagnell and Ruth Reid of Gabarus, Mary Maggie MacCormick of Framboise Intervale, Dan Alex MacLeod and Christine (MacLeod) Abram of Stirling, and Maggie (MacDiarmaid) MacQueen of North Framboise also were born during the first decade of the twentieth century. They all recalled their early years with great fondness but not because they had experienced a simple rural past. In fact, they were born into a complex society with a wide range of values and contrasting experiences of life. Some members of their society were strictly Gaelic or English speakers while others were fluently bilingual. Many families respected education and some sent their sons and daughters away for professional training. Other people signed their names with an X. A very few could read and write in two languages. Some of these people's elders were fully Canadian having come from families that had been in Cape Breton for over a century. Others were immigrants who had never totally adjusted to their new land and still bore the weight of a forced exodus. Many people in the district survived through a combination of farming, fishing, factory work, road repair, or whatever other temporary labour jobs were available. Others were shipbuilders, sea captains, merchants, doctors, nurses, civil

servants, office workers, teachers, sailors or tradespeople. Captains and merchants might live in large houses with servants while country people walked barefoot to church in order to preserve their shoes (see Plates 3.11 and 3.12). A teenage girl might attend school while living a sheltered existence in a comfortable home or she might be in service in Boston, sending home money to support her family. Some of the women had been forced into marriages while many others had made their own choices. Graves might be marked by engraved tombstones purchased from an undertaker or by ordinary rocks, small enough to be carried without difficulty (see Plates 3.13 to 3.15).

Epidemics—tuberculosis, smallpox, influenza—raged through this district in the first quarter of the century. An infected injury or some unknown medical condition might cause a sudden death or a painful and lingering one. While many people lived well past the biblical "three score and ten," a difficult childbirth or a sudden squall at sea might abruptly turn happy children into orphans. Hardworking doctors and nurses attended the district's health needs as did folk healers using herbs, charms, and inherited powers. The same person who consulted a doctor when suffering from appendicitis might turn to a seventh son or daughter to cure the king's evil or wash a horse with silver and water when it fell sick after being given the evil eye.

One farmer may rarely have left home and considered a trip to Sydney to be an adventure while his neighbour may have fought on the plains of South Africa and felt comfortable strolling the ports of the West Indies. An elderly couple living in a house in the woods might have had, among their furnishings, carvings from Africa and religious icons from Asia, souvenirs of the husband's travels. A mother in homespun clothing, drenched in sweat and leading the Gaelic singing at a milling frolic might have photos of herself as an attractive

young lady in a stylish hairdo, wearing the latest big-city fashions. Though the roads of the district were little more than cart paths and boats were the main form of transportation, a local sailor might have repaired electric cars while working as a mechanic in Boston. Everyone had cousins in the Boston states.

Although people never thought of locking doors and walked the roads without fear, fighting was almost a sport among the region's young men. The same lads who engaged in fierce and sometimes violent inter-village rivalries also socialized with the boys of other villages and courted their sisters (perhaps this is what the fighting was sometimes about). Religion was very important and young people walked in groups for miles to attend each other's church services. The district was largely Protestant and religious feelings and bigotries ran high, yet a passionate Orangeman might maintain friendships with Catholics from Grand Mira or the French Road. The use and abuse of alcohol was frequent in the region but many people were teetotallers. The Sons of Temperance were fighting a fierce battle against the evils of drink as were many straight-laced wives who did not hide their disapproval when their generally moderate husbands engaged in an occasional excess.

The other people who I interviewed were born in the teens, twenties, thirties and, in one case, the late forties. Although the oldest of these were only small children when the Gabarus-Framboise area began its economic decline and mass outmigration, they grew up in a bustling rural district. Although the fishery had been seriously reduced and cargo ships no longer stopped at the villages to load farm goods, the area still supported numerous fishing and farming families. Lumbering and the periodic openings of a zinc, lead and copper mine at Stirling subsidized the incomes of the many people who still lived by a combination of farming, fishing and roadwork. Hunting, gardening

and berry picking helped keep the costs of groceries down. Although many of the people were poor and some families underwent severe hardships at times, everyone looks back at the old times with affection. Theirs was a dynamic culture which valued many of its traditions but could also adapt to change.

Gabarus-Framboise residents had developed their own culture by the early twentieth century. These people felt themselves as belonging to this region. Though they were certainly part of a larger Cape Breton and Canadian culture, they had their own unique Scottish and English backgrounds which combined and adapted to fit their environment and economic circumstances. These people valued many of their own ways but also adopted ideas brought from the large cities of the America eastern seaboard. With other Cape Bretoners, they exported the Gaelic language and Cape Breton music to Massachusetts where they gathered at Boston's Maritime dance halls and at the "Scotch church" in Needham. When they returned home, they introduced new music (and undoubtedly dances) learned in the urban centres (See Ian MacKinnon, 1989:34-35).

The people of the region had a rich social life. A person walking from Gabarus to Framboise could stop at any house to convey the news and gossip and would receive a hot meal as a reward. Music was very important. The Framboise area was especially known for its Gaelic singers but singing in both Gaelic and English was commonplace throughout the district. There were a great many musicians playing fiddles, pipes, harmonicas, guitars, pianos and organs. Dances were regularly held at frolics, picnics, box socials, and at various fundraising events. If there was no public dance scheduled, young people would hold one on a wooden bridge or at someone's home. The Scots kept a Sabbath which even the most devout Presbyterians remember as being

unnecessarily strict and, without doubt, the longest day of the week. Still, they were capable of enjoying themselves on the other six days. Laughter is frequent as they reminisce about their younger days. Much of their time was spent in the company of others and visiting was a highly valued pastime. Youth, of course, is generally a time of high social interaction before one takes on the domestic responsibilities of adulthood.[21] However, as we shall see, adults in this community spent a great deal of time in each other's company during working and leisure time, as they did in most rural communities during the early twentieth century. Not surprisingly, Arthur Severance and his peers were born into a society with established storytelling traditions.

In conclusion, storytelling in the Gabarus-Framboise region cannot be separated from the community's social history. Narrative themes and storytelling practices tell of settlement patterns, ethnicity, and the adversities and triumphs of the past. Gaelic turns of phrase, settlers' experiences, work and play on land and sea, travel to distant cities, and belief systems derived from places of origin are all evident in the community's narrative repertoire. The residents of the region are descended mainly from English, Loyalist, and Scottish settlers, some of whom chose to seek new opportunities in this land while others were reluctant emigrants. Despite the persistence of ethnic and linguistic divisions, intermarriage was common and many community residents claim both a Scottish and an English heritage, as is evident in their family narratives.

While some settlers prospered, most lived lives of hardship, danger, and economic deprivation. These facts are recorded in a few oral narratives while the lack of others and the deflection of queries suggest memories too grim to share with those who did not live them. The region's orientation toward the sea meant that while residents were connected directly with much of the world, untimely

death was a constant threat to many families. The settlement of the populace in the more prosperous villages on the one hand and the country on the other separated residents into two social groups, yet created economic bonds that brought them together. The area's steady economic and population decline throughout the twentieth century was made bearable perhaps by the fact that most of the contemporary residents come from families that were never well-to-do. In fact, those who remain live much more comfortably than their ancestors ever did. Arthur Severance and his peers knew many of the last wave of pioneers, the Scots who turned the backwoods into farmland. Although members of his generation inherited the resourcefulness of their elders, for them the business of maintaining the necessities of life grew steadily less brutal.

In the following chapters, it becomes clear that oral history is a major component of the community's narrative repertoire. The people of the Gabarus-Framboise region value their past. The area's "Scots" especially are consciously affected by the heritage passed on by their immigrant forebears, many of whom were refugees who only wanted to return home. Many residents not only uphold their Gaelic traditions but in addition feel strong ties to the "old country," a land that most have never seen. However, their "Scotch" heritage is something they share among themselves, not a cultural commodity for display or sale to outsiders as it is in many parts of Cape Breton. The only display event focusing on the Gaelic heritage is Gabarus Lake's annual "milling frolic" mentioned in Chapter V and even this is more of a community celebration than a show for outsiders. Other residents are acutely aware of their British military and Loyalist roots. The contemporary society of the Gabarus-Framboise region is shaped by the area's history. When we examine the storytelling traditions of the region's residents, it becomes clear that most value that fact.

Notes

1. See Caplan, 1991:158-62; 1996:18-22; and Severance, Cape Breton's Magazine 33.

2. See Appendix 4 for an explanation of this accident.

3. For Severance's and MacDonald's accounts of this accident as well as other people's commentaries on the effects of this tragedy on Murdoch MacDonald's family, see Ranald Thurgood, "The Drowning of Murdoch MacDonald," Cape Breton's Magazine 71 (Jan. 1997):11-19.

4. Since the time of British settlement, Gabarus also had Anglican (Church of England) and Roman Catholic churches. The interesting and often tempestuous history of Gabarus's churches has been examined thoroughly by Mary and George Laverys in Tides and Times (1991).

5. For more about this region's history, see: Rhodena Clark, "Gabarus," "The Gabarus Churches," People of Gabarus...; Cumming et al., 1984; D. Dow, 1975; Fergusson, 1958; Huntington, Looking Around; MacCormack, N. "Fishing in Gabarus"; Donalda MacDonald, Echoes of the Past; MacEachern, 1979; MacGillivray et al., 1985; J. L. Sullivan, et al., 1995; MacLean, 1991; Stella Mann, "Stella Mann papers" (including 1973, 1976, 1980, 1987), The Sixth Regiment..., Village Life...; Mathieson, 1967; Munden, "Post Offices...", "Postal History"; Paufler, 1978; and Vernon, 1903. Primary source documents: Burchell, "Correspondence and Papers..."; "Gabarouse Thrice Named"; MacDonald, Rev. M. B., "Marriages, Baptisms"; Morrison, "D. S. Morrison Papers"; Nicoll, "Journal 1893-1910"; and Winton, "Mrs. Mary Winton: Diary...". For an environmental report on the Gabarus area, see MacDonald, Joanne & MacKay, 1977. Many more materials are available at the Beaton Institute.

6. Between 1852 and 1890, Silas Rand (Anderson, Wm. P.,1919) recorded Mi'kmaq names for Framboise, Gabarus, St. Espirit, and Louisbourg. The first two were corruptions of the European names. Framboise was called *Tawanok* or *Tawaitk* meaning "the outlet or narrows." St. Esprit was called *Askuadich*, "clam harbour." (11, 24, 28, 77). I have not consulted primary source documents in my research on the Mi'kmaq and could easily have overlooked important data on Mi'kmaq land use and habitation. Bernard Gilbert Hoffman's The Historical Ethnography of the Micmac of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries is a good source of information on the Mi'kmaq inhabitants of Cape Breton before British settlement.

7. He is also credited with this story in A History of Fourchu (MacGillivray et al., 1985:13) although the authors question whether the couple whom Jane Severance visited were, in fact, John and Mary.

8. All these names are pronounced as an English speaker with no knowledge of French would read them (though Fourchu is pronounced "Forshie" by some of the older people). Even the Marie-Joseph Brook is called the "Mary-Joseph" in speech. The origin of the name Gabarus is unknown though not for lack of interest. Bruce Fergusson in a 1953 article speculated that Gabarus was the site of Cabot's landfall and its name is a corruption of "Cabot's Cross" (61-62). However, he was more cautious in Place-Names and Places of Nova Scotia (1967:225) See also: Anderson, 28; Thomas Brown, 25; Clark [1995a], 2; Lavery & Lavery, 161-63). For origins of other local place names, see: Cumming et al., 21-23; Thos. Brown; Fergusson (1967), MacGillivray et al., 9; and MacLean, 10.

9. West Newdy Quoddy or East Quoddy area on Quoddy Inlet, Halifax County, Nova Scotia.

10. Conditions on the ships are discussed in detail in Prebble's The Highland Settler and in Edwin C. Guillet's The Great Migration: The Atlantic Crossing by Sailing Ship 1770-1860 (1972).

11. The MacCormicks, who originated in Benbecula, believe that their ancestors converted to Protestantism at some unknown date. When I visited Benbecula in 1996, the MacCormicks living there were Roman Catholic and local people generally were surprised to hear of Protestant MacCormicks.

12. Michael Kennedy emphasized this point in a lecture on Highland emigration "...in contrast to the melancholy imagery conjured up by romanticists, the emigrating Gaels, more often than not, embraced the independence and opportunities offered by the New World with enthusiasm..." He quoted a song praising emigration composed by an emigrant who moved from Ross-shire to P.E.I. (Anonymous, "A New Perspective on Highland Emigration," 1998:9).

13. The difficulties of eking out a living in a land of forest and climatic extremes are examined in Charles W. Dunn's The Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia (1968:24-33], in Kathleen Lamont MacKinnon's A Short Study of the History and Traditions of the Highland Scots in Nova Scotia (1964:26), and in David Weale's "The Gloomy Forest" (1983).

14. The historian Rusty Bitterman (1988) says that in Middle River on the west side of Loch Bras d'Or, "Backlander" was a "geographical epithet" applied to later settlers on the lands away from the river, indicating "not just the

location of their holdings, or chronology of arrival, but, more importantly, their status and position in rural society" (43). There seems to have been less of a hierarchy among the rural Scots in the Gabarus-Framboise area. They were virtually all "backlanders." However, the term may have some pejorative connotations when used by villagers.

15. These observations come from my interviews with residents and former residents of the region in 1992 and 1995. As the Cape Breton Gaelic scholar Hector MacNeil commented in a personal communication, information on numbers of Gaelic-speakers tends to be impressionistic (June 1998). As Gaelic is primarily an oral language in Cape Breton, there are no official standards for fluency and we are dependent on speakers' often self-denigrating evaluation of their own linguistic ability. Unless a thorough survey is carried out by fluent Gaels, information will continue to be speculative.

16. Bitterman challenges notions of Highland Scots living in egalitarian, self-sufficient communities in Cape Breton. He stresses that they participated in a complex economy, saying: "The explanation for the massive growth of Cape Breton's shipbuilding industry in the mid-19th century is to be found not just in the demand created by local staples and the growth of trans-Atlantic and international trade but also in the ready supplies of cheap labour originating in the countryside" (51). The nineteenth-century Scots in the Gabarus-Framboise region, like those discussed by Bitterman, underwent brutally hard times and sometimes lived close to starvation (Cumming et al., 33-34).

17. According to Clark, when MacCormick grew old, he taught villagers to weave for themselves on looms built by Malcolm MacDonald, a local craftsman. (Paufler, 3).

18. See Appendix 2 for population statistics.

19. Haidee (Thurgood) Pearce lived in Gabarus until age 10 when she moved to Arichat, Cape Breton (1920s). She said that the speech of Gabarus was similar to both that of Newfoundland and of the Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence where she worked as a nurse in the early 1950s. When she moved to the Magdalens, she met a man who looked and talked so much like her uncle, Charlie Bagnell of Gabarus, that she first thought it was him (personal conversation, 1995).

20. Bitterman discusses the appeal of urban employment to Cape Breton's rural poor in the late 19th century, stating that "rural wages were not keeping abreast of industrial ones" (1988:53), a trend which continued throughout the twentieth century. He argues that not only were rural Cape Bretoners

responding to demands for workers but their availability (along with that of other rural labourers) made a great deal of economic development possible. "...Cape Breton's mobile, rural-based, labour force played a part in, among other things, manning the American fishing fleet, constructing Boston's streetcar suburbs, and bringing in the harvest on the Canadian prairies (52)." For more on the Maritime connection with Boston, see Alan Brookes's thesis (1978).

21. See Sarmela (1969) for an examination of the intense social life of rural Finnish youth (esp. 181-209).



Plate 3.1 Old Severance house with boat, Fourchu (Aug. 1992).



Plate 3.2 Arthur Severance's bungalow and old Severance house, Fourchu (Aug. 1992).



Plate 3.3 Boat built by Little Henry Severance, Arthur's father (Aug. 1992).



Plate 3.4 Murdoch MacDonald, 1848–1897 (photo courtesy of Marie Williams).



Plate 3.5 Rhodena Clark at home in Gabarus (Aug. 1995).



Plate 3.6 H. E. Baker lobster factory workers, Gabarus, circa 1906 (photo courtesy of Bruce Smith).

back row: Jim Reid, Donald John MacLeod, Angus MacLeod or John MacGillivray, Dave or Joseph MacGillivray, Wesley Cann, Harvey Munroe, Donald John MacKinnon, Kenny Morrison or Alfred Hardy, John Charles Harris, Charles Thurgood, Dan or Lauchlin MacQueen, Jack Robson
third row: Charles Grant, Willie Joseph MacDonald, Kenneth Morrison, Jane Bagnell (later Thorneycroft), Hattie Hardy, Ida MacGillivray, Margaret MacDonald, Lottie Cann, Minnie (Margaret) Bagnell, Naomi Cann, Rose Bagnell, John Gray Sr., Dick Siteman, Alex MacIntyre, George Myers
second row: Henry B. or Harry Bruce Bagnell, Jessie (Sutherland) MacVicar, Mary MacVicar, Effie "Teaspoon" MacIntyre or Effie Munroe, Mary Stewart, Annie Harris (later Gray), Edith MacDonald (later Smith, later MacDonald), Mary Effie MacDonald, Kitty or Kate Reid, Ona Pearson, Little Angus MacIntyre
first row, kneeling: Max Harris (killed at Vimy Ridge, WW I), John MacVicar, Norman Thorneycroft (killed at Passchendale, WW I)
Names are from lists by Annie (Harris) Gray via Bruce Smith and Stella Mann (Beaton Institute MG 12, 224, E/89-1225-19420). Where there is a discrepancy in names, the first is from Mrs. Gray's list and the second from Mrs. Mann's.



Plate 3.7 Clifton Bagnell of Gabarus in his seniors' apartment in Marion Bridge (Aug. 1995).



Plate 3.8 Gaelic-speaking country people: Annie MacLeod (mother of Flora, Chapter 4) and Mary "Belfry" MacCormick with a bag of wool after shearing sheep (photo courtesy of Sarah "Belfry" MacCormick).



Plate 3.9 Gaelic-speaking country people: John R. MacLeod and Kenneth MacLeod peddling meat in New Waterford (photo courtesy of Patsy MacLeod).



Plate 3.10 Ruth Reid of Gabarus in her seniors' apartment in Marion Bridge (Aug. 1995).

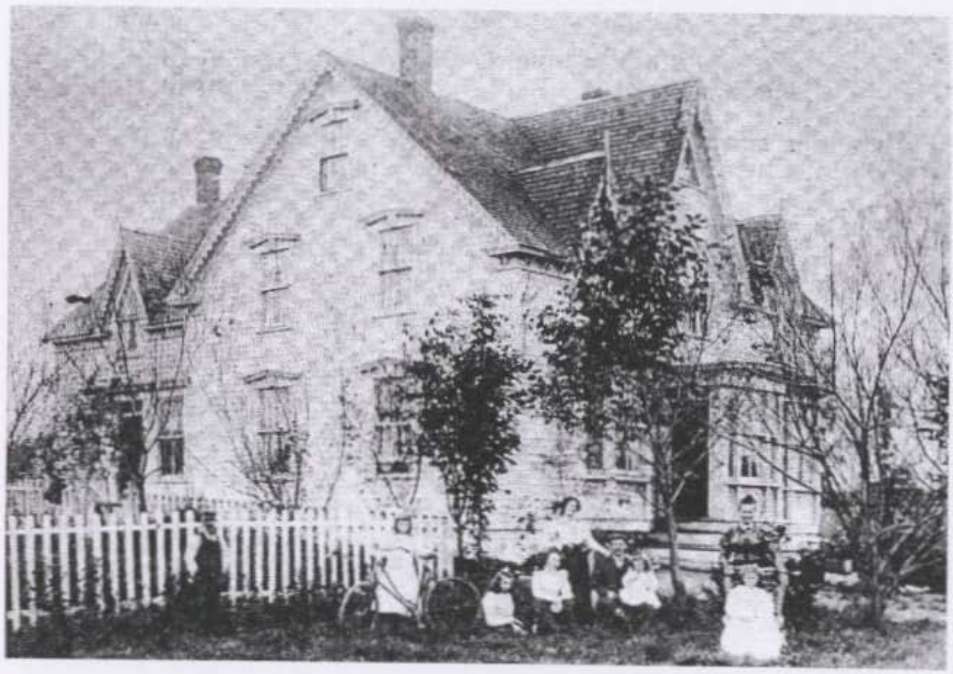


Plate 3.11 Morrison family in front of their home in Gabarus, circa 1900. Roderick Morrison was a well-to-do merchant (photo courtesy of Cape Breton's Magazine).

(l to r) Angus, a hired man, and Cassie, Nan, Isobel, Lena, Roderick (father), Perle, Melinda (mother), and Lottie Morrison. The girls were all sisters.



Plate 3.12 MacCormick family, Belfry, circa 1925. The MacCormicks farmed and fished (photo courtesy of Mary Maggie MacCormick).
back row: Hector, Mary (mother), Bessie, Abe, Aunt Kate MacCormick, Gordon
front row: Aunt Jessie MacCormick, Annie, John (father), Alison, Murray
(missing: John Angus)



Plate 3.13 Commercially produced grave marker at Gabarus Lake Zion Cemetery. Reads: "In Memory of Father and Mother/ NEIL MacDONALD/ Born in South Uist/ Scotland 1814/ Also His Wife/ ANN MacDONALD/ Born in South Uist/ Scotland 1821/ Died at Gabarous Lake 1899" (July 1992).

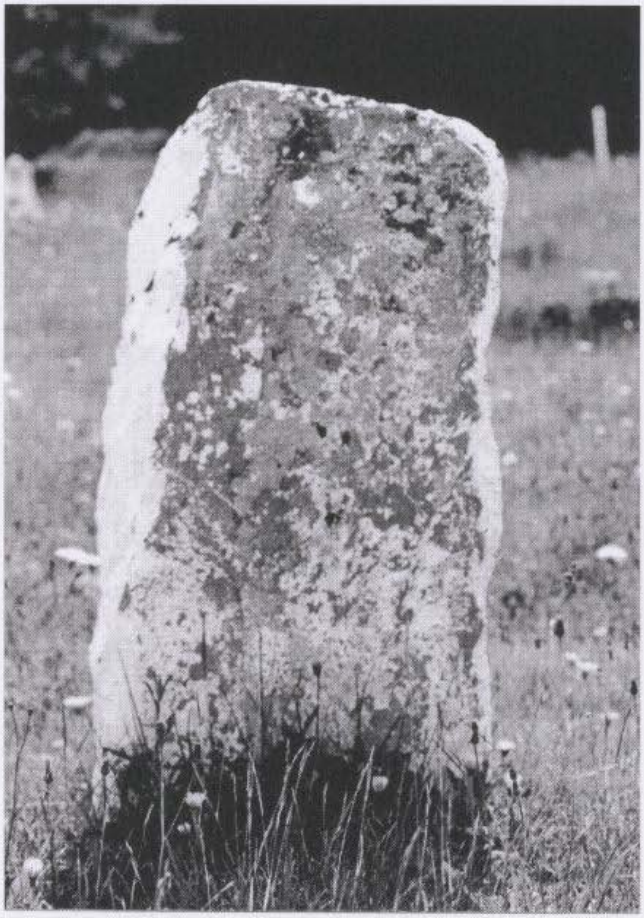


Plate 3.14 Uncarved flagstone as grave marker, Gabarus Lake Zion Cemetery (July 1992).



Plate 3.15 Uncarved stone as grave marker, Gabarus Lake Zion Cemetery (July 1992).

Chapter IV

"It was an evening's entertainment":

Storytelling Traditions in the Gabarus-Framboise Region

The elderly people now living in southeastern Cape Breton were born in an era when people made their own entertainment. The ability to tell stories skilfully was only one of a variety of accomplishments that a sociable person might possess. Music, whether instrumental, vocal, or as accompaniment to dances, was also vital to the social life of the community. Lloyd MacDonald recalled that during his youth, hard days spent working in a lobster factory were offset by carefree evenings.

> Yeah, there were about thirty girls working there and twenty men and they'd come from the country around here, mostly all boarding. It was great here for the two months in the summertime 'cause every evening you went out on the road, there was a dance. There used to be a big bridge down where the pavement is now. We used to go dancing on the bridge at night. Some fella'd land over there with a violin, play the violin. Dance over in the old hall. I remember going to six dances in one week and worked the next day. (laughs) Oh, golly, good times then! (RT92-36B, Aug. 13, 1992)

In the colder months, the music and dancing moved indoors to homes, schools, and halls.

Singing too was a popular pastime. The Scots especially reminisce about the region's Gaelic singing traditions. One elderly man recalled his father commenting on a neighbouring family known for its singing:" *'Tha a' chlann tha*

thall a'suid,' mar na h-èoin. 'Thig amach's [theann?] iad à tighinn ás na ceithir còraidhean dhe'n t-saoghal, is iad a'seinn mar na h-èoin.'" (His translation: " 'Those children over there, they're just like birds,' he said. 'You go out the door and from the four corners of the compass there's somebody coming singing.' ") (RT95-11B, Aug. 30, 1995). Although the English-speakers are less nostalgic about their singing traditions, the evidence shows that they too enjoyed singing. Ronnie MacEachern (1979) published a collection of twenty-one folk songs sung to him by Amby Thomas of Deep Cove. Virtually all the elderly people of Gabarus can recall remnants of Lillian Crewe Walsh's ballad "The Wreck of the John Harvey" which tells the dramatic tale of a 1912 shipwreck on the Gabarus coast (MacEachern, 14-16; Peacock, 950-51), further proof of a folk song tradition.[1] Besides singing secular songs, both anglophones and Gaels in this religious community regularly sang hymns.

Telling stories was another favourite form of entertainment. Whether during a lull at work, while on a visit to neighbours, or as part of an evening's socializing at a general store, people told tales, both serious and humorous. The best storytellers were valued guests and their names have been preserved in the region's oral history (See Appendix 1). A great many others, while not noted storytellers, could certainly make a contribution to an exchange of stories. When I asked Angus Archie MacQueen whether he recalled individuals who were referred to as storytellers, he replied:

> No, not just one individual but mostly all of them. That's what they did them times, you know, go ceilidh at night, telling stories, singing Gaelic songs. That's mostly what they done for a pastime. (RT95-17A, Sept. 1, 1975)

An examination of past storytelling settings and traditions in the Gabarus-

Framboise area shows that storytelling, a highly skilled and honoured activity, was a vital part of daily life.

4.1 Telling Stories to Children

The senior citizens of the Gabarus-Framboise district listened to a great many stories when they were children. When I asked whether stories had been told specifically to children, the responses varied. Some people, like Angus Archie whose mother told him bedtime stories, remembered clearly hearing children's stories. Others felt that adults had not directed stories at them. However, when asked if, as children, they had known specific popular folktales, all except one gave an unqualified "yes." To my question, "Did you know stories like, say, 'The Little Red Hen' or 'Three Bears,' that sort of thing?", Dan Alex MacLeod's response was a cautious, "Well, I heard of it, yeah" before explaining that he grew up in a Gaelic-speaking home and community (RT95-24A, Sept. 2, 1995). Of course, getting accurate information was complicated by the fact that I was asking elderly people for details about the first few years of their lives. As Dan Alex put it, "That's ninety-two years ago!"

Undoubtedly, storytelling practices differed from family to family. As well, memories are clouded because of the relationship between orality and literacy. Many of the parents of these people were literate and could both read stories and recall them from memory. Lloyd MacDonald's mother told him stories "mostly from books and from what her mother or grandmother, mostly her grandmother, I guess, had told her." Alison MacCormick recalled that his parents read tales like "Little Tin Soldier." Most houses had few if any children's books, though. Annie (Munroe) MacLean explained:

> I remember having only one book when I was a girl. My father brought it home from the store over at Gabarus, Albert Bagnell's store. I thought it was wonderful then. That's the only book that I can remember till I went to school and had the library box and could get books there. (RT95-14, Aug. 31, 1995)

Part of the confusion over people's sources of these well-known tales was due to the fact that all the people I interviewed attended English schools—Gaelic schools were non-existent—where they were exposed to the English children's folktale canon through readers, the "library box," and perhaps the teacher reading aloud. Arthur Severance said that his oldest sister, not his parents, would read him the popular folktales, indicating another possible link between school and the transmission of these stories. Edith (Mills) Strachan was unsure of how she learned English children's lore (folktales and rhymes) in a Gaelic home. Perhaps the process involved both home and school.

Ranald: ...when you were little, did you know stories like The Three Bears, The Little Red Hen or-?

Edith: Yes. Yes, we did. And all the nursery rhymes, you know, that were handed down from generation to generation.

Ranald: Were you brought up in an English-speaking household or a Gaelic—?

Edith: No, Gaelic continuously...

Ranald: So, the nursery rhymes and such would be in Gaelic, then?

Edith: Well, NO. I think somebody must have taught them a few of these. (RT 95-12B, Aug. 30, 1995)

She gave "Jack be nimble, Jack be quick" as an example of a nursery rhyme from her childhood.

Charlie Thurgood, who came from a mixed English and Scottish household, was more reflective than most about the stories of his childhood and

about the relationship between orality and literacy in Gabarus-Framboise society. His comments also provide insight into the creative process of storytelling generally.

Ranald: When you were a kid, did people tell fairy tales or fables or anything, other than from books?

Charlie: Oh, there were tales, I suppose [Hans Christian] Andersen and all those fellas got the old folk tales and formalized them and put them into print. But most of the tales they tell, you know, they're in the folk traditions of the people. So the people all knew these stories whether they were literate or not. Uncle Ranald [Ranald Murdoch MacDonald], I don't think he could write much more than his name, if he could do that. He just never went to school and he was an oral man.[2] He went around and talked with people and visited people and communicated and exchanged conversation and he would [learn] all these fairy tales and that sort of thing. They knew about them and if they didn't like the way the tale was told, they'd make up their own version and probably localize it and bring some local character into it to make him look foolish or something (both laugh). Just to compound his problems. Particularly some fella that was a little simple or something like that (laughs).

And then, of course, in our family we got some of the English tradition which is more formal. The old English rhymes and tales and that sort of thing were brought to us through Dad from his early days in English school when he was a kid in England, although he wasn't very old when he left. I think he was only seven when he left.

Ranald: So, did people tell you 'The Three Pigs' and 'Little Red Hen' and that sort of thing?

Charlie: Oh, yeah. 'This little piggie went to market' and all these rhyming stories. Everyone knew them, as I say, whether they were illiterate or whether they could read. They knew just from memory, from repetition and—.

Ranald: And they'd tell them to kids?

Charlie: They'd pass them on to kids. There was not so much reading out of books of children's stories or anything like that. They were all in the oral—, in the memory bank of the people and they'd tell you

> the stories and sing you the lullabies and teach you the little rhymes and that sort of thing. (RT 92-51B, Sept. 2, 1992)

Besides hearing popular folk tales, the children regularly listened to Bible stories. These stories also involved a combination of orality and literacy, in that adults like Lloyd MacDonald's and Dan Alex MacLeod's grandfathers were avid Bible readers but would tell the stories from memory in language comprehensible to children. Arthur Severance's mother read directly from the Bible and then would "change it a bit to make it more simple" (RT95-16A, Aug. 31, 1995). A great many people were deeply religious and well-acquainted with the Bible. Lloyd MacDonald expressed respect for both his grandfather's Biblical knowledge and his ability to interpret these stories.

> Lloyd: My father wasn't much of a storyteller but my grandfather was a pretty good storyteller but mostly, a lot of his stories was on the Bible.... I don't think he ever had a formal education, he went maybe a few days of school here, maybe he went to read and write and that was about it. But he could read the Bible and all those big names, I can't pronounce them but he could. It was funny though for a fella that had no education that he could do those things.
>
> Ranald: So, did he tell you the stories out of his head then or—?
>
> Lloyd: Oh, yeah. He was always telling stories about, you know, the Bible, things that happened long ago and we'd be there, I guess, all ears, listening to him. (RT95-21A, Sept. 1, 1995)

Bible stories and children's folk tales were popular within families. As well, adults entertained children with stories containing themes which were typical of adult conversation, such as personal reminiscences and local humour. Haidee (Thurgood) Pearce recalled that her father told funny stories to his children, "I think he made up most of them," while her mother "used to tell us stories about when she was growing up, when she was a little girl living in Malquish" (RT95-1B, June 6, 1995). But what the elderly people recalled most

vividly from their childhoods was simply listening to the stories exchanged among adults. Visiting, especially during the winter months, was a major pastime in earlier years. Children were not excluded from most adult conversation, although they were primarily listeners and not speakers. The storytellers of today learned much of their art while listening to their elders speak to each other in a highly entertaining manner during house visits.

4.2 House Visits and Ceilidhs

Virtually everyone to whom I talked associated storytelling with visiting. Lloyd MacDonald explained:

> You know, in the old days, they would come to the house and there was no television, no radio. The good storytellers would come and they could talk till midnight without telling the same story over. We had an old fella down here, old John Rafuse, and he could tell sea stories for a whole week at a time... Oh, I can remember him from the day I was three or four years old. Pretty nearly every Sunday that I can remember, you'd see poor old John coming at nine o'clock on Sunday morning and he was good till twelve o'clock that night. And he could tell you stories all day and he had some pretty good ones too. I guess he used to stretch the truth a bit. (RT95-21A, Sept. 1, 1995)

Charlie Thurgood also told of guests telling stories at his home. Like Lloyd he emphasized both their talent as entertainers and their ability to tell numerous stories.

Ranald: Do you remember your father telling ghost stories?

Charlie: Not particularly, he wasn't much for telling stories himself, you know. As I say, when some visitors would come around to the house, there was always two or three fellas come around and Dad was a great listener. He'd sit and listen to these stories and become part of them, you know, stimulate his memory. But I remember a number of people, a few in particular, who'd come and they'd sit for hours and just tell these stories, whether they were ghost stories or sailing stories or fiddling stories or- And most of these old

> friends of Dad's had been to sea and were fairly worldly wise. A lot of them had been all over the world sailing and into various ports and they were quite in tune with the ways of the world. But they were great storytellers and they'd have great [stories], particularly the humorous stories that you'd get a laugh out of. They weren't very serious.
>
> But it was an evening's entertainment. Really, it was TV and radio, it was the TV and radio of the time. One of those fellas would come in and they could talk about things on a fairly broad level. They were familiar with a lot of things and a lot of places and, at that stage, nothing was very awesome as far as they were concerned. They'd weathered a lot of storms and been in and out of a lot of ports in their day.
>
> So it was certainly entertaining, you know, for a little fella around there to hear these fellas talking about their stories. Dad himself, he'd never sit down and directly tell you a story unless someone else was there to stimulate him and he'd come up with something. (RT95-15, Sept. 2, 1992)

Both Lloyd and Charlie said that their childhood homes had been places where men gathered to tell stories although in neither case was the host himself a storyteller. Charlie's description of his father as "a good listener" indicates that telling stories is an interactive process which depends on having a good audience as well as a good performer. A person who appreciated stories attracted storytellers. Linda Dégh who studied oral narrative in eastern Europe and the United States, explained that storytellers, by which she meant prominent narrators of folktales, sought receptive listeners.

> Storytellers I have known were performing artists and natural entertainers of responsive audiences, unlike tellers of sensitive personal testimonial narratives such as legends or life experiences. These storytellers became recognized because it was their personal need to practice their art. If no one came to their houses, they went to the pub, the old folk's home, the soup kitchen, the market, wherever people gathered to seek an audience. (1995:10)

Lena (Rafuse) MacLeod and her husband, Jimmy had vivid memories of storytellers in the Belfry area sitting in kitchens entertaining listeners.

Ranald: Did you have storytellers out around here or what kind of stories did you—?

Jimmy: Oh, there was quite a good storyteller, there was an old MacIntyre—old Dan MacIntyre and Lauchie MacDonald.

Lena: Yes, he'd start to tell a story. He smoked a pipe, you know, and he had those long pieces of wood that he'd cut off just for lighting the pipe, that he'd put in the Waterloo stove. So he'd sit down in front of the Waterloo stove and he'd start to tell this story. And he'd put his wood stick in the fire to get the match to light his pipe. And he'd go get his pipe and he'd light it and put it down, he'd be telling the story. That's the only puff he ever took out of it. By the time he went to take another puff, the light would be out again.

Jimmy: He'd have to light it again.[3] (RT92-4B, July 22, 1992)

Lengthy storytelling sessions in homes usually took place at times when there was a break in the work cycle. Lloyd MacDonald mentioned that storytelling was a popular activity in his home—obviously, not a Presbyterian one—on Sundays: "[A]pparently they'd always head for our place on Sunday. Never missed that we'd have somebody on Sunday.... And that's all they'd do, they'd sit there around the house and they'd maybe smoke and tell stories" (95-21A). Arthur Severance pointed out that there was not just a day but a season for visiting and telling stories.

> Well, in the days when I was growing up, you made your own entertainment. I was a young lad before radio came along. Radio crippled it to some extent but not too much. But in the fifties when the "idiot box"[4] arrived, she went downhill faster. It did! Now you would have a lot of house-to-house visiting particularly in an area like this now, you take late in the fall and through the winter. Late in the fall, the fishing was over such that you weren't fishing every day, eh. And of course, the winter, your boat was hauled out and all you had to do was cut firewood and hauled it home and brought it in and burned it. So you kept yourself warm three ways that way (laughs).
>
> But you had to have your food supply practically in for the winter. We had some stores that were reasonably stocked but not to the extent that you could depend on them for to go in and buy what you wanted any day

> of the week, see. At that time, well, all the freight in and out was coming by water: trading schooners, small steamers and so on.
>
> So with this house-to-house visiting and the Cape Breton ceilidh—. And during the time, sure to God, you know, sometime in the evening, someone would say something that would tickle everybody's funny bone, what? (chuckles.) (RT92-46A, Aug. 17, 1992)

Although house visits increased during the winter,[5] work continued even while people socialized, as Ruth Reid explained while discussing her youth in Gabarus.

> Well, they used to go out in the evening and take their knitting with them or whatever they were doing and they'd be there for, I guess, probably sometimes till twelve o'clock, till midnight, just talking. And the women would be knitting and the men, the fishermen and anyone that was going fishing, they used to be knitting lobster heads for their traps[6]... . That's all they done, they visited and ceilidhed around and then, well by the time the women was through their work, they were too tired to do anything else.[7] (RT95-25A, Sept. 4, 1995)

Both Arthur Severance and Ruth Reid used the word ceilidh which refers to the Gaelic equivalent of the house visit. Ceilidh is a difficult word to define exactly as people use it in slightly different ways. Dwelly's, the most comprehensive Gaelic dictionary, states that *célidh* is both a noun meaning "gossiping, visiting, visit. 2. [s]ojourning. 3. [p]ilgrimage. Air cheilidh, *on a visit, gossiping...*" and a verb meaning "[v]isit." The word ceilidh (usually dropping the accent mark) is used by anglophones throughout the British Isles and North America though, as the authors of one contemporary Gaelic text explain, the popular use of the word has been removed from its original meanings:

> English has adopted some other Gaelic words. One of these is **cèilidh**,[8] which originally meant a house-gathering at which tales were told, songs were sung, and music was played. Nowadays a ceilidh usually means a concert of Highland music and song. It is also used in Gaelic as a term for visiting. (Robertson & Taylor, 1993:45; author's emphasis)

The people of east Cape Breton are familiar with the use of the word "ceilidh" to describe a concert at which entertainers play traditional music. The tourist industry also uses the term house party to label a cultural performance, somewhat less formal than a concert, and less self-consciously Scottish than a public ceilidh. At such an event, the tourist presumably suspends disbelief and pretends to be in a house rather than in a hall or hotel lounge. However, when the people of the Gabarus-Framboise area use the word ceilidh, they are usually referring to their own traditional gatherings.[9]

The simplest meaning of the word ceilidh in Cape Breton is simply a visit. Arthur Severance, an English-speaker who had a Gaelic-speaking mother, explained,

> ...ceilidh was a Gaelic term for a visit, a house-to-house visit, you know. There's families meeting and the old fella, the old people, would say, well, "Come ceilidh" and that just simply meant "Come in and visit us." (RT92-46A, July 24, 1992)

Lloyd MacDonald, who was raised in an English-speaking household, agreed with Arthur.

Ranald: Among the Gaelic-speaking Scots, the people back in Gabarus Lake and Framboise and that area, when I say, "When were stories told?", the first word that comes to mind is "ceilidhs."

Lloyd: Ceilidh, yeah. When you'd get together for a visit.

Ranald: Yeah. Did you use the term ceilidh or was—?

Lloyd: Oh, yeah. We used it too.

Ranald: So if people came over for an evening—.

Lloyd: Oh, they'd visit. They'd come to visit my father or my grandfather. They used to call it, "Come for a ceilidh" then.

Ranald: And what would a ceilidh consist of?

Lloyd: Well, they'd just come and, like we are doing here, sitting in the house talking, drinking tea. That's about it, that's all. That's all, mostly what they'd do, they'd come into the house and they'd have a cup of tea and they'd talk about the weather and sometimes they'd talk about their neighbours and anything that's going on. And that's the only way we had of [knowing] what was going on in the outside world because maybe the old fella was getting the paper and he was telling us what [was going on], maybe the news would be a month old but still it was news. It was welcome. (RT95-21A, Sept. 1, 1995)

Others said that a ceilidh was more than a simple visit. Christene (MacLeod) MacLean describes herself as have some Gaelic, while her sister-in-law Annie (Munroe) MacLean says that she does not speak Gaelic. They told me about ceilidhs wherein large groups of young people sat in rings on floors. Annie agreed with Christene who said that for an event to be a ceilidh, it needed " [m]usic, singing, and stories, storytelling and all this. There was a crowd" (RT 95-14A, Aug. 31, 1995). Dan Alex MacLeod, a fluent Gaelic-speaker, agreed. I sat in his kitchen one morning and asked:

Ranald: What is a ceilidh?

Dan Alex: Oh, a ceilidh is a bunch of people coming here, singing Gaelic songs, maybe telling stories, maybe have a dance. That's a ceilidh.

Ranald: Was every visit a ceilidh?

Dan Alex: I don't know, I- No! Like you coming here today, I wouldn't say that's a ceilidh. Or anybody coming here. This would be in the evening after work, it was always called a ceilidh.

Ranald: But it would have to have that element of entertainment in it?

Dan Alex: Oh, yes.

Ranald: The songs and stories, music and whatever, some part of that?

Dan Alex: Oh, yes. It was entertainment. (RT95-24B, Sept. 2, 1995)

Dan Alex's and Lloyd's contrasting opinions about whether my visit was a ceilidh may have been influenced by the fact that I visited Lloyd in the evening and Dan Alex in the morning. As well, my interview with Lloyd involved considerable storytelling whereas at the point when I asked Dan Alex about ceilidhs, we had been discussing social history. My visit with Lloyd was closer to Dan Alex's definition in that it was an evening visit in which many stories were told.

(John) Soutor Strachan, another fluent Gael, lives less than five kilometres overland from Dan Alex. His explanation of ceilidh indicates that the contradictions in meaning are not due simply to anglophones and Gaels using the word differently. During a Sunday afternoon visit, Soutor discussed ceilidhs in some detail.

Ranald: What made a house visit a ceilidh? Now, if I just lived down the road and came over and sat down and had an evening with you, would that be a ceilidh or what's a ceilidh?

Soutor: Yes, yes. You'd be a ceilidh, that you would discuss some happenings of the place or- Yes.

Ranald: Would it take a certain number of people to make a ceilidh or—?

Soutor: Not necessarily, not necessarily. You could have a good ceilidh by yourself and another person discussing happenings and different things that would interest one another if you were—.

Ranald: Now, were they planned sometimes?

Soutor: Planned? Well, I don't know.

Ranald: I mean, would you tell your neighbours, "Come ceilidh tonight?" or—?

Soutor: Well, they'd plan. They'd make a plan. Probably they'd go to visit and they used to play cards around here [as a] pastime quite often. They did different games, mostly Cribbage and Auction Forty-Five and Auction Five Hundred and Fifty-eight. It was very much in

the wintertime, this Fifty-Eight, they call it "Fifty-Eight," yes, I think the game is Sixty-Three. But anyway, they'd gather- Many's a game we had here. The friends would come from next door and from different families around and play.

You can call a ceilidh two people discussing and telling just—. It's more or less passing the evening, you know, the time in the evening, long winter evenings and you went out to visit a friend. Usually there'd probably be two go out for a visit at a ceilidh. But I would say that one person could come to the ceilidh and make it a ceilidh. There was an old expression then,"*"bha mi céilidh,"* "I was visiting so-and-so." " Well, in Gaelic it would be, "*Bha mi air céilidh aig Iain Strachan.*" "*Bha mi air céilidh,*" I was for a visit to John Strachan's. Well, you can go and say your name, like you visited me here today. But a ceilidh, usually it happened in the evening, it began in the evening.

Ranald: It was usually in the winter, was it?

Soutor: Yes, more or less the ceilidh time was. You know, it was after the summer's work was done... (RT95-11B, Aug. 30, 1995)

Whether ceilidhs were quiet visits or large gatherings, people remember them fondly. Mary Ann (MacDonald) MacLeod used the word to describe both visits from next-door neighbours and large gatherings, none of which were dependent on an invitation. She still lives in her family home on the shore of Gabarus Lake, the scene of many lively evenings. She warmly recalled the sight of visitors approaching in the night. Mary Ann and her family would "just get chairs for everyone to sit down in. My mother always had bannock and corn cake and that stuff ready, serve tea and- Oh, it was great, you know. You'd see them coming down the ice with the lantern." When the guests arrived, they used to "sit around telling stories and laughing" (RT 95-19B, Sept. 1, 1995).

Ceilidhs were undoubtedly fun but, as Lloyd MacDonald implied (above), they also had an important role in the exchange of information. The entertainment came only after the sharing of news. Joe Neil MacNeil described

the ceilidhs of his youth in Big Pond, Cape Breton in Tales until Dawn (1987). Joe, who later became a prominent storyteller, valued ceilidhs because they were settings for telling stories and for entertainment generally (24-31) but he emphasized that ceilidhs had an important function in the dissemination of news (12-15; see also Martha MacDonald, 1986:69, and Natalie MacPherson, 1987:278). Soutor Strachan in his discussion of ceilidhs also stressed that this aspect of the house visit.

Soutor: They used to have some great evenings at the homes—ceilidhs and little parties, milling frolics, summer picnics—once or twice in every school section to gather up a little money to pay for a teacher—and box socials and the likes of that, everybody competing to get the girls' boxes for to help bring in a little more money.[10]

Ranald: Can you tell me about ceilidhs? What was a ceilidh? What would a ceilidh be like?

Soutor: Well, as I remember, it would be talking about the happenings of the place. And then very seldom did I hear too much discussions about politics, only coming on election time. There'd be a little heated arguments probably occurred then, but otherwise it would blow over and after it's over and done with, they'll be back to normal again. But then they'd discuss farm work, discuss conditions on the road, and oh, they'd always find lots to say. I remember quite well people coming, older people, coming to visit my father and mother, and they'd have lots to talk about, probably about their own young days, you'd hear some pretty good stories about what was going on, the happenings in their own time, although they'd probably be some cross at the youngsters of the day too, what they were doing. But anyway, they'd probably sing you a couple of Gaelic songs. If somebody was interested in singing and would like to hear, they'd let go. There was some around here that could really do it, too.

Ranald: I understand Framboise had a lot of really good singers.

Soutor: Oh, they did so. They did so. I've often heard the expression that there was never was a place in Cape Breton Island that you could hear—. This came from these ministers that served here. And

they'd walk for miles to hear them. I had a cousin, he was a Strachan too. He lived next door here. He was about the best English—, he had Gaelic too but when he'd sing English—I'm referring now to church, to service in church, as a soloist—he was supreme.

Ranald: So what else did they do at the ceilidhs?

Soutor: Drink tea! (chuckles) Yes, tea time. Well, they would talk, it's simply hard to remember what they'd talk about. They'd talk about everything concerning the community or the place, if somebody arrived from somewheres or if somebody—. Oh, there was different things to talk about, it'd be hard to remember.

Ranald: Did they have instrumental music?

Soutor: Well, mainly two, probably three: the accordion, the pipes, and the fiddle.

Ranald: And did people dance at a ceilidh or just listen to the music?

Soutor: Oh, no —— well, there'd be some during the ceilidh that if they had the music, they'd clear a place in the dining room or in one of the rooms and put a square set on. And stepdance, there was some good stepdancers around here, the women as well as the men'd get out and tap it down on the floor. You don't see that today, that's for sure.

[Pause while I turn tape over.]

Ranald: When they told stories at ceilidhs, did they tend to be about their own lives or people around, that sort of thing, or what?

Soutor: Well, there would be a discussion about their own lives. Of course, the question would be asked by the others, some of the party about, they'd tell a little concerning their own family or what happened or conditions in the household and that. Well, there was lots of discussions, there was no doubt about it. I remember them coming here and sit down in the corner and they'd talk till eleven o'clock at night.

Ranald: Were there people around here who were known as storytellers?

Soutor: Well, there was. To my knowledge, there must have been because

they could tell you stories that were really good, you know. It was interesting to young people and it was the Gaelic language that they were speaking and those of us that could understand the Gaelic would listen in, too.

Ranald: What kind of stories were they telling?

Soutor: Oh, my dear. Well, I don't know. There was, oh, happenings in the community as a whole, if there was something happened or something occurred that, something would happen that shouldn't be put on a tape, so— (laughter).

[After some discussion, we establish that he is not talking about either scandal or off-colour stories but is thinking of a specific instance of a man making a witty remark at the expense of his neighbours.] (RT95-11A&B, Aug. 30, 1995)

Many people related childhood memories of listening to adults telling stories at house parties and ceilidhs. Angus Archie MacQueen was one of several who told of being so frightened as a child by ghost stories told at ceilidhs that, "Sometimes, you'd be scared to go home." (RT95-17A, Sept. 1, 1995).[11] One anonymous Cape Breton writer stressed the importance of the mixed age group at these events in passing on folklore, "Young and old attended, making the céilidh house essential in the transmission of traditional song, music and story" ("How you make a Céilidh...," 9). However, the Cape Breton ceilidh did not belong to a romantic time and place in which the young all sat spellbound at the feet of their elders, eagerly awaiting the next song or story. Christine (MacLeod) Abrams said of ceilidhs, "I suppose they did tell stories. I don't know that us as children paid that much attention to the grown-ups. We just had our own playtime and way of living" (RT92-39B, Aug. 13, 1993).

Joe Neil MacNeil viewed ceilidhs as significant in creating a strong sense of community. "...I still maintain that the house-visits were good for bringing people together and keeping them happy and that they kept them close to each

other and in harmony physically and spiritually; I see it as a great loss that so much of this has declined and grown so rare" (17). However, Joe Neil said that he was unusual in that he spent time with older people at ceilidhs in Big Pond, "When young people, two or three or four of them were together, they would spend more time in their own company and socialize more among themselves" (13). Social interaction at Gabarus ceilidhs followed a similar pattern according to Ruth Reid.

Ranald: Did they tell stories at ceilidhs?

Ruth: Oh, yes. They used to be, now, the men, a lot of the younger fellas would come down, they used to come to our place and my father used to be telling them stories about when he was sailing you know, years ago, and the men'd be talking, they'd be talking about fishing and whoever was sailing they'd be talking about that and—. My father died in 1935. He was an invalid for fourteen years with arthritis.

Ranald: Oh. —— Can you remember any of the stories he used to tell?

Ruth: No. They'd be talking. Like he'd be sitting down, they'd be around. They'd be talking. Of course, we'd be, some of the girls probably and the younger fellas would be down and we'd be probably in the room talking [i.e., the living room]. And we used to play cards, I never played cards in my life. One time, we weren't allowed to have cards in the house and then later years I could never learn. But we used to play a game with cards, it was called Rook and there was different colours from one to fourteen and four'd play. And we'd sometimes be playing that and we wasn't paying any attention to what the men were talking about. No. (RT95-25A, Sept. 4, 1995)

Adults and children spent considerable time together at ceilidhs and house parties while youths—with the exception of those with a special interest in adult activities—often kept their own company in a separate room. Undoubtedly young people courted at ceilidhs as they did at *veglia*, the tightly

chaperoned, adult-controlled evening visits in Italy (Falassi, 1980:105-143). Margaret MacPhail, an elderly Cape Breton author, brought attention to the courtship aspect of ceilidhs in her novel, Loch Bras D'or (1970). In a chapter about a ceilidh at a home with two teenage girls, a visitor observes, "I'm not the least astonished the lads out number (sic) those beautiful lassies two to one; where there is honey, the bees will gather" (20).

Despite the voluntary segregation of the youths, house visits were still primary venues for transmission of stories and it was here that children got a schooling in the community's oral narratives. Visiting was an important activity. Both hosts and visitors were expected to behave according to well-understood social roles. Today in mainstream North American society, the word "visitor" has a passive quality, one who simply goes to another's house and is cared for by the host, a role not entirely different from a guest at a hotel.[12] But, as the anonymous writer quoted above explained, "...one does not 'go for a ceilidh' but 'makes a ceilidh.' A (sic) old-time visitor does not expect to be entertained but contributes news, stories, a song or tune" ("How you make...," 9).[13]

Comments made by two elderly people from Gabarus Lake and Belfry reveal people's expectations of visitors in this region during the first half of the twentieth century. When I asked Mary Ann MacLeod why ceilidhs do not happen any more, she replied, "I don't know in the world. The younger people have no interest in that kind of work. Now, the TV takes up a lot of their time." And when Alison MacCormick and I were discussing my great-uncle, Ranald Murdoch MacDonald, Alison complimented him, saying:

> Ranald was a good visitor. A real good neighbour. When we were living in the old house, you know, my father's house, an old house- I can remember one cold, cold day in the winter, you'd look out and there was Ranald coming. And we had an old Waterloo stove and it was just humping. It was full of [pine?]. Good heater. Ranald came in and he was

> sitting down (laughs). Whatever happened to the stove, it made one crack. "Lord save us!" he said. "The frost is coming out of it!" (All laugh) "Lord save us!"[14] (RT95-3A, Aug. 27, 1995)

Visiting then was work and people were evaluated on their abilities as visitors.[15]

4.3 Other Storytelling Venues

The community had other important storytelling venues besides ceilidhs and house visits. Mary Maggie MacCormick (Mary, the daughter of Maggie, see Appendix 3) ran a post office out of her farmhouse in Framboise Intervale (Plates 4.1 and 4.2). She explained:

> Oh, they'd come before the mail, waiting for the mail to arrive. It was coming from Grand River. And they'd be here before it would come and then they'd have to wait until that's sorted. There was eight families then and there's only four now, getting mail, that would get mail. So, there'd be manys a story told. (RT92-8A, July 27, 1982)

She explained that in the winter, when night came early and the mail was often late, people "told ghost stories a lot of the time, which I didn't like to hear."[16] She also remembered the wit and playful nature of her neighbours, which was typical of Cape Breton Scots. Witty comments often inspired anecdotes (as in the case of Ranald and the stove).[17]

> But we had one fella driving the mail, taking the mail from Fourchu, and he had a wooden leg. And this day my mother says, "I wonder"—His name was Angus Stewart—"I wonder what Angus"—It was hailing and raining and it was miserable—"I wonder what will he say today." He came in, took that chair, took it over in the corner, then went on his one knee, going to pray (laughs). Ah, poor Angus, he's gone. And a lot of them, mostly all of the mail drivers that was around are passed away. (RT92-8A)

As in other rural communities throughout North America, general stores were popular settings for storytelling.[18] As Lloyd MacDonald explained,

merchants recognized this function to the degree that stores were laid out with storytelling in mind.

Ranald: You were telling me—I wanted to get this on the tape recorder but I missed it—you were telling me about the men telling stories in the stores. Can you just tell me about that again?

Lloyd: Down there around Gabarus there.... They didn't here [Fourchu] but down in Gabarus, there was—I don't know how many—maybe seven, eight stores there and each store had, well, maybe four, five, six, probably ten men used to go to that store and they'd sit around the evening, they'd tell stories. Down at the Barachois, there was three stores. There was John Grant's and Will MacDonald's. They were, well, probably a hundred feet apart and right across the road from Will MacDonald's was Joe Gray's and they too had their own customers. They'd come in, I don't think they spent any money but they just sat around talking the evening. If somebody came in, they'd watch what they were buying and—. Well, that's the way life was in Gabarus.

And up on the Hill, it was the same. Dave Hardy's, it was the same. He had a store there. He had his crew. And today there's no stores only Annie Hardy's. Is Annie Hardy still going?[19]

Ranald: Yeah, I think so, I've been driving by and I've seen the door open.

Lloyd: Yes, I've seen the door open and that's about the end of it. There was a—.

Ranald: So, did they have chairs for the—?

Lloyd: No, they had seats made around the store, right around the sides of the store, around the store, wooden benches, and that's what they used. Benches. I don't remember ever seeing any chairs there. And then upstairs, over at John Grant's store, they had the barbershop and Leonard Gardener used to cut hair up there. He had a barber chair there and there'd always be a gang there. Five cents to get their hair cut.[20] (RT95-23A, Sept. 1, 1995)

Although Lloyd said that there had not been storytelling sessions in the stores of Fourchu, Arthur Severance, who was born fifteen years before Lloyd, could

remember when they occurred regularly. He also said that lobster factories around Cape Breton were good places for hearing stories.

Ranald: When did you tend to hear stories? When did you hear stories, what kind of occasions?

Arthur: Well, at the time I heard that story down north there, it was just one of those days when, well, just after a storm and a bunch of fellas around.[21] And they were just sitting around there, spinning yarns. Some of them would be talking about something that actually happened you know. And they'd go on and some of them would have to go on from there to tall tales. And that'd be one instance, something like that. But mostly, it would be around the lobster factory at home now, and this store that was close to the factory. You'd catch a few of them there on slack time or in bad weather or something.

Ranald: So people would just go into the store and sit around and tell stories?

Arthur: Oh, yeah, yeah. And the old factory boss, Steve Holmans, great big man, must have weighed close to three hundred pounds. He was a big man. And he liked to listen to them, get these fellas going, yeah. (RT95-6B, Aug. 28, 1995)

Wakes were another popular storytelling venue as they were in many countries.[22] Stories of the uncanny were especially popular among those who sat up with the corpse. Jimmy Philip MacLeod explained:

> They used to have a wake in the house for three nights, three nights before the funeral. And the week of the wakes, everybody went, you know. It was all night long! And there always was somebody there that, that could tell stories, you know. Keep people awake. (RT92-5B, July 22, 1992)

In essence, when people had the time and place to tell stories, they did—a situation which has not changed greatly over the years.

4.4 Contemporary Storytelling and Storytellers

Storytelling is still a lively tradition in the Gabarus-Framboise area. Stories usually emerge whether one is visiting an old couple, leaning against a car with local men outside a sweltering community hall, or just sitting in a kitchen while a housewife prepares dinner. Many people regularly use narratives either to illustrate points in conversation or simply to entertain. Although most members of the community are, at the least, competent storytellers, they reserve the title of storyteller for the elderly and for Gaelic speakers. Their storytelling is informal, face-to-face, and part of everyday life. No narrators are paid for their art nor do they perform in festivals and other settings which require distance from their audience.

One of the prime storytelling venues remains the house visit. Despite complaints that the ceilidh has disappeared, not only is visiting neighbours a major pastime but storytelling and exchanging news are parts of every visit. One middle-aged Fourchu couple who I barely knew, expressed great disappointment when after I knocked on their door I discovered that I was at the wrong house. In rural Canada, many people look forward to visits. Country people live by rules which sometimes differ from urban social norms. The Chicago-based advice columnist, Ann Landers, has often said, "An uninvited guest is an unwanted guest," definitely not Gabarus-Framboise etiquette.

The day of the large ceilidh with an inter-generational crowd converging on one house has passed, due to such factors as the decline in and aging of the population, the cars which allow younger people to visit peers outside the community, and, of course, television. However, though every house has a television, rarely was one on when I arrived. When televisions were on, in all

but two or three instances, the homeowners turned them off immediately as I entered. Even in the exceptional cases, the television was only background noise and not a focus of attention—although I was occasionally distracted by the antics of Wile E. Coyote and The Roadrunner.

Visiting almost always involves the exchange of stories as well as "tea," a small meal (served at any time of day) which includes very strong tea—never coffee—a few rolls or sandwiches and a plate of home-cooked sweets.[23] Contemporary evening visits, with their exchanging of news, storytelling, and the inevitable "cup of tea," seem to have changed little from the more intimate ceilidhs of an earlier era described by Soutor Strachan. (In Chapter V, I examine a contemporary house visit.)

Storytelling does go on at public gatherings, such as the Volunteer Fire Department Barbecue, seniors' gatherings at any of the community halls, or the annual milling frolic. However, this storytelling is less formal and takes place on the periphery. It exists as an aspect of communication among individuals in small groups. At the Gabarus Lake milling frolic, the community celebrates its heritage and raises funds for the church by re-enacting an old work ritual. Older people sit around a table rhythmically pounding a length of wool cloth and singing Gaelic songs, just as some used to do when they had to shrink a newly-woven cloth in their youth (see Plate 4.3). The milling table is the focus of the evening and the singers are the main entertainers.[24] However, storytelling takes place in the chairs spread throughout the hall and in the parking lot outside. At any festive gathering, one hears the buzz of conversation regularly broken by hearty laughter as humorous tales come to an end. In fact, people share narratives wherever they gather, just as they did in the past—in the fishing

shanties of Gabarus and Fourchu, outside the United and Presbyterian churches, or at the gas pumps by MacKinnon's Store in Framboise.

Residents also take their stories with them when they leave their community, whether to go to Sydney or St. Peter's to shop, to attend fiddle concerts anywhere on the Island, or, in the case of those who are not teetotallers, to spend some time at a bar. In these places, they participate in a greater Cape Breton storytelling tradition sharing serious or humorous tales with others.

In a sense, the community reaches beyond its geographic borders. Many who move away retain links with the area. My grandparents, Fred and Dolena Thurgood, moved into Sydney in the 1920s. They lived on Warne Street, just off Alexandra, the main route from Gabarus. Their home served for over four decades as a stopping point for Gabarus-Framboise residents with business to attend to in town. They also boarded young people coming to Sydney to attend school or to work, helping them stay close to their rural roots as they adjusted to urban life. When Dolena entered her nineties, she happily moved to "The Cove" nursing home, a favourite place for the Gaelic-speakers of her community to spend their final years (although its residents came from many communities and spoke at least three different native languages—English, French, and Gaelic). Other community residents, many of whom left in the 1930s, retain homes in the area and are welcomed each summer as though they had never left. Residents have no special words or expressions to distinguish summer returnees from permanent residents. I only discovered who had returned from Sydney, Boston, or British Columbia when a casual reference was made in conversation. A shared history and oral culture allows former residents to fit in immediately upon their return.

4.5 The Storytellers

I have classed community members into nine categories according to their use of narratives. These categories are not mutually exclusive though most people lean toward a particular one.

1) Enthusiast/performers are those with a deep interest in stories *per se*, who tell lengthy narratives, which may last from fifteen to twenty-five minutes, about a variety of topics. This category consists of two men from Fourchu, Arthur Severance and Lloyd MacDonald, who are recognized as storytellers throughout the community (see Chapters VI & VII). I spent a great deal of time with these two men and found that not only did they enjoy hearing and telling stories but they also liked talking about storytelling. Both provided considerable contextual information about storytelling situations.
2) Other specialized storytellers tell many stories, usually not as long, focusing on a narrower range of topics of personal interest. For example, Dan Alex MacLeod and Maggie MacQueen, both native Gaelic speakers, have numerous stories about supernatural occurrences (see Chapter VIII). Both can provide lengthy narratives on other topics but often direct the conversation to supernatural stories.
3) Typical raconteurs are not necessarily recognized as storytellers in the community. They have many short narratives on various topics which they can use skilfully in conversation. Each of these people has a few favourite themes (e.g., personal experiences, family history, rum-running, humorous anecdotes, or local characters) but also tells stories about various other topics. The majority of the area's older (and perhaps younger) residents fall into this

category. Roy, Florence, Jimmy, and Lena MacLeod, are all typical raconteurs (see Chapter V).

4) Other tradition bearers may not use narratives adeptly but may still be referred to locally as **people who "have stories."** These are generally Gaelic-speakers with considerable expertise in some area of traditional knowledge deemed valuable by both Scottish and English neighbours. The late Philip MacDonald of Gabarus Lake, a noted Gaelic singer and expert on Gaelic lore, was a prime example of a highly-regarded tradition bearer whose specialties were in Gaelic singing and knowledge about both healing and Gaelic traditions generally.
5) A minority of people in the community are **non-storytellers**, who rarely use narratives. Some members of this group have other cultural specialties such as music. Two of the area's highly regarded fiddlers are not storytellers.
6) **Oral historians** (not those who collect and provide written analyses of oral history) are experts on local history who can provide detailed descriptive accounts of "the old days." In most cases, they rarely use narrative but can give detailed accounts of what life used to be like. (This category is closely related to #4, above). Many women are oral historians who are very good at describing their earlier lives and who have considerable knowledge of the people who preceded them.
7) Rhodena Clark is a **local historian**, an amateur historian who researches both oral and written material and then writes about her region. She is also a storytelling oral historian who adds interesting tales, obtained in her documentary research, to her spoken repertoire.
8) The retired sea captain Bruce Smith and Christine Abrams, who worked as a domestic in Massachusetts, are **narrators of life stories**. The two provided

lengthy accounts of their life experiences when I interviewed them. In both cases, their stories were focused primarily on the topic of making a living. These life stories appear to be created partly by the interview situation—I do not expect that these people tell these lengthy stories to every visitor. In fact, Bruce has entertained me on different visits with humorous anecdotes about life in Gabarus. However, when I interviewed these two people, my style did not differ greatly from my usual. Their own interests guided the interviews, thus it is valid to regard their life stories as products of their storytelling and not of my interviewing method. In the past, I have recorded a few life stories from people in other parts of Canada and have occasionally heard a person relate his or her life story when I was simply talking with them.[25]

9) Michael MacKinnon, who with his wife Carolyn ran the Framboise store until they moved away in 1998, was the only specialized joke teller in the community. Though humorous anecdotes about known characters are the mainstay of local humour, jokes about anonymous people are rare. Mike is originally from East Bay, another small, rural Cape Breton community, and has lived in New Brunswick, Ontario, and the Yukon. He attributes his wide repertoire of jokes partly to his former career in insurance investment during which he heard many jokes at conferences (RT92-32B, Aug. 12, 1992). Mike also tells personal experience narratives and stories of locally happenings. The only other person in the community who told jokes to me is John Neil MacLean, not a specialist in this genre. John Neil commutes to Sydney where he works as an electrician and where he likely hears his jokes.[26]

Two important factors should be considered in regard to the above categorizations. First, as mentioned previously, I did not have access to all storytelling venues and therefore must have missed some types of storytellers.

Second, people's storytelling style is often affected by the interview situation. Some area residents were uncomfortable either with me or with the formality of the interview situation. More than one began telling stories only after the tape recorder was turned off. Perhaps a few were shy and did not have time to become comfortable with me. Some people, such as Buddy MacLeod and Philip MacDonald (both are now deceased) were highly recommended to me as people "with stories" but told me only the briefest narratives whether in interviews or during informal visits. This may have been because we were unable to develop a proper storytelling situation, because Gaelic (of which I know little) was their prime storytelling language, or because they were not narrators but people who possessed other oral lore of significance (as in category #4). Like most attempts to categorize human behaviour, this one is inexact.

Storytellers share many traditional skills with other community members. Most tradition bearers specialize in only a few traditions, some excelling in more than one. For instance, Arthur Severance was both an outstanding storyteller and a fine piper. Dan Alex The Bard MacDonald was both a Gaelic storyteller and a composer of songs, including the well-known "*Oran do Cheap Breatuinn*," (D. A. MacDonald, 10-13). Alex MacLean is a fiddler, a maker of fiddles, and a woodworker. The late Hector MacCormick and his son "J.C." were and are both storytellers and pranksters, their practical jokes providing more material for stories. Hector was also a Gaelic singer. His wife, Mary Maggie MacCormick was an oral historian, a knitter, and a Gaelic singer. Patsy MacLeod is an outstanding quilter who teaches her craft to younger women and is also a good cook and a teller of personal experience narratives. Other traditional skills common to this area include: card playing, cooking, berry picking, farming, fishing (sport and commercial), gardening, knowing genealogies, house building

and repair, hunting, doing needle craft, and being able to navigate both woods and barrens.

4.6 The Stories

Most of the stories told by all storytellers are concerned with past life in the immediate region. The enthusiast/performers told some stories from other areas (notably, greater Cape Breton and Newfoundland). Some tellers also had personal experience stories about their lives outside the area. However, even these stories usually fit within popular local narrative themes:

1) fishing and the sea,
2) rescues, wrecks and tragedies,
3) community and family history,
4) supernatural experiences,
5) treasure (this topic often overlaps with #4),
6) the 'old days' and everyday life before WWII,
7) work and making a living,
8) illegal activity (including rum-running) and reckless behaviour
9) tall tales,
10) local characters, and
11) humorous situations (including pranks) and witty remarks.

There is considerable overlapping of these eleven themes. The two people who told me lengthy life stories centred on the topic of work and making a living also included many of the above as sub-themes.

Although I collected some migratory legends such as the well-known tale of a gambler who discovers that the stranger playing cards with him is the devil

(quoted in Chapter II), I did not hear any contemporary legends.[27] Also lacking were the lengthy *sgeulachdan*—the Scottish hero and wonder tales told by the Gaelic storyteller Joe Neil MacNeil (1987) from Big Pond, thirty kilometres away. Though researchers have collected many of these tales throughout Cape Breton,[28] even the oldest people in the Gabarus-Framboise region cannot remember anyone telling them. The absence of these stories is probably due to a combination of factors:

1) As John Shaw explained, "In Cape Breton, this class of tale is to be found in the Catholic areas only, though tales of a less elaborate variety, particularly humorous stories are to be found in the Presbyterian areas. The absence of longer tales outside the Catholic areas can be directly attributed to their condemnation by the fundamentalist clergy at least from the sixteenth century" (MacNeil, xxiv-xxv). J. F. Campbell reached a similar conclusion about storytelling in the Hebrides in the mid-19th century.[29] However, his associate, Hector MacLean, a schoolmaster from Islay who collected tales in the Outer Hebrides, associated the loss with other social factors as well.

> The most of the people in Barra and South Uist are Roman Catholics, can neither read nor write, and hardly know any English. From these circumstances it is extremely improbable that they have borrowed much from the literature of other nations. In North Uist and Harris, these tales are nearly gone, and this, I believe, to be owing partly to reading, which in a manner supplies a substitute for them, partly to bigoted religious ideas, and partly to narrow utilitarian views (J. F. Campbell, 1860, vol. 1:v-vi).

Religion, then, might not be the whole explanation. Shaw cited the case of Black Point in Victoria County, an isolated Cape Breton Protestant community in which such stories were told until the 1920s (xxv). In addition, many of the Scottish settlers in the Gabarus-Framboise area emigrated from the mainly-Protestant Island of North Uist, where Hector MacLean observed that the tales

were nearly gone a century and a half ago. Nonetheless, *sennachies* from that island provided Donald Fergusson (1984) with numerous wonder tales and myths as well as with considerable oral history in the 1960s and 70s.

2) Dan Alex MacLeod suggested that the age of the immigrants may have caused a break in their oral traditions: "See, most of those fellas-. Well, my people, they were young coming over here. My grandfather was only FIVE YEARS OLD. My great-grandfather was only THIRTY. And my great-grandmother that's on the MacDonald side, was only TWENTY-FIVE" (RT95-24A, Sept. 2, 1995).
3) Linda Dégh emphasized the importance of eminent tradition bearers on the transmission of folktales, explaining that the German folklorist Wilhelm Wisser (1926) "attributed the existence of Märchen-rich and Märchen-poor communities to the presence or abscence of good storytellers in the lifetime of the last three generations" (1995:11). The telling of Märchen and lengthy hero tales is a specialized art. Narrators of these tales were probably rare on the Protestant islands from which the settlers emigrated. When we consider that young families comprised the majority of immigrants and that the role of storyteller usually falls upon the elderly, the absence of such specialists among the settlers in the Gabarus-Framboise area and the resultant lack of these stories is not surprising.

Another type of narrative which has not disappeared but which has changed form is the tall tale. Elderly people remember local Münchausens who could relate lengthy stories of their fantastic adventures. Today, these storytellers are gone. Truman Clark, who claimed to have been swept on and off a ship without spilling his tea, was among the last (Caplan, 1995:161-63). Truman passed away in 1998. When I visited him and his wife Rhodena, his

health was failing and he said little because of shortness of breath. But he still had a twinkle in his eye and was able to articulate his approach to telling stories.

Rhodena: Truman tells a story about when he and Joe Bagnell, they'd both be up there a lot in the winter. And someone was kind enough to loan them a lantern to come home with. And, I guess they got tired of carrying this lantern and they hung it on a tree. Is that the way the story goes?

Truman: I guess.

Rhodena: That's the truth of it. I believe they told the story like a deer had come along, hooked it, got the lantern hooked on its horns or some such thing (laughter).

Truman: There's no use in telling something unless you can stretch it a bit (laughter). (RT95-4A, Aug. 28, 1995)

Neighbours also claim that Lloyd MacDonald tells tall tales. If so, his are more subtle than those of many earlier tellers. Lloyd, unlike one Fourchu neighbour, could not outrun bullets nor were his three-pound potatoes as big or fantastic as John Cooper MacLeod's cabbages that he mistook for sheep when he saw them from a distance. When I asked Lloyd about his "exploding cabbages," his response seemed within the realm of possibility.

Ranald: I heard that you grew some cabbages so big they exploded, one time (laughing).

Lloyd: I did. They did that last year on me.

Ranald: Oh (laughing).

Lloyd: Yeah. Yeah. I grew them too fast. That's three or four times, they exploded on me. And this year—.

Ranald: What do you mean, "they exploded"?

Lloyd: They grew so fast that they blew themselves apart. They were just the same as you'd exploded them, if you'd put a charge inside of the—IT"S HARD TO BELIEVE but they were just open right up like, no good for nothing. Oh, dandy, well I had six or seven, they just blew to pieces. Well, look boy, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT

> HAPPENED to them, there come a shower of rain and they sucked the water up too quick—it was dry—they got the water too quick and they just (forces hands outward). They'll do that, you know, just pop, because they—. But I had some dandy cauliflower this year, I had about half a dozen and I think every one was about eight inches across, boy, they were. But they grew so fast, they were—first week in August, they were over. I don't know if it was the ground up here or what. Jees, I brought them zucchinis there, they were that long [gestures]. I had one only a couple of years ago, they were 18 inches long, you ever seen one that big? (RT95-21B, Sept. 1, 1995)

Of course, any good tall-tale teller insists that his story is true. However, Lloyd followed the story of the cabbages with descriptions of cauliflowers and zucchinis of large but believable sizes, breaking away from the usual tall-tall pattern of ending the tale with the exaggerated claim. Tall-tale tellers usually begin by grounding their story in reality and then lead the listener into the world of fantasy and lies.[30] Furthermore, Peter Narváez advised me that the CBC Radio science show "Quirks and Quarks" once presented a program explaining the phenomenon of exploding vegetables, suggesting that Lloyd's tale had a factual basis.

Though the autobiographical tall-tale tellers—always males—seem to have vanished, their tales live on. However, they are always attributed to particular narrators. These include John Rafuse of Fourchu, Isaac Townsend of Gabarus, and Neil Archie MacIntyre and Western Dan MacLeod, both of Gabarus Lake. However, the most famous tellers in the regions were Charlie, John, Malcolm, and Norman Cooper MacLeod (their father John Cooper made barrels, see Appendix 3) of Framboise.

Arthur Severance gave me a thorough description of a tall-tale session involving John and Norman Cooper in a Fourchu general store. Arthur was first hesitant about mentioning their names. However, when he realized that others

had told me about the Coopers, he was willing to name them in subsequent interviews. Arthur does not tell tall tales as first-person accounts, yet in his storytelling, he shows appreciation for the style of earlier narrators. The instigating role of the factory boss, the gradual unfolding of the tale, the careful attention to detail, the straight-faced nature of the tellers, and the competition between the brothers are all important elements of this tall-tale session.

Ranald: You were... talking about Truthful Paul (MacLellan) and you were saying that he was "a master storyteller." What do you consider a master storyteller to be?

Arthur: Well,... I have been told, that the Gaelic-speaking Scots, pretty nearly any community that you went, you'd have one—at least one—accomplished storyteller and he could, oh, possibly, make them up, you know. But the stories were told simply for entertainment, that's all.

But, as I said, we did have a family, they were up at [Framboise]. There was one member of the family, he never went as far as the Strait of Canso. And there were four boys. Oh, we had two of them living in Fourchu for a while. And I used to like to get down (chuckles).

Well, I think possibly by not mentioning any names, there was one of the old fellas (John) that worked in the lobster factory. And he could tell some pretty tall ones. Another fella (Norman) lived right handy there and there was a store right alongside the factory. And the old factory boss would like to go in there and—. Sometimes, if there was a day—like after a storm—and there wouldn't be any lobster packing going on. He had one of the young fellas come in from the factory and he'd tell him he wanted to see this certain man [who] worked there. Happened that way this day. And the man came in and the old factory boss said to this man—'Course the man figured that the boss had some particular job for him to do, you know. But he [said], "John, no rush about it, John," he said. "Sit down," he said, "and have a smoke. Have a bit of a chat for a little while, [we] have lots of time. There's nothing much going on," he said. "The [inaudible] can handle it all. I'm fine."

So, just about this time, one of the other brothers (Norman) came in. The weather a couple of days previous, it'd been high winds and heavy seas running and so on. And the boss said, "Well,

John," I guess he said that "in your day, you've seen worse weather than this. Higher winds."

"Yeah. Not too often," John said. "Not too often."

Oh, the other fella had been down in the southern states for a long time and he come in with this story about an area that he had spent some time in as a cyclone struck. And it was a fairly good-sized—more of a village than a town but they had a bank and they had two or three stores, couple of them specializing in certain lines, agriculture requirements, and I suppose one of the others would be a clothing store.

However, this cyclone struck. It was only a matter of a few minutes, the path of the cyclone led right along the main street and everything was ripped up hither and yon.

The bank was a brick building but I guess it must have been built so that the force of the wind entered it somewhere, somehow, and bricks were flying in all directions and the building collapsed and tore the door, the lock off the door of the bank. He didn't say whether it was unlocked or not but it tore the door off and "God!" he said, "There was money all over the county." People were picking up bills for weeks afterward. They could never, I guess it was IMPOSSIBLE for them to arrive at the extent of the losses anyway. But it calmed down within a matter of hours after the cyclone passed through but it was days before they straightened up the damage. Some buildings were completely [inaudible].

Now, the old factory boss, Steve Holmans, [said], "Were you down there yourself, Norman?" "Oh, Yeah." He was present. He was down in a cellar, yeah.

"Well, you must have some experience of high winds, yourself, John." "Yeah." Well, this old fella had homesteaded in Manitoba, years ago. In fact, his homestead would be almost central to the city of Winnipeg now. He sold it out but not at a time when he became rich (laughs) for the claim.

Anyway, old John said, "Yeah." [I] think it was the second year he was out there and he got the harvest—first year the harvest wasn't that good but second year he was there he had a good harvest. And I guess it'd be one man in a given area would have a threshing machine. And he would go from farm to farm and the farmers within a certain part of the district would follow that machine around and they'd all work on it and get the job done for the community.

And at the time they had the machine started up, he said, there was a little knoll on his land. What caused it, I couldn't say, but the slope went up from the prairies, from the level prairie, the slope went up so far and then it almost dropped off perpendicularly to

the back. So to get the advantage of any breeze, movement there, they set the machine up, up on top of this little slope. Of course, they were using straw for to fire the boiler. So, they were going along, a great clip, so—.

Along in the afternoon, he said, the early afternoon, he happened to look up to the west and he said, thank God, he saw this little speck in the sky. And he looked at it and it seemed to be getting larger but it was so far away that the growth wasn't [inaudible]. But then he turned, he said, "Just look," he said, "I've been watching this little CLOUD," he said to the other fella. And the other fella looked and he let out a holler. "Dig for cover," he said, "there's a twister coming!"

So, where they went, they (chuckles) scooted down off of the hill and they got behind this facing on the back of the hill. "Lay down on the ground!" There was nothing else and they had to lie down, grab—there was something there in the way of a little brush or big weeds or something to grab a hold of, you know. And, he said, it wasn't five minutes anyway, they were only getting down there when the twister passed over and he said, it was a terrific roar. It went by. He said, in about five minutes it—DEAD CALM.

So they got up. They went along. They couldn't see anything of his equipment. Only a boiler. The threshing machine was gone, wagon. The only thing that was left now on the hill was the boiler and he said the tubes was on the outside (laughter).

Ranald: So it had turned right inside out!

Arthur: Well now, I'll tell ya. I really can't do justice to the story. But now, that would be the old fella's invention, there's no question about it. But anyway, his brother remembered he had something to do and he knew when he was licked (laughter). He was sitting on the counter. He dropped his feet to the floor and took off. Yeah.[31] (RT95-6A, August 28, 1995)

Although telling tall tales was a male art, many of the community's women fondly recall specific tales and their tellers. The general store was a popular setting for these stories but they were not banned from homes as in some communities.[32] Despite many women's stated fondness for these stories, they do not give them—or their tellers—their unqualified approval. Many times I heard comments such as "But there was no harm in them," "They didn't hurt

anybody, you know," "He wasn't a bad man,'" and "He just talks like that for fun." These apologetic remarks indicate that telling tall tales was (and is) not entirely respectable.[33] However, the tall-tale teller generally acted out this traditional role only in appropriate circumstances. A man who "stretched the truth" at the wrong time could gain a reputation for being unreliable or even dishonest.

Arthur Severance's hesitation to name the Cooper MacLeods when describing the tall-tale session in the general store was due to the fact that "there was a number of women in that family and married around there, so you'd hesitate to repeat some." When I asked his opinion as to why some women don't like these stories, he said that they don't like the men in their families to have "a reputation of being different: DAMN LIARS!" (Aug. 28, 1995, RT95-6B). As well, I suspect that women sometimes feel victimized by tall tales which quite often take place in what has traditionally been the male world—the woods, the sea, and far-away places. When women from this region left home to work, they often entered domestic service rather than being close to the natural world. Therefore, just as city dwellers without experience of the country are easy victims for rural people's tall tales, women, too, often lack a background which allows them to distinguish the border between truth and falsehood in men's tales. Their own domestic world did not stimulate the creation of tall tales as grandiose claims could be too easily investigated. Gustav Henningsen in his analysis of tall tales in Norway (1965) points out that these stories are usually told by men whose work takes them away from their communities "while sedentary people who live in a community where everyone knows everything about everyone else are cut off from similar fictions (214)." However, these factors do not completely explain women's reluctance to tell tall tales. Men made claims of giant

vegetables and ridiculously fast horses, which could easily have been disproven. The tall tale is, by and large, not part of women's culture. Women generally avoid developing reputations as boasters and "damn liars" even if the lies are told in fun.[34]

The lack of tall tales told in the first person today may be due to the lack of an appropriate storytelling context. Arthur's story clearly expressed the competitive nature of the narrators. Richard Tallman observed that "performance-conscious genres, such as the tall tale and the personal experience narrative do not lend themselves to an 'art for art's sake' aesthetic, that is, to an appreciation of a specific item of story for its own sake divorced from any particular context" (127). He says of the men of Blomidon, Nova Scotia, that, like Arthur Severance, when asked for tall tales, they "will more often than not describe a storytelling event rather than tell the story" (126). Richard Lunt associated the lack of tall tales in an area of rural Maine, where Jones Tracy was once a highly regarded performer, with changes in people's way of living:

> Jones Tracy spent days in a hunting camp with his friends, where they were two days journey by horse from civilization fifty to eighty miles away. It used to take him on other occasions an hour or more just to ride over to the post office and back to his home. Today he could do it in ten minutes and would be likely to allow himself just that. Time was much lengthened out (from our point of view) forty years ago. Friends were more likely to stay overnight when caught in a storm than today. In short, time lay heavy on one's hands more frequently than today." (1968:65)

Rural Cape Breton faces a similar situation. There are far fewer occasions in which groups of men share idle time and perhaps it is hard to find an appreciative audience for tall tales.[35]

People in the Gabarus-Framboise community use a number of other terms besides tall tales or tall stories when discussing narrative. Such etic

categorizations as legend, memorate, anecdote, hero tale, and wonder tale have little to do with local concepts and I use these terms primarily when they are needed to clarify analytical issues. In fact, people usually did not volunteer the word storyteller but used it in response to my questions. While most were able to evaluate quickly who was or was not a storyteller, some were reluctant to use the term. The fact that the word is not used traditionally to describe local people might account for my sometimes being directed to tradition bearers who did not seem to tell stories. However, Arthur Severance and Lloyd MacDonald, themselves outstanding storytellers, were quite comfortable with the word storyteller and easily applied it to others.

Dan Ben-Amos (1976) argued that understanding the names which people use to classify their own folklore genres is important to understanding cultural rules of communication. Following are "native" or "ethnic genres" used in the Gabarus-Framboise region to refer to narratives told among adults. These generic divisions are not strict categorizations nor are they mutually exclusive.

1) Stories: This term is used in a number of ways and reflects the viewpoint of the speaker. It can refer to stories generally. For those who are interested in the supernatural, stories may mean primarily supernatural stories and storytellers are those who specialize in such tales. For those interested in tall tales and humorous anecdotes, stories may mean amusing stories and storytellers are those who tell them. Stories, spoken in contemptuous tones, may also be used to refer to those stories which the speaker believes are foolish, usually either tall tales or supernatural stories (but not both). The last usage is general throughout the English-speaking world.
2) Ghost stories: This term may refer to supernatural stories generally or to spooky stories told for entertainment and not meant to be believed (by adults,

anyway). When Marie Williams spoke of her father, Fred Thurgood, telling ghost stories, she meant what folklorists refer to as jump stories, in which the teller ends the story by jumping forward and grabbing someone in the audience. People tell jump stories strictly for entertainment.

3) Stories about forerunners: These are often separated from ghost stories, depending on the speaker. Many people in the community believe in forerunners but not in ghosts and will distinguish stories about forerunners from ghost stories. Skeptics are inclined to class all such stories as ghost stories. Stories about forerunners may refer to omens of death or to various other unexplainable happenings.
4) Fairy stories: One man used this term contemptuously when referring to Märchen and hero tales, "That's just fairy stories anyway." (Older community residents can remember some of their elders expressing belief in fairies but such beliefs seem to have disappeared. People do not generally refer to these beliefs or the related, and largely-forgotten, legends as fairy stories.)
5) Lies: This word has conflicting meanings and uses. It may refer to either tall tales, humorous anecdotes or both and may be used either with scorn or with good humour. It may also be used as a pejorative referring to supernatural stories. The usage reflects the viewpoint of the speaker. As well, the word lies is used, usually by men, in a more general way, common to the Maritimes. "We're sitting here telling lies,'" may sometimes be taken literally. However, more often, it is an acknowledgement that the speaker recognizes that the people concerned are entertaining themselves with stories but that their talk is relatively unimportant.
6) Yarns Arthur Severance referred to men, spinning yarns, a common expression throughout North America. He uses the expression when

speaking of tall tales and other entertaining stories. As with the latter use of lies, "spinning yarns" is an acknowledgement that the people concerned are entertaining themselves with stories but that their talk is relatively unimportant.

7) *Sgeulachdan*: Local Gaelic speakers use this word to refer to stories or tales generally and to supernatural stories. They often smiled when they spoke of *sgeulachdan*. I was unable to determine whether this was simply because they had fond memories of these stories or because there was an aspect of the word that I was not understanding. (Jeff MacDonald advises that in Cape Breton, a storyteller is a *sgialaiche* or *sgeulaiche*..)

Two points can be determined from this terminology. First, that there are conflicts in beliefs and values within the community. People disagree on the existence of the supernatural or of specific aspects of the supernatural, as they do virtually everywhere (see, e.g., Dégh, 1995:285-305). They also disagree on the importance of various types of tales which are elements of their community's traditions. Second, the terminology used to discuss storytelling and storytellers is vague. This is a reflection on the conversational nature of storytelling here. Storytelling is part of talk and does not require special terminology. I discovered during an evening visit with two couples in Belfry that stories emerge easily when conversation flows and that the evening house visit is still a prime venue for telling stories.

4.7 Conclusion

Contemporary storytelling in the Gabarus-Framboise region derives from the community's past narrative traditions. The area's elderly people were raised

in a highly oral environment in which storytelling was an integral part of social activity. As children, they not only listened to folktales and Bible stories told aloud for their benefit but also comprised part of the audience for storytelling among their elders. Furthermore, until approximately the 1950s, storytelling, especially by men, took place in such public venues as stores, barbershops, post offices, and lobster factories while homes acted as settings for both men's and women's storytelling. However, the most important context for public storytelling was the ceilidh or evening house visit. These visits, in which storytelling usually played a prominent role, involved both socializing and entertainment.

Local storytelling has gone through changes over time, a fact made evident by the disappearance of wonder tales and the decline of tall tales told in the first-person. However, most stories still involve familiar people or settings and can be grouped according to a limited number of locally popular themes. Today's storytellers, like their predecessors, specialize in their own favourite genres. Some dispute the importance in the community's repertoire of those types of stories which they do not favour—for example, supernatural legends or tall tales. Despite such changes over time, local people are still grounded in the region's storytelling traditions. Although the era of large, spontaneous ceilidhs ended with post-war changes in population and technology, telling stories remains an important part of social activity. Sunday and evening visits are still prime venues for storytelling. Contemporary storytellers of the Gabarus-Framboise region practise one of their culture's most important folk arts, an art in which they were immersed throughout their lives. In their avocation as storytellers, they occupy traditional roles in their community, acting as entertainers, teachers, historians, comics, and moral guides. Their stories, as

stated in Chapter II, comprise the "community novel," telling listeners who they are and where they came from, and suggesting how they should live their lives. Using anthropological terminology, many local narratives function as models of and models for the community.

Notes

1. Stella Mann described the shipwreck in Gull Cove Remembered (1979:21-22). She said that children memorized the words to Walsh's poem in school but also sang it after the words were set to music.

2. Like most other children in his community, Ranald had the opportunity to go to school. However, being the son of Murdoch and Effie MacDonald whose story is told in Chapter II, he was orphaned at a young age and his older sisters were unable to coax or bully him into attending.

3. Delargy tells of Irish storytellers smoking pipes until "all the current topics of interest have been discussed and the story-telling could now begin" (1945:19).

4. The "idiot box" was a common slang term for television in the 1960s.

5. Winter as a storytelling season is not restricted to Cape Breton. Many Canadian aboriginal peoples allow the telling of sacred stories only in wintertime. In Scotland, C. MacLean (1952:121-22, 125, 128), and in Ireland, Delargy (1945:7) and Ó Súilleabháin (1973:10-11) speak of winter evening gatherings as primary storytelling venues. Dégh (1969:76, 111) and Holbek (172) mention fall and winter as storytelling seasons in Hungary and Denmark.

6. Lobster heads are small nets which lobsters crawl into but cannot crawl out of.

7. Bengt Holbek (1986), while discussing the transmission of folktales in 19th and early 20th century rural Denmark, stressed the importance of knitting bees as "important clearing houses not only for tales but for other kinds of oral tradition." As in Gabarus, "Both sexes and all ages participated....the gatherings took place in the winter, usually in a farm house with plenty of room" (170). Although no one in the Gabarus-Framboise region specifically mentioned storytelling at "spinning frolics" (work parties or "bees"), these gatherings went on and would likely have been storytelling occasions, as they were in Hungary (Brill, 634; Faragó, 1971:442; Nagy, 485). As Holbek observed, "[T]he gatherings where slow and tedious work was done together...were regular occasions for storytelling" (172, cf. Dégh, 1969:76). The German folklorist Carl von Sydow (Sweden) said that communities with "work in common, feasts, entertainments, etc." were important settings for transmitting folklore (13).

8. There is a movement to standardize Gaelic spellings by dropping the acute accent. Older books use both grave and acute accents. Many Gaelic-speakers still feel that the use of the two accents indicates important differences in pronunciation and continue to use the acute, hence the inconsistency in spelling.

9. For folkloristic studies of contemporary ceilidhs in Cape Breton and in Newfoundland's Codroy Valley (among descendants of Cape Bretoners), see: Martha MacDonald, 1988, and Bennett, 1989:55-81. See also MacPhail's novel Loch Bras D'Or (1970), 19-29. Annie MacLean (1991) mentions storytelling as an aspect of ceilidhs in the Gabarus-Framboise area (54-55). Gary Butler describes house visits as a storytelling context in French Newfoundland, the main difference from visits in Gabarus-Framboise is the presence of alcohol, rather than tea, as the usual drug of choice in Butler's fieldwork area.

10. Milling frolics were work parties in which neighbours gathered in a house to shrink newly-woven cloth. Gaelic singing was a vital part of these events. Summer picnics were large gatherings which included an outdoor dance, held to raise money for schools. Box socials, once common throughout rural North America, were fund raisers in which a supposedly anonymous young woman supplied a fancily wrapped boxed lunch to be auctioned to male bidders. The successful bidder ate the lunch with the person who made it.

11. Cf. Neil MacNeil, 1948:74.

12. Twentieth-century etiquette books and newspaper columns promote the concept that the host should be an entertainer while the guest's chief responsibility is to be behave politely.

13. Neil MacNeil summarized the attitude of Gaelic Cape Bretoners to visiting in The Highland Heart in Nova Scotia (1948), a social history of his home community:

> The people of Washabuckt did almost no formal entertaining. One was almost never invited to visit a home except to attend a dance or a frolic. Good neighbours were expected to visit their friends and they did at all hours of the day, and especially at night, but no invitations were sent out. A family was always 'at home,' and if the visitor found the housewife or the man of the house at work that was only to be expected and the visitor sat and talked just the same or joined in the labours. No one was ever invited to dinner or supper. If one dropped in at mealtime he or she was welcome to the meal the family was about to eat and nothing extra was provided and there was no attempt at show (29).

14. He was making a ludicrous analogy to ice cracking—a very dangerous situation if one is crossing it.

15. It is a truism among folklorists that play often involves considerable work.

16. Taft (1983) was told that a post office in British Columbia was a popular site for storytelling when the mail was late (9).

17. A highly enjoyable section of Tales until Dawn is entitled "Repartee and Ready Wit" and consists of anecdotes about people's clever remarks (MacNeil, 359-79).

18. Various writers have studied or commented on the village or country store as a storytelling setting. These include: in Cape Breton, Martha MacDonald, 1986; MacPherson, 1987; elsewhere in Nova Scotia, Bauman, 1972; Fanning, 1978; and Tallman, 1974a; and in the U.S.A., Botkin, 1944:555-6; 1989:5-6; Burrison, 18-19. In an unpublished paper, Diane Tye (1984) demonstrated that for members of one rural Nova Scotian community, the nearby town mall has taken on some of the social functions formerly held by the general store. This is less true of the Gabarus-Framboise region as the town of Sydney is too far away to drive to regularly for the purpose of socializing. (My research indicates that the country store as a setting for storytelling is a North American phenomenon. Martin Lovelace advised me that pubs in English villages had a similar role. Cobblers and other craftsmen whose shops were gathering places also had reputations as storytellers.)

19. In 1995, Annie Hardy ran a food store with very limited stock. It was usually open for a few hours a day at her convenience. It is now closed.

20. Barbershops, rural and urban, are known as storytelling and musical venues in many countries. Regarding storytelling, see, e.g., Tallman, 1974:456-57.

21. "Down north" refers to northern Cape Breton. The significance of the storm is that it prevented fishermen from supplying the factory with a catch to process, thereby halting work.

22. See, e.g., Delargy, 1945:17, 20 re: Ireland. Dégh (1969) refers to storytelling at Hungarian wakes (105, 110-11).

23. I was puzzled as to how a North Framboise woman could make money running a catering business in a rural area with so few residents. A local man pointed out to me that most of the women either held jobs or were elderly and, conveniently, they all owned freezers: "You'd be surprised how much of her cooking you've eaten at tea," he told me.

24. Milling is also called waulking. The best description of a milling frolic (with photos) is Ronald Caplan's "A Milling Frolic on The North Shore" (1980). In Scotland, milling was a women's activity and men only joined for the party afterward. Neil MacNeil (1948) indicates that milling frolics in Washabuckt followed a similar pattern (57) but usually milling in Cape Breton involved both men and women (see John Shaw's notes for the record, "The Music of Cape Breton, Vol.1," p.1). See also: J. L. Campbell & Collinson; MacKinnon, 40; Margaret MacPhail's novel, Loch Bras D'Or, 30-31; and notes for "Waulking Songs from Barra" (in discography).

25. Ron Caplan's interview, "With Lottie Morrison from Gabarus" (see bibliography), was one of many in Cape Breton's Magazine which are essentially life stories. Caplan generally tries to get his interviewees to talk about what interests them with minimal direction. Various folklorists have examined the life story as a narrative genre. See, e.g., Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1989; Titon, 1980; Pentikäinen, 1980; and Workman, 1992.

26. For comparisons between rural and urban humour and between joke tellers and raconteurs, see Leary, 1984, and Utley and Flamm, 1969.

27. Lindahl says of contemporary legends that "such tales often fail to make their way to the storytelling stages, partly because they are often told as news and believed to be true, and therefore not regarded by the tellers to be folktales at all" (Lindahl, Owens, and Harvison, eds., 1997:25, note 2).

28. See, e.g., Dan Angus Beaton, Cape Breton's Magazine 43:41-46 and 45:39-43; Neil John Gillis, 1998; MacEdward Leach, 1957:40-54; Hughie Dan MacDonnell, CBM 13:IFC & 81-19 and 21:13-20; Patrick MacEachern, 1996:12-13; Dan Hughie MacIssac and Lauchie MacLellan, CBM 23:18-31; Joe Neil MacNeil, 1987, 1998: 19-20, CBM 16:24-32, continued in 17:31-39, CBM 22:30-36, "*An Thaìrìsgeal Mór*," in Am Bràighe (3 parts: w. 1996/97, spr. & s. 1997); Watson, ed., 1998; Watson and Robertson, 1987. Joe Neil MacNeil also told a cosmological tale in CBM 19:32 and Joe Allan MacLean told a long non-Märchen folktale in CBM 10:13-16. Readers should be aware when examining Joe Neil MacNeil's stories that, although he was brought up in a culture with an active tradition of telling Märchen and wonder tales, in his later life Joe was essentially a storytelling revivalist. He read both English and Gaelic and learned stories from books in order to tell new stories and to re-create stories from his youth. Michael Taft (1997) and Ranald Thurgood (1997) addressed this issue in unpublished papers presented at a Folklore Studies Association of Canada conference. See also: MacNeil, CBM 54:33-38 and 71.

29. Re: Barra. "[H]ere I was told, that they now spend whole winter nights about the fire listening to these same old world tales. The clergy, in some

places, has condemned the practice and it has fallen into disuse; stories seemed to be almost exterminated in some islands though I believe they were only buried alive..." (J. F. Campbell, vol.1, xix-xx). See Deborah Davis's (1992) essay on the role of Protestant clergy in the collection of folklore for a discussion of both positive and negative attitudes toward Scottish lore.

30. Taft provides an excellent discussions of tall-tale telling in context in Tall Tales of British Columbia (1983:3-13). He explains:

> The tall tale is a strange sort of story—part truth and part fiction. As many of the tellers put it, the tall tale begins as a factual account or description of something entirely believable. As the story progresses, the truth begins to stretch; the more it stretches, the less believable the tale becomes, but if the teller is good enough at his craft, the listener crosses the line of credibility without noticing it and is "taken in," if only for a moment, by the storyteller (4).

The best study of the historical place of the tall tale is Gerald Thomas's The Tall Tale and Philippe D'Alcripe (1977) which proves beyond doubt that this genre is not an American invention as has often been claimed. Liar's contests: AT 1920, see also Henningsen, 193-97 and Thomas, 1977:10-11. For more on tall tales and their tellers, see: Bauman, 1986:78-111; Botkin, 1944: 490-650; 1989:129-73; Cothran, 1974; 1989; Fowke, 1976:167-70; 1986:74-80; Halpert, 1944; 1944a; 1976:171-89; Henningsen, 1965; Jansen, 1948; Johnson, K. D., 1976:189-90; Lindahl et al., 1997:13-15; Lunt, 1968; Mullen,1976; Narváez, 1983:69-78; Randolph,1951; Tallman, 1974; 1974a; Thomas, 1987, 1996; and Harold W. Thompson, 1962:129-54.

31. AT 1920 Contest in Lying, Baughman X905 Lying Contest.

32. Kay Cothran (1974) spoke of Florida women aggressively "banging pots" when their husbands were "talking trash" at home (354). When Michael Taft (1983) tried to collect first-person tall tales in a Saskatchewan home, he was advised that pubs, picnics, and round-ups would be appropriate place for gathering such stories. However, he did hear tall tales which were attributed to others and worked into a conversation involving two couples and himself (46-47). He also mentions in his British Columbia collection (1983) that house visits were popular venues for tall tales (10).

33. A resident of Batchellerville, N.Y., said of a local tall-tale teller, "Bill Greenfield was the goldarnest, most unreasonable liar, you ever saw, though he meant no harm to anyone" (Harold W. Thompson, 1939:138.)

34. On reputation and tall-tale tellers, see Narváez, 1983:69-78.

35. Lunt argues that the fast pace of life has led to shorter stories generally (66). Ironically, the Texan storyteller Ed Bell has lengthened his tall tales for festival audiences. Bauman attributes this to the facts that: there are no longer other men waiting to tell as there were when Bell was young; his contemporary audiences are unfamiliar with rural life and need more explained; and they are "less knowledgeable about the conventions of traditional storytelling and the genre of the tall tale....the storyteller has an impulse both to embellish the element of exaggeration and to guide them to an understanding of it" (Bauman, 1986:103).



Plate 4.1 Mary Maggie MacCormick, Framboise Intervale (July 1992).

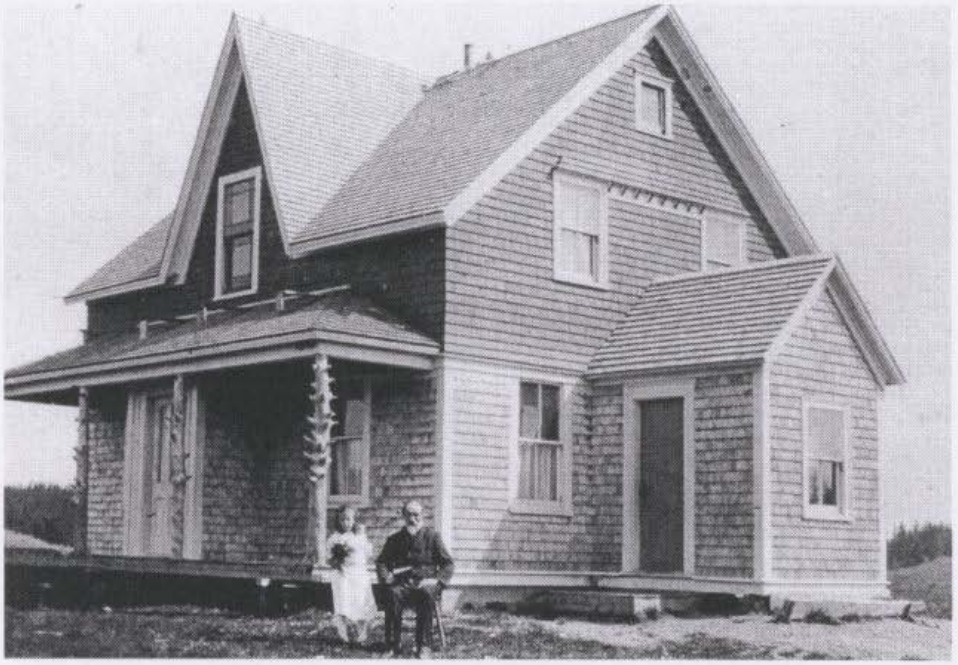


Plate 4.2 Mary Maggie Strachan (later MacCormick) and grandfather, Kenneth Strachan, in front of their house, Framboise Intervale, circa 1920. "Norman MacLeod, the [professional] photographer, visited and we were the only two home. Norman picked some weeds from a pile of gravel for a bouquet" (photo courtesy of Mary Maggie MacCormick).



Plate 4.3 Milling frolic on Cape Breton's north shore, 1970s. This was the first frolic held in a home and involving the actual shrinking of woven cloth since 1939 (photo courtesy of Cape Breton's Magazine).

Chapter V

An Evening Visit with Jimmy Philip and Lena MacLeod: Storytelling as a Pastime

Stories, as we have seen, are closely related to the people who tell them. In this chapter, I examine an evening house visit in order to establish how participants interact and what sort of stories they tell during a fairly typical storytelling event in southeastern Cape Breton (allowing, of course, for the uncustomary presence of a folklorist with a tape recorder). First, I establish the social context of the storytelling session. Next, I show how the storytelling progressed throughout the evening by summarizing the conversation and presenting excerpts from my tapes.[1] This summary will not only familiarize readers with the storytelling styles of these four tradition bearers but will also illustrate how narrative topics both connect with each other and emerge from conversation. Finally, I analyze both the narrative themes and the roles of the storytellers who took part in this evening's visit. Throughout the chapter, I will provide commentary on aspects of the storytelling session and the stories themselves to show how these narratives relate to life in the Gabarus-Framboise folk community.

This storytelling session was typical of many neighbourly visits in rural communities. I have attended similar gatherings in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec, and other folklorists have documented like

events. Margaret Reid MacDonald in Scipio Storytelling (1996:3-104) and Michael Taft in Discovering Saskatchewan Folklore (1983:45-83) provide excellent descriptions and analyses of informal storytelling during home visits far from Cape Breton, in rural Indiana and Saskatchewan. The events they recount contain many elements similar to ones observed during my visit, e.g., 1) storytelling takes place during evening visits; 2) storytellers tell many humorous narratives usually based in the community or involving local people; 3) listeners actively participate in creating the story; 4) listeners tease the storytellers; 5) witty remarks comprise an important part of the evening's humour; 6) most or all people tell stories despite the presence of one or two dominant storytellers; and 7) the hostess serves food to the guests.

The residents of the Gabarus-Framboise region have a history and resource base which differ greatly from that of people from the American Midwest or the Canadian Prairies. However, these Cape Bretoners would be comfortable with the style of storytelling during an evening's house visit in Borden, Saskatchewan or at a New Year's Eve gathering in Scipio, Indiana. The people of the Gabarus-Framboise region, like people in numerous other rural areas, entertain themselves during evening visits through conversational storytelling[2] focused on their own community and its people.

5.1 The Context

When I saw a sign on Grand Lake Road in Sydney announcing a "Strawberry Festival" and "Milling Frolic" at the Gabarus Lake Zion United Church Hall, I thought that this would make a good setting for meeting residents of the Gabarus-Framboise region. After enjoying a "tea" of

strawberries, tea biscuits, rolls, and assorted home-baked sweets, I joined other men who had escaped the heat of the crowded hall by gathering in the parking lot. The air was beginning to cool on this still July evening but four types of biting flies (horseflies, deerflies, blackflies, and another type I could not identify) were feasting in the parking lot (see Plate 5.1). "There's a lot of flies," one elderly man commented. "Yes, they've all got Saturday afternoon off," his friend replied.

This gathering did prove to be a fine place for meeting local people. I was soon talking with other men while the women worked or socialized inside. The rural communication network quickly went into effect. Before the evening was over, a woman approached me and said, "I hear you're a Thurgood." When I began introducing myself after moving to Framboise five days later, many people already knew who I was and why I was in the area.

Among the men I met that evening was Jimmy Philip MacLeod (i.e., Jimmy, the son of Philip; see Appendix 3), an outgoing man of seventy-five years. Jimmy had retired to his home community of Belfry in 1980 after an industrial accident ended his career as a welder in the Halifax shipyards. He asked questions about my family background and expressed interest in my research. When I met his neighbour Sarah Belfry (Sarah MacCormick of Belfry, see Appendix 3) six days later, she told me that Jimmy would be a good source of stories. That same evening, I dropped in on Jimmy and his wife, Lena (Rafuse) (Plates 5.2 and 5.3). They both proved to be interesting conversationalists, each with a stock of stories. I arranged to come back and record them and made one of my few exits without first having tea. Lena offered tea, of course, but I declined, saying that I had been drinking tea all

day. She laughed and said that when she and Jimmy first moved back to Cape Breton, they spent their time visiting people. One day they counted how much tea they had drunk and arrived at twenty cups. "We were up all night!"

When I returned to Jimmy and Lena's bungalow, Roy and Flora (MacLeod) MacLeod (Plate 5.4) had arrived minutes before me. I already knew Roy and Flora who live in Arlington, Massachusetts (near Boston) but spend their summers in a trailer in Malquish, between Belfry and Fourchu. We met a couple of years earlier when I slowed my car to look at the site where my grandmother had been born and raised. Flora and Roy, who were standing outside their trailer, waved me in. After introductions, I discovered that Flora knew my family well and that she too had been raised on this property, her father having purchased it from my great-uncle, Ranald MacDonald.

Flora and Jimmy are cousins and grew up as neighbours. Lena spent her childhood and youth in nearby Fourchu and shared many memories with Flora and Jimmy. Roy lived in Framboise, about eighteen kilometres away. Although his social circle was somewhat different from theirs, he knew many of the same people and had attended some of the same events. The two couples were close and had a noticeable ease with each other.

As I entered the house, Flora was in a nearby room talking on the telephone while the others were in the kitchen discussing the party line. Jimmy and Lena had been waiting for some time for the phone company to install a private line but, as their Belfry neighbours—even the teenagers—were all considerate people, the shared line was only a minor inconvenience. As could be expected in any rural community, talk of the party line quickly

led to funny stories about the early days of the telephone. The three recalled the time of crank phones when everyone listened to each other's calls and certain older people were consistently baffled by this complicated new technology. A storytelling session was underway. Roy offered to leave with Flora and let us get on with our interview but I encouraged them to stay and asked if I could turn on my tape recorder right away. Thus began a recording session which Lena described afterward as having been "just like a visit: sitting around talking, telling stories, and having tea."

5.2 The Storytelling Session Summarized

In this section, I show the dynamics of informal storytelling by providing a description and sampling of the evening's storytelling. Most speech on the tapes is clear but unfortunately some words and comments are indecipherable. This problem was caused by such factors as: five people sharing one centrally-placed microphone; a rattle in Lena's voice due to health problems; the general hilarity of the evening (which often meant that people were laughing as they spoke); and more than one person speaking at various times.

When I turned on the tape recorder, the atmosphere became more formal. Everyone became quiet and waited for me to direct the proceedings. I began by asking them to to identify themselves and tell me a little about their backgrounds so that their voices would be clearly distinguishable when I later listened to the tape. Although they were cooperative, these people did not resign themselves to passive roles. From the beginning, the interview was coloured with humorous remarks when, for example, Flora teased me about

asking her age (which I had not, in fact, done) and then described herself as having received her education at "Belfry College." To this, Lena responded, "Like the old saying goes, 'I got my education down behind the barn.'"[3]

At my request, Lena repeated a story, which she had told me previously, about her family immigrating to Nova Scotia. This time, however, she fetched a book of hand-written family history and looked at it while she told about her ancestors.

Ranald: Okay, what's that book you have there?

Lena: Oh, the family, John Rafuse, his great-great-grandfather moved from Holland to [Nova Scotia] in 1752. And he sailed from Rotterdam, June the 18th, 1752 on a ship named *The Pearl*, bound for Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was formerly from Luxembourg, Germany. These people were Protestants and had settled in Germany on the Frisian Islands and there was no religious freedom. They were a mixture of French, Swiss, and German and came from the Upper Rhineland to Nova Scotia. That's where the first Rafuses came from to Nova Scotia. Anyway, they were on the way over on this ship called *The Pearl* and it was captured by pirates. The pirates kept them aboard until they got off the Nova Scotia coast. So they put them aboard a small boat with enough provisions to take them to land. And they landed on Rafuses Island in Chester and that's how Rafuses Island happened to get its name.

Ranald: Where did you hear about that?

Lena: Well, my Uncle Johnny that lived in the States for years was very interested in this sort of thing. He and somebody else that has much, much more lists on it and that is Calvin Rafuse from Fourchu. He's done an extensive amount of research on this. And John Frederick, John Rafuse—it was spelled J-o-h-n-n-e-s R-a-n-f-u-s-s. That's the way the Germans spelled it. Now, he had six children and John Frederick, he was born on Rafuses Island, he would be my great-great-grandfather. And then he had six children. So we got it all down from that. (RT92-5A, July 22, 1992)

The formality of the first part of this interview and Lena's use of family

records to ensure the accuracy of her account indicate a problem regularly encountered by folklorists: the presence of the folklorist and the tape recorder affect the dynamics of oral communication. In this case, the storytelling situation quickly changed into an interview. The others no longer controlled the flow of conversation but instead, allowed me to assume the director's role. Lena by getting the family records and spelling out the name of Johnnes Ranfuss, showed that she was more concerned that I get the facts right than she had been when she told me the same story earlier.[4] Yet, their humorous remarks show that they did not allow themselves to be intimidated by the occasion and were actively shaping the recording session.

In many ways, the evening was similar to a ceilidh. The first part of the interview was comparable to the exchange of news that preceded storytelling at a ceilidh. The two couples discussed such topics as place names, ancestry of local people, work frolics (parties, bees), and contemporary forestry practices for their own benefit as much as for mine. This discussion was only partly inspired by my questions. In fact, their comments were often addressed to each other.

During this exchange of information, Flora related a short anecdote involving a family connection with Prince Charles. This was "news" to Jimmy and Lena, as well as to me. Roy had been explaining that he corresponds with relatives still living on his ancestral home of Berneray, a small island off North Uist.

Roy: We were in North Uist but we never went to Berneray. We didn't know about them at the time, in 1988, when we were over there. So, I still hear from them. I never met them. There's two ladies.

Flora: And your cousin, Dan Aleck. Prince Charles went out there two

years ago and planted potatoes on Dan Aleck MacKillop's land out there.

Lena: [inaudible]

Flora: Yes. He wanted to know how they did it and he wanted to be involved with the people on the island.

Lena: Prince Charles?

Flora: Prince Charlie. And so they were sworn to secrecy. No one knew he was there. And then when they were digging the potatoes in the fall of the year, everybody wanted to come and see the potatoes (laughter) Prince Charles made. But then, this past year, he and Princess Di went out to the island and stayed with Dan Alex MacKillop. That's interesting.

Ranald: People must be saying, "That fella must be pretty important. He has Prince Charles doing his gardening for him." (Laughter)

Lena: [inaudible] Prince Charles-.

Flora: Yeah. He just wanted to see how they lived.

Roy: And see, they've got a private air strip out there where they land and they live there. They live just [like] ordinary people there.

Flora: Well, his uncle lives there. (Roy: Yes.) Lord Cranmore --- lives across the bay there.

Lena: You have an uncle a lord?

Roy: No.

Flora: No, no, no. Charles's uncle.

Lena: Oh, Charles does. I was wondering! (laughter)[5] (RT92-5A, July 22, 1992)

The excerpt above illustrates a high degree of interaction among the MacLeods which continued throughout the interview.

After the discussion of Prince Charles, Roy introduced the subject of

frolics. I asked him whether there were dances at frolics and this led to a discussion of dances, local musicians, and Jimmy's 1930s' band, "The Gloomchasers." Jimmy enjoyed speaking about these subjects and the conversation became more animated as all four reminisced about good times shared. When I inquired about fights at dances, the talk became even more lively.

Flora: There was always somebody, a peacemaker. Malcolm (Lena: Yes. Jimmy: Oh, Malcolm.) was the worst one to get in the middle (Jimmy: Right in the middle.) and make peace. I'd be so afraid he was going to get killed (laughs).

Ranald: Who was Malcolm?

Flora: That was my brother and he was great for-. I'd see him fly in there and then he'd get down and make peace.

Lena: And he could fight too.

Jimmy: Oh, YES.

Flora: Oh, I don't know. I didn't know-

Jimmy: Oh yes, he could.

Lena: He could look after himself.

Jimmy: No, no, no. That's why he got in there.

Flora: I never knew that.

Jimmy: He was fast.

Flora: I never saw a fight that he was in, Jimmy.

Jimmy: Huh?

Flora: I never saw a fight. (Roy laughs)

Jimmy: Didn't you?

Flora: No! Who did he fight?

Jimmy: Well, he never got in that much fighting. He'd let them get going good, you know, he'd always break it up. And they were all scared of him.

Flora: No kidding!

Jimmy: When you seen him coming in, everybody was off him. The people that just wouldn't leave stopped it. They'd get beat up anyhow. (Roy laughs)

Flora: That's why he was always a peacemaker. I didn't know he was sparring. Did he? Well, he didn't have any training for boxing.

Jimmy: Oh well, there was a couple of fellas around here had boxing gloves, you know. (Flora: Oh!) Murray MacLean in Fourchu, he had boxing gloves. Oh, they used to go down to the factory there, boxing around like that.

Flora: See, I didn't know that, I didn't know.

Jimmy: There was nobody got any real training.

Flora: Yeah. I didn't know that.

Ranald: So did Malcolm box good?

Jimmy: Oh, he usually used the gloves but he never boxed in fun though. Never boxed under a real instructor or anything. (Flora: No, no.) No.

Flora: I didn't know that where he would-.

Jimmy: He was shifty [on his feet].

Flora: He was pretty slow about doing everything, a job or-. (laughs) He would never move fast. (laughter) Glad to hear he did something fast. (laughs) (RT92-4A, July 22, 1992)

This snippet of conversation indicates two important points. First, it shows, once again, that for this group of people, talking is a highly interactive

process. From the beginning, listeners say "yes" or "no" to express agreement or disagreement, repeat the words of others to emphasize a point, and make short comments just to show that they are being attentive. This is illustrated by Jimmy and Lena's responses to Flora's statements.

> Flora: There was always somebody, a peacemaker. Malcolm (Lena: Yes. Jimmy: Oh, Malcolm.) was the worst one to get in the middle (Jimmy: Right in the middle.) and make peace. I'd be so afraid he was going to get killed (laughs).

Second, conversation within a family or a folk community can cover common experience from many years ago, something not possible in "communities of interest" or other folk groups whose members have been linked for a relatively short duration. In this case, Jimmy, Lena, and Roy had all known Malcolm many years earlier. Jimmy and Lena were able to give Flora a new understanding of a public role that her brother had played during her youth, fifty or sixty years earlier. Although urban communities of interest may have lengthy histories, individual members do not share a past to the same degree. Many urbanites do not have people outside their immediate families who know the people they grew up with. Even family members may barely know an individual's friends and acquaintances. In a rural folk community, virtually all people are known to each other. A member of such a community may receive new information about and insights into family and childhood friends throughout life. This, of course, is not impossible in an urban setting, especially if one belongs to an extraordinarily stable neighbourhood or folk group. However, such continuity is much more likely in a rural community in which even many of those who have moved away regularly return "home."

The discussion of dances and fights proved to be a catalyst for

storytelling. The conversation had developed a momentum of its own. As I came to the end of the first side of the tape, the talk did not stop. Side B begins with the four roaring with laughter as they recalled the antics of John Archie, a huge man, and Archibald, a very small fellow. I then asked about inter-village rivalries and this quickly led to a story from Jimmy. The storytelling was contained within the wider conversation. Although the stories were important so was the talk connecting them. The reminiscences and descriptions, some of which were provided for my benefit, were part of the communicative event. The non-narrative segments of the conversation held everyone's interest and stimulated memories, which led to more stories.

In the transcript below, which was punctuated with considerable laughter, my question led to a few comments, which then inspired a story which began with the standard opener, "Well, I remember one time...." After this narrative, the conversation moved easily to a discussion of fighters and then back to the subject of dances. The fighters have been given pseudonyms as one elderly man, who was one of the youths being discussed, is uncomfortable with his name being used in connection with such escapades. As he explained to me, his concern was not with his own reputation but with the feelings of the losers.

Ranald: Was there a lot of rivalry between the different villages or did people tend to get along pretty well here?

Jimmy: Now, it seemed like the village of Gabarus down here and Gabarus Lake, there's rivalry there.

Flora: "Big Lakers."

Lena: That's what they used to say, "There goes the Big Lakers."

Jimmy: Well, I remember one time, there were two fellas from Gabarus. They went down one Sunday night after coming out for

church—"Charlie Cann" and "Henry Bagnell"—they were always into fighting. And this trip they thought they'd tackle the "MacKays" down here, Angus and Alex. (Flora: They made the mistake there.) They brought a couple of guys out from Sydney who were supposed to be rugged. They hooked up with the wrong ones that night. They got a licking anyway.

So the Gabarus fellas invited us down here during the week to fight. There was [another] Jimmy MacLeod down here—he had a '30 Chev truck—and Malcolm with that '27 Chev. We were up making hay all day long and there was a big oil drum on back of each truck going down there. Drove right down to the village, pounding on the drum (Flora: Pounding the drum!) and there wasn't one man to be seen on the road. The only fella there was Ronald MacGillivray. He caught us on the road afterwards. He says, "You won't find any Gabaroosters on the road tonight," he says, "They're all in the house."

I still remember. But I was only a young fella. I just went for the drive, you know, all in our overalls. Wasn't a soul—wasn't even a woman, wasn't a man, and nothing on the road.

Flora: Well, those MacKays were really-, especially Dan. Remember the time, he was the head of the Gabarus Lake School and he got in-. Was it with "Neil" or "John Donald Mathieson"?

Jimmy: Neither one of them poor fellas were fighters.

Flora: Anyway, I guess he was going to beat him or he did beat him to a pulp. I forget. I wasn't there but I heard the story many times.

Jimmy: Oh, "Neil" was awful for fighting. He'd get beat up and the next morning, there wasn't a cut on him. Healed up awful fast.

Ranald: So were you fellas scrappers at all?

Jimmy: No.

Flora: Roy used to hide behind the store if there was a fight.

Roy: We'd hide behind the store. We were all pretty good up there. But I'll tell you, all the different schools in Framboise, North Framboise, Framboise Intervale, St. Esprit and all around, they all had schools. And what they used to do to raise money, they'd build a stage outside. You probably heard of that, then?

Ranald: No, no.

Roy: Haven't you? Well, they'd get a violin player from L'Ardoise. (Flora: Or the pipes.) He rode down on his bicycle and he'd play for the dance that night. It would be all square dancing and they'd make money. I don't know what they used to charge for the dance but that's the way they made their money.

Jimmy: It'd be twenty-five cents. (RT92-4B, July 22, 1992)

This part of the conversation moved to a discussion of pie socials, another fundraising activity, and ended with Flora and Jimmy commenting on what fun they had back then. At a break in their speech, I asked about storytellers from the area. The conversation took another turn as everyone recalled particular storytellers and then related their tall tales. The excerpt below began as mention of ghost stories led Lena to describe a childhood experience of listening to Lauchie MacDonald. Jimmy then referred to people dreaming of treasure and this prompted Flora to tell a story of Lauchie's having a prophetic dream. Roy, inspired perhaps by the theme of frightening stories, related a humorous narrative in which a local man received a bad scare. Roy's mention of a shipwreck or my question about treasure motivated Jimmy to tell about the region's most infamous shipwreck. Once again, there was little separation between narratives and the surrounding conversation.

Flora: Yes, and another thing was the ghost stories. They were big on ghost stories.

Jimmy: Well, if a guy knew you were there and you were scared in the night-time, look out!

Flora: And you had to go home in the dark.

Jimmy: You couldn't get home fast enough.

Flora: That's right!

Lena: I remember that time we went down with Wellington. We were waiting for Wellington to come home and we were at Lauchie MacDonald's and he was a great one to tell stories. And he'd be stamping his feet while sitting there. (Flora: Yes, I can remember that.) Great one for telling stories and I was only that high, I guess. My father was carrying my brother and we started down the road and I was so scared from listening to Lauchie MacDonald's ghost stories (Flora: I bet.) that I pulled up the collar of my coat like this [pretends to pull collar over face]. I was scared I'd see a ghost on the way. Oh, he was great for telling ghost stories and money in the ground.

Jimmy: Och, and money, about money—, places in the country, they'd dig money. They used to dream, you know, where there was money buried.

Flora: But you know, he really had a dream one time, out in the outer hill. He fell asleep there on a rock and he dreamt. He came home and told them about ships that were flying up above him and everybody thought he was crazy. And that was before the planes came into being and, well now, he prophesied that or predicted it or whatever or he dreamt it.

Jimmy: There were a lot of the fellas used to tell stories like that. They even believed it themselves, you know.

Flora: Yes, I guess so.

Roy: There was a ship landed on the shore in Crooked Lake quite a few years ago (Flora: Shipwreck!), while those people were still living on the farm down there. Dan Norman's father was still living. *Dòmhnall Beag Chalium* and *Coinneach Chalium* [Little Donald Malcolm and Kenneth Malcolm, i.e. the sons of Malcolm]. Malcolm MacLeod and Dan MacLeod were their names—Jimmy's uncle, this fella I'm going to talk about. So he used to go to Sydney, to the city, once a week or every second week and he'd always bring a bottle home with him and he'd hide it in the barn. He wouldn't bring it in the house. Bottle of rum, you know. And this time, the shipwreck, there were people got drowned and they took the bodies ashore and they put them in his barn on the threshing floor and covered them. So he came home and dropped off at the road, I guess, and went into the barn and he saw this canvas on the floor and he lifted the canvas up and there were three bodies. So he came into the

house and, of course, he was white as a sheet. He didn't know anything about the shipwreck and I guess it was quite a thing for him at the time. They had to tell him after he got in what happened. You hear about that?

Jimmy: No, never heard that one.

Roy: No? I often heard that.

Ranald: Do you remember any of the stories about treasure that they used to tell?

Jimmy: No. There was no treasure. I know once there in 1912, the *African Prince* came ashore, loaded with rum and Douglas fir. Well, the rum was in ninety-gallon barrels—that's a big keg—ninety-gallon barrels and she come ashore down here on the beach, down below MacCormicks'. (Ranald: Down at Belfry.) And it broke all apart and these steel drums were on the beach in the wintertime. Needless to say, they're out in the country now. So they sent a customs officer from Halifax. And this was scattered, rum was scattered, between Belfry Gut here and Winging Point and one man to patrol that. Now, you can figure it out for yourself.

Ranald: Winging Point in Gabarus? [There is another Winging Point in Fourchu.]

Jimmy: Yes. Well, I guess they got some of it but most of the people got it and took it home and hid it in the woods. It was all over the place for years and years! White rum, it was white rum. Well, I'll tell you one thing about it—I don't remember it but I remember working up in the valley in 1939, '39 or '40, and I come home and I went to Munroes', Mrs. Munroe's. I had a bad cold and she went upstairs and she come down with this bottle and she gave me a hot toddy. "Now," she says, "This is some of the white rum." Now, you can figure it out yourself, how old.

Flora: Yeah, from the *African Prince.*

Jimmy: From the *African Prince* in 1912.

Flora: Imagine!

Jimmy: How much she had, well, I don't know.

Flora: Well, the women in those days never really drank.

Jimmy: No.

Flora: They had it for medicine.

Jimmy: She might have only a gallon possibly, I don't know.

Flora: Yes, they'd keep it for medicine.

Jimmy: And there was a lot of it stored—.

Lena: Well, they used it for medicine—that's what they used it for.

Flora: Yes, for colds. It was the aspirin of the day, I guess.

Jimmy: They even hauled them and cut holes in the ice in the lake, dumped the barrel and never got it. 'Course a ninety-pound barrel, that's the same as one of those big molasses puncheons. You can't handle that! Horse and sleigh, you couldn't haul it, you know. Hide it in the woods, everywheres. I don't remember it but I remember the barrels around here. They used to have the pots for washing the wool. Remember? (Flora: Yes, yes, yes.) They were steel, same as a ninety-gallon drum.[6] (RT92-4B)

Not only did everyone participate in this conversation but they also felt free to add their editorial comments. Jimmy left no doubt as to his skepticism about the subject of prophetic dreams when he said of the storytellers,"They even believed it themselves." His reminiscences of the wreck of the *African Prince* were broken as his listeners speculated as to why Mrs. Munroe would have a bottle of rum in her house.

Remarks made by Roy and Flora indicated that storytellers often repeat favourite tales. Roy had barely introduced the story of the bodies in the barn, saying, "There was a ship landed on the shore in Crooked Lake quite a few years ago," when Flora responded, "Shipwreck!" She had obviously heard him tell this story enough times to know from his opening line exactly what

tale he was going to tell. Upon finishing his story, he commented that he has "often heard that." It is through repetition that listeners learn many of their stories and a body of stories becomes well-known within a folk community.

The discussion of white rum led me to ask if there had been rum-running in the area. They all assured me that this coastal region, with its numerous coves and a series of lakes only a few meters from the ocean, was a popular spot for rum-running in the 1930s. Roy described how the operations were run, then Jimmy commented, "I stored a bit of it myself." Lena laughed and related a short anecdote about Jimmy and rum-running:

> I can remember Jimmy trundled over to our place—you know, they stayed in the factory—and we were sitting on the steps out home and you could see Guyon Island just out like that. And I said, "Jimmy, isn't there a light flashing down there somewhere?" He looked and he said, "Yes, there's a light flashing. I guess I'd better go home, take the kerosene home." What he was going to do was get home and get down for the landing. (RT92-4A)

Jimmy then discussed his experiences unloading rum boats. This led to a number of stories about rum-running in which Jimmy was the main performer. Then Roy and Flora together told of two men who were arrested in Framboise after an adopted boy, angry with his stepfather, informed on them. When this topic ran out, Flora commented, "But you know, speaking of treasures, you remember they thought there was a treasure in our brook there?" She then told a story of Kate Ferguson, a friend of Flora's mother, who dreamed of treasure. People attempted to recover this bounty but always failed. Finally, Flora's mother discovered a hole which had been dug exactly where the treasure was supposed to lie. She was never sure whether someone had removed the treasure or whether Hector MacCormick (Plate 5.5 and 5.6), a local prankster, had played a trick on her.[7]

In response to a question of mine, we discussed drinking and attitudes to drinking in the area. This topic inspired Roy, Flora, and Lena to tell funny stories about people drinking too much. Roy, who had earlier ended the discussion of fighting, then changed the topic to religion. (Perhaps he did not want me to get the opinion that all the local people were fighters and drunks.) He began, "But you know, those years back then, they were pretty good-living people. The farmers were all religious people and most of them used to go to church...." This led to a long, descriptive discussion of Presbyterian church services, past and present attitudes to helping others, and the strictness of the Sabbath in their younger years.[8] Although the talk was rather serious, it was not without humour. Jimmy complained of sitting in pews for so long on Sacrament Sunday that his "rear end was sore." Lena insisted, to the laughter of all, that roosters were once locked up on Saturday night so that they would not indulge in sinful behaviour on the Sabbath. Flora then spoke of helping her neighbours, the MacCormicks. At the mention of Mrs. MacCormick, Jimmy told a humorous anecdote about breaking the Sabbath and ended the discussion of religion.

> On Saturday night, we used to play down at MacCormicks', a couple of violins and a guitar. I think she knew about it—and Alison [her son] would go over and sit—. He'd put the clock back about an hour because you couldn't play after midnight. Years ago, that was it. (Flora: Oh, no! She was the Sunday school teacher too.) And I still think that she could figure. (Flora: She probably knew.) She'd never go to bed till after we left and he'd put the clock back, you know. But if she knew it or not, I don't know. (RT92-4B)

A few more comments about the MacCormicks led to the most continuous storytelling session of the evening. Seven narratives emerged,

one right after the other. Unfortunately, in the general hilarity, the punch line of one was lost.

Jimmy: Hector [McCormick] was a good singer. (Flora: Yes, Hector—.) I never knew Hector could sing till after I came back from Halifax. I never knew he could sing. I never heard him singing when I was growing up.

Flora: Oh my goodness, Hector was funny wasn't he? Funny guy.

Ranald: Can you remember any stories about him or anything? I keep hearing about him all the time. People (laughing) tell me how funny he was but they never tell me what he did or what he said or—.

Jimmy: I'm trying to think of one but I can't re—.

Roy: You mean Hector?

Ranald: Hector, yeah.

Flora: Well, I remember I—.

Roy: I have a story of Hector.

Flora: Yeah, okay.

Roy: He was a very funny man. He had comical stories he used to tell.

Lena: A wonderful sense of humour. (Flora: Yes, yes.)

Roy: He was going to Capelin Cove—you know where Capelin Cove is?—with some friends from Boston. He was taking them down there to the cove to show them that just what it looked like there. (Flora: Beach.) And there was a big puddle on the road. He was in a truck with those two people and he stopped the truck just at the puddle and the lady in the front asked him, "What are you stopped for?" He says, "I'm waiting for the ferry." (laughter)

Lena: That sounds like Hector.

Flora: That's him.

Ranald: What was your story, Florence?

Flora: Oh, I was just thinking of Hallowe'en tricks, you know, they used to play around here. They used to play some BAD ones. This Sandy MacDonald, up here, had put down all these fence posts. I guess, right across the field, he was going to build a new fence. And the next day after Hallowe'en, he got up and every post was pulled out of the ground (laughs). So he was pretty upset. And Hector came to visit a few days after that. My father said to him, "My goodness, what RASCALS those people were to DO THAT to the MacDonalds." He says, "Yeah, they weren't very good people," he said. And then my father said, "But gee, it must have taken them hours and, and think of all the hard work. Now, he's got to put them all back in there." "Well, it's no worse than it was to pull them out of there." (laughter) —— So I guess he was involved in pulling them out. (laughs)

Roy: He was always playing tricks on people, you know. MacCormicks were always playing tricks. One morning, his sons were out late, they were out all night, I guess, and come home early in the morning. So, Hector got up early and he was laying on the kitchen floor. And they walked in the door and there was their father laying on the floor in the kitchen. They thought he was dead.

Ranald: Oh, no!

Flora: (laughing) He was dead, he was dead. Scared the wits out of them!

Roy: Scared the wits out of them.

Jimmy: Well, he was going by [my] home here one night and—. Oh, it was summertime, a nice night and I guess he got tired—I don't know where he was coming from—and he went up and laid on our veranda. And Archie MacIntyre was going down the road with a horse and wagon and he was (laughs), he was looking at this fella laying on the veranda and couldn't figure out who it was. After a while, Hector heard the wagon and that woke him up, you know. Then he come into the house. "Well, all I know," he says, "Don Archie woke me up," he says, "I was asleep on the veranda out there." (laughter)

Flora: I can remember the time that-. It kind of ran in those

MacCormicks, all this fun and tricks and stuff. And Hector's nephew there in Sydney, that Jimmy MacCormick, my goodness, he worked for Yazer Company in here, you know, it's a big name store in Sydney. And he brought out the mannequins and hung a mannequin down there on the road someplace and old Jim MacDonald was driving the mail (laughs) and he went to my mother's place (laughing) and he stopped and he said, "Whoa," he said, "I'm telling you," he said, "there's something, there's someone," he says, "hanging from a tree." (laughter) I guess there must have been an awful stir. And here it was Jimmy's mannequin. That was around then. People just started stealing that mannequin. People'd see it in different parts, different areas.

Lena: But who was it on Hallowe'en night that took the horse at the barn, you know, the horse, and replaced it.?

Jimmy: Oooh yes, somebody up here. This fella had a nice horse and he was going away, he was going away to somewheres. And he always fed the horse good. Halloween night, they took this old horse that could hardly move (Flora laughs) and put it in the guy's barn that had the nice horse. (laughter) So he had the horse back in and went to open to the barn, an old grey horse was in its place. "Well," he said, "I guess [inaudible] any of you" (laughter).

Flora: And remember the Hallowe'en trick they played on Philip MacDonald?

Jimmy: Oh, yeah. They used to take the outside toilet.

Flora: Yes. And took it across right to the point, across the lake. Up on Gabarus Lake and hung a lantern in it (laughter).

Jimmy: It'd be a light house. (laughter)

Roy: Oh, boy. If that had been today!

Flora: Imagine! Imagine if somebody did that today, (Jimmy: A lot of work, you know.) they'd be in jail.

Roy: You'd be in jail today.

Flora: But the tricks were really something else.

Jimmy: But old "John Nicholson" [pseudonym] up there, you know, "Dan Norman Nicholson's." They had nice apple trees, good apples. They wouldn't give you any for Hallowe'en night, for to go up there. And they always had their window open so you could-. They'd be hollering out. But we went up and they used to cut a great big whip of [inaudible]. Fellas'd go up in the tree and in the house, he'd be listening and he could hear them, you know. So, as he'd stick his head out the window, they put the whip to him (laughter). They slashed him all over the head with the whip. (laughter) What a lot of time they had, everybody in the tree had a bunch of apples, their pockets full and they'd eat 'em. But he wouldn't give any away, he wouldn't give you any. No.

Flora: Oh, my gracious. Yes, I suppose we should go home. We have to go to Sydney in the morning.

Lena: Oh, sit down, take a cup of tea. (RT92-5A)

The first four stories deal with Hector MacCormick (1906-1986) of Belfry and, later, Framboise Intervale, a local character admired for his quick wit and his abilities as a prankster.[9] Witty remarks are generally admired in Cape Breton and are often passed on through anecdotes (see e.g., Joe Neil MacNeil, 1987:361-79).[10] Roy's anecdote about Hector and the puddle is only one of many stories of Hector's quips that abound in the Gabarus-Framboise region.

Playing tricks, Hector's other favourite diversion, is a popular pastime in rural communities. As with witty remarks, a great deal of what would normally be unacceptable behaviour is not only forgiven but even admired if it is done with skill and wit in the form of a prank. Flora's story of Hector and the fence posts not only illustrates how hard people will work to commit practical jokes but also makes a joke about hard work, as a value, in rural life. On Hallowe'en, a night of misrule during which a community sanctions disruptive behaviour, mischief-makers perform tricks that often result in work for the victims. Hector's prank could have been an outlet for hostility,

on the other hand it could have been a compliment to Sandy MacDonald's ability to work. Hector may have been showing that Sandy was regarded as a strong man who could easily recover from a setback. Pauline Greenhill (1989), in a discussion of practical joking at shivarees in rural Ontario, explained that differences between benign actions and jokes that "got out of hand" were based on how disruptive they proved to the farmer who was the victim (56). Greenhill says that when a plow, too big to go through a barn door, was disassembled and put together in the pristine dairy, the male victim could expect help from the pranksters (different rules existed for pranks involving the domestic/female environment). Whether Sandy MacDonald would eventually get help from Hector is unclear.

Flora's narrative ended with another of Hector's witticisms: "Well, it's no worse than it was to pull them out of there." Through his humorous comment, he was able to promote his reputation as a prankster without directly taking responsibility for this misdeed. However, Hector was leaving an opening for word to get back to Sandy MacDonald and could probably expect to be victimized in turn, next Hallowe'en.

Roy's story of Hector lying on the kitchen floor showed there could be a deeper aspect to Hector's tricks. Like "Jack" of fairy tale fame, Hector was able to put his ability to fool others to practical use. In this case, he used a prank to teach two wayward youths a lesson about their behaviour. Hector's son, "J. C.," confirmed this story. But his version ended with a typical Hector quip.

> My cousin and I, one morning, came in—'Course we'd been out all night—came in and I guess he saw us coming down the driveway so he just laid on the floor. We come in and he was stretched out on the floor like he just DROPPED. So I got taken aback but I bent down to see what was wrong with him. Acted as if he couldn't move, he couldn't speak, or anything else. Then Dad just bounced up and said, "Oh, I guess I forgot to go to bed." (RT92-49A, Aug. 18, 1992)

Hector's comment was not simply a joke but part of an act staged for the benefit of the boys. His making them worry was a payment for their being out all night, often a source of great worry to parents. His remark about forgetting to go to bed satirized their behaviour. It was the boys who had worried others by "forgetting" to go to bed. Hector's whole performance was an indirect but memorable way of letting the boys know that their behaviour was unacceptable.

The final anecdote about Hector MacCormick, Jimmy's story of him sleeping on the veranda, is an illustration of Hector's eccentricity and willingness to step outside social norms. Much of the humour in the story rests on the fact that that it is about Hector, who is expected to be funny. Nonetheless, Hector was not a socially marginal character. Rather, he was respected for his intelligence, his integrity, his learning, his religious activities, his singing, and his storytelling. Not only was Hector a self-taught Gaelic scholar but he was also a Presbyterian elder. His ability to amuse others allowed him to behave in eccentric ways without alienating his neighbours.

The topic of Hector's tricks and witticisms reminded Flora of another prank played by a MacCormick nephew. When her narrative ended, Lena prompted Jimmy to tell a story of a Hallowe'en prank. This led to Flora's brief description of a Halloween trick in which an outhouse was moved to a distant point and made to look like a lighthouse. Moving outhouses was a popular Halloween prank throughout Canada. In this case, the stunt was given a coastal-dweller's touch. After brief speculation by Roy and Flora as to the effects of such behaviour today, Jimmy was inspired to relate a narrative about another Hallowe'en prank. Hallowe'en in Canada has traditionally been a night of practical jokes and mischief. Sometimes Hallowe'en "fun"

goes beyond community standards and enters the realm of vandalism and endangerment to innocent people. As a result, contemporary law enforcement practices have led to the decline of Hallowe'en tricks in most urban areas. In many rural areas, however, Hallowe'en pranks continue. A few middle-aged people in the Framboise area go to elaborate lengths to play practical jokes on each other on this night.

The distribution of folk justice is an important part of the Hallowe'en tradition in rural areas. Annie Hardy of Gabarus told me, "You'd see who was liked. One man couldn't get along with kids and he always had trouble. I never had any trouble" (fieldnotes, July 27, 1992). Dennis Mann, of Brougham, Ontario, made a similar comment regarding that province's small towns and villages. He told me that he had only to look at the houses of sports coaches on the morning after Halloween to gauge the youngsters' opinions of them. Rural society has strong expectations of its members. In Jimmy's story, the orchard owner was clearly transgressing the rules of neighbourliness. Jimmy, now an elderly man who might be expected to sympathize with the adult victim, still maintains that the man's meanness brought on his harsh punishment.

Following this section of the evening's storytelling, there was a little more chat before Roy and Flora got up to leave. A forceful assertion by Flora ("No, no, no. Oh, no tea. No. Don't do that to me.") made clear that they were not staying for tea. Lena, perhaps changed by her years in Halifax or by her own tea overdose, did not enforce the local women's rule that guests cannot leave without having tea.

We carried on two conversations at once until Flora and Roy went out the door. As Jimmy stood in the doorway conversing with them in Gaelic,

Lena began telling me about the state of Gaelic in the community. Jimmy soon returned and they explained that although they both spoke Gaelic as young people (Lena was never fluent), they had to, a degree, lost their use of it after living away for many years. The discussion of Gaelic led Lena to prompt Jimmy to tell an anecdote about his pious grandfather making a rather inappropriate remark in Gaelic after being surprised at the end of evening prayers.

As we had tea, I asked, "Did people talk about forerunners and things like that?" (The term forerunners usually refers to experiences of things happening before they happen in ordinary life. These noises or visions are often associated with death.) Lena showed by her straightforward comments, such as "It's only certain people that would see those things," that she believed in predictive phenomena. However, Jimmy again expressed skepticism, making such comments as: "That's what they CLAIM, anyway;" "But I never seen anything, I was on the road all hours of the night;" and "I travelled all hours of the night but I never seen any lights."[11] Despite his attitude, Jimmy related a story of his brother returning home one night, two weeks before he was drowned, and seeing the house lit up when, in fact, it was dark. Presumably, he was seeing a forerunner of his wake.

Lena then told a story of her mother hearing a forerunner, followed by Jimmy describing funerals of his younger days. Lena related another narrative of her aunt seeing a forerunner of a wake. Talk of wakes led Jimmy to tell the following story of two young women playing a trick at a wake. In this excerpt, Lena prompted Jimmy to tell another story, about Hector McCormick's antics at a wake.

Jimmy: There was one [wake] for my grandmother, Grandmother MacKay died. At the wake, Annie MacCormick, she'd be Hector's sister, she was there and there was a Mary Ferguson—she was an awful rig [i.e., a rascal or character; this is not necessarily a negative comment] too—and there was John Ferguson. So at twelve o'clock at night, they made tea and give everybody a cup of tea, then they went in and cut the HARDEST bread that was in the bread box. They put it on his plate. And they put a cup of tea and they put epsom salts in the cup of tea. And they gave him his tea with the food. Poor fella was trying to eat, and every time he'd bite the bread everybody could hear him, "Crunch! Crunch!" and they were standing in the pantry door watching the racket. (laughs)

Ranald: So was there a lot of joking around and things at the wakes?

Jimmy: Oh, yeah. Especially after the family went to bed, you know, the immediate family.

Lena: Jimmy, what's the time Hector came downstairs? (chuckles)

Jimmy: Who?

Lena: Hector.

Jimmy: Oh, Hector, yeah.

Lena: Came downstairs and stood with the [inaudible] on.

Jimmy: Oh, one of his aunts died. I was down there myself that night and he had been up the night before. There was two MacDonald fellas, a MacDonald and a Mathieson fella, there. So they were kind of timid. They were going to go home early anyhow. So Hector says—he come down, oh, it'd be ten o'clock, I think—"Fellas, I was up last night," he said, "I think, I'm going to bed," he said. So he took off. [They] said, "We're going home anyway, pretty soon."

So, anyhow, he went in, he went up, and he sat on the stairs. And she was a tall woman, about six foot one or two, his aunt. In them days, they wore long black coats, you know. And when you come out the porch door, you had to come around the front of the house. And he was setting right on the steps on the front. He heard them, when they left, said "Good night" and all that. And when they come out the porch door, he stepped right out

> around the corner of the house with his black coat on. He said, (in deep voice) "WHERE ARE YOU GOING, BOYS?" he said (chuckles). And then he went back up the stairs.
>
> At three o'clock in the morning, he got up. He came down. He looked around. Here the two fellas were still there. They never went home. (laughter) Says, "I thought you fellas were going home." "Oh, no, we decided we'd stay." (RT92-5B)

When Jimmy ended this story, we returned to the subject of funerals and had a three-way discussion about funerals and local cemeteries. After we exhausted this topic, I concluded by asking Jimmy and Lena some biographical questions for my records. After all, this was an interview despite the fact that it fortuitously turned into a storytelling session as close to the ideal "natural situation" as I could hope to record. Jimmy and Lena both said how much they'd enjoyed themselves and invited me to drop by for tea any time.

5.3 "Just like a visit"

Undoubtedly, my presence at the evening's gathering affected the conversation. The MacLeods may have told more narratives than usual because they knew that I was there to hear stories. They explained some events in greater detail for my benefit. They seldom digressed from storytelling or discussing community history to talk about topics of current interest which might have been more prevalent in a typical visit (e.g., neighbours, relatives, health, taxes, road conditions). They spoke about some subjects only in direct response to my questions. However, despite the fact that I attended the tape recorder and occasionally took notes or glanced at papers, I was an active participant in the conversation. My questions were

often responses to what they had said previously rather than being obtrusive interjections into their talk.

As mentioned previously, this recording session was in Lena's opinion, "just like a visit: sitting around talking, telling stories, and having tea." The couples easily adapted themselves to the situation, joking, teasing, and often controlling the conversation. Their stories were generally directed toward each other as well as toward me. At various points during the evening, I was silent (except for my laughter) while the older people talked. Many of their stories were well-crafted and had obviously been told countless times before. Notice, for example, Jimmy's use of a series of short sentences as he reached the end of his tale of Hector's prank at the wake. Lena also prompted Jimmy to tell particular tales, showing that these stories were familiar parts of his repertoire. The evening's storytelling was, in many ways, typical entertainment for this group of friends. Although both couples had lived away for lengthy periods, their neighbours regarded them as community members, recommending both Flora and Jimmy as local people who "had lots of stories." Their storytelling is representative of the region.

5.4 Narrative Analysis

A narrative, by definition, must have a plot line. Something must happen. A story must go beyond mere description. Flora's mention of an outhouse being put on a point as a prank is not a narrative (for an explanation of "narrative," see Chapter II). She was offering a brief reference to a humorous situation as an invitation for others to provide the narrative.

Although other such promptings were often followed by a story from one of the others, this one was not, although Jimmy did offer further comments.

Flora: And remember the Halloween trick they played on Philip MacDonald?

Jimmy: Oh, yeah. They used to take the outside toilet.

Flora: Yes. And took it across right to the point, across the lake. Up on Gabarus Lake and hung a lantern in it (laughter).

Categorizing narratives for analysis has inherent difficulties. Stories told in conversation do not always have precise beginnings and endings.[12] When Jimmy told his story of the wreck of the *African Prince* and of his drink at Mrs. Munroe's, was this a story of a shipwreck which led to another story, or was it all one narrative? I counted the two episodes as one narrative but could just as easily have classed them as two.

Categorizing narratives does not provide precise information about either the storytellers or their community. Because repertoires are ever changing, attempts to capture their exact nature are fruitless. The narratives related in Jimmy and Lena's kitchen represent only a small sampling of the repertoires of any of the storytellers. A rather apt adage (attributed to Mark Twain and Benjamin Disraeli, among others) has it that "there are three kinds of lies: lies, damn lies, and statistics." Statistical renderings of complex situations often lead to simplistic and misleading conclusions. However, a thematic breakdown of the narratives told by the MacLeods indicates general patterns in the narrative repertoires of these storytellers and their community.

In the course of the evening, the MacLeods told thirty-one stories, twenty-five when all were there and six when only Jimmy and Lena were

present (see Table 5.1). Virtually all these narratives dealt with unusual happenings. As Michael Taft explains, the "unusual" is a vital component of narrative.

> As far as the "unusual" is concerned, there are few stories told under any circumstance that concern the usual and everyday events of life. Brushing one's teeth, eating meals, going to work, buying items in a store and the like are not the stuff of tales; only when the routine is broken, only when we are caught in an absurd situation or when one acts in an unexpected or illogical way does a story arise. (1983:80)

However, stories were only a part of the evening's conversation. Much of the talk was about with the mundane details of life (working, socializing, and passing the time) in the 1920s and 30s, yet much of what was talked about was "unusual" to me, the intended audience of these descriptions. Even for the others, the appeal of such talk lay in the fact that the things discussed contrasted greatly with contemporary life.

On examining the stories told, the most striking factor is the storytellers' focus on their own community. All but two of the narratives took place in the Gabarus-Framboise region and involved local people. The exceptions involved distant ancestors or contemporary relatives of those present. In a society which values kinship, these narratives, too, had local relevance. I asked questions about the past, early in the evening, and thereby influenced the others to think about "them days." No doubt, on other evenings, these same people shared stories of their experiences in Halifax and Arlington. Nonetheless, even when the storytelling was at its most spontaneous and relaxed, no one related a single story which did not involve the local community. Jimmy might well have recalled a tale of a prank in the Halifax shipyards. Flora could have told of a friend's clairvoyant experience

Table 5.1 Thematic Patterns in the MacLeods' Narratives

31	narratives related (25 with all there, 6 after Roy and Flora left)
8	told by Flora
4	told by Roy
1	told by Roy and Flora together
12	told by Jimmy (8 with all there, 4 after Roy and Flora left)
6	told by Lena (4 with all there, 2 after Roy and Flora left)
29	local (Gabarus-Framboise region)
23	humorous
19	not what it seems
13	personal experiences
12	local characters
9	death
8	pranks
8	illegal activity (rumrunning, theft, vandalism, assault associated with pranks)
7	reckless behaviour
6	deviance from local values
5	supernatural
5	unintentionally funny remarks (made by a character in the story)
4	prophesy
3	witty remarks
3	sea
3	tall tales
3	forerunners
3	work
3	danger
2	history (settlement, long-ago happenings in the region)
2	violence
2	defying authority
2	farming
1	disaster (shipwreck in which lives were lost)
1	famous people
1	play on supernatural
1	hardship
1	family history
1	technical details
1	treasure
1	solving problems

Note: Most stories contain multiple themes. Numbers reflect general patterns; they do not provide exact data.

in Massachusetts. Instead, they stuck to local events. Such community-centred storytelling is typical not only of the Gabarus-Framboise region but of rural areas generally.

A substantial majority of the narratives (twenty-three out of thirty-one) were humorous. Although not all local storytellers are humorists, humour is a mainstay of rural storytelling. Residents of the Gabarus-Framboise region value laughter. Different people made references to "funny" or "comical" people throughout the evening's conversation. They remembered stories from tall-tale tellers of earlier days. Of the humorous narratives told, eight involved pranks and three contained consciously witty remarks (another five included unintentionally witty remarks made by a character in the story), indicating that people of the region work at creating comic situations. The wits and pranksters are conscious of the possibility of being immortalized as a result of their words and deeds. Narratives about practical jokes are closely related to the jokes themselves.[13] Hector MacCormick was not willing to sit passively while his neighbours discussed his Hallowe'en trick of digging up fenceposts. Instead, he indirectly took credit for the prank.

Nearly two-thirds of the stories (nineteen out of thirty-one) present a world in which something is not what it seems. A neighbour's personal experience narrative evolves into a fantastic tale of the impossible. A man's strange dream of flying ships becomes reality. A farmer discovers that his barn is a morgue. A hole where treasure has been dug may be evidence of a practical joke. A clock is used to mislead its owner into believing that it is not yet Sunday. Dead people are, in reality, either alive or mannequins. A barn contains the wrong horse. Lights in a house or flowers in a living room are

visions of things that have not yet happened. A woman's ghost is a living man.

In these stories, anything—words, objects, animals, or people—may prove to be different from what one expects. This attitude confirms other aspects of Cape Breton life. Teasing is commonplace. "Telling lies" is done with a straight face. A person who is considered totally trustworthy when dealing with matters of importance might make up a story on the spot and insist it is true. A child must learn to distinguish truth from fiction, even when separating the two might sometimes prove difficult for an adult. The proliferation of narratives in which something is not what it seems, combined with gentle, playful teasing, and word play in general, encourages similar wit in children. As well, such tales encourage skepticism and create a need to look below the surface in many situations.

Stories of this type make it difficult for rural dwellers to be complacent. Life might seem secure and predictable to people who know both their environment and the people they see around them. However, these narratives let listeners know that life is not obvious and even people who are familiar can act in surprising ways. Unlike many contemporary legends, these stories do not generally present the world as a dangerous place in which a person's safety is constantly under threat. Instead, the world is shown to be a place in which people must use their wits and not accept either people or things at face value.

Such a viewpoint is not limited to Gabarus-Framboise society. In an analysis of family stories told by my relatives in Prince Edward Island, I found that over twenty-eight of fifty-seven stories contained the message that things are not what they seem (R. Thurgood, 1992:13). Moreover, tall tales—all

containing the same message—were once common throughout rural North America. Many country people, especially men, have a tradition of lying for the sheer fun of it. We Always Lie to Strangers (1951), the title of Vance Randolph's collection of Ozark folktales, summarizes a widespread attitude.

A great many European folktales also contain the message that things are not what they seem. Two of the more obvious examples are: "Chicken Little" (or "Henny Penny"), in which an acorn falls on the bird's head and, in her panic to warn the king that "the sky is falling," she is tricked by a seemingly helpful fox into "taking a shortcut" through his den; and "The Emperor's New Clothes" in which the despot is deceived by two confidence artists who convince him to appear in public wearing clothes which can be seen "only by those who are fit for their positions" when, in fact, he is naked. Numerous other less-blatant tales tell of characters being misled when they accept appearances (e.g.: Snow White takes gifts from the wicked queen disguised as an old woman; Cinderella's stepsisters do not recognize her in beautiful clothing; and fierce giants are intimidated by The Brave Little Tailor, whose belt reads "Seven with One Blow," referring to the killing of flies and not men).

Many anonymous urban jokes and all riddles are based on the idea that something is not what it seems. However, these are regarded as fiction by those who share them. Unlike practical jokes and lies, they are less likely to victimize the innocent passerby or listener. Anonymous jokes serve less as an illustration of reality than as a commentary on it.[14] Humorous rural stories, on the other hand, are, in theory at least, about what is real. Practical jokes take place in the everyday world. These tales and pranks create a world in which rural people must use wit and caution to avoid becoming figures in

funny stories themselves.[15] Since one only has a single identity or very limited number of identities in rural society, one's social identity is precarious and must be protected.

To return to categorizing the stories, thirteen relate personal experiences, the personal experience narrative being a common and important genre in informal storytelling. Twelve involve local characters, people who provide entertainment by transgressing social norms. These stories define acceptable behaviour by immortalizing people who go beyond or live at the edge of what is allowable. Sandra Stahl stated that "the one important function of the local character anecdote is the characterization of a local 'character'....Whether an anecdote is borrowed 'from tradition' or develops from a personal narrative, it is maintained in the community because it records the kind of thing the 'character' would do, given his peculiar personality" (1975:294).[16] When Roy told of Hector's witty remark at the puddle, Lena and Flora responded, "That sounds like Hector" and "That's him." The story of Hector sleeping on a neighbour's porch further illustrates Stahl's point. This anecdote, unlike most others about Hector, holds little humour for a person who never met him. Although he was clearly transgressing social norms, this in itself does not make the story funny. The humour comes mainly from the fact that the protagonist is Hector. Jimmy's audience can picture Hector stumbling into the house, half-asleep, and delivering his odd comment. Hector as a "character" occupied a traditional and acceptable social role, unlike some local characters who are either mentally unbalanced or wildly eccentric.

Five stories, besides the story of Hector on the porch, are about deviance from community values. Residents may hold contradictory views

on the ethics of smuggling liquor during prohibition but informing on a relative out of anger is clearly unacceptable. Other examples of deviance are chronic drunkenness and related dangerous driving, meanness, and swearing at the end of prayer. Like local character anecdotes, stories of deviance, whether serious or humorous, illustrate improper behaviour, though in some cases they may celebrate rather than censure such conduct. The narrators related these tales either as humorous or memorable events of the past to contribute to the evening's conversation. The stories, despite their illustrations of community values, were not meant to teach lessons.

Nine stories relate to death, whether real or feigned. Four of these involve disasters (shipwrecks) or untimely deaths. Death is, of course, a prime source of fear and tension to people everywhere. A ship wrecked on the shore or a young person killed in an accident disrupts community life and forces everyone to focus on both the loss and their own mortality. Death sometimes comes with drama and provides material for stories. A peaceful and expected death is only talked about for a short time. Some stories show that at times there is a playful attitude surrounding death. Jokes at wakes, Hector playing dead, and hanged mannequins indicate that the subject is not totally serious. Gaelic humour, both in Cape Breton and Scotland, is often dark and sometimes shocking to outsiders. My grandmother, Dolena Thurgood, who was in her nineties, was asked by a long distance caller, "How is everyone?" Her reply was, "They're all dead" (which was true of most of her peers). When I brought her a bouquet, she commented, "What lovely flowers! You must have heard that I was dead." Two humorous greetings used by elderly Scottish Cape Bretoners are, "Are you dead yet?" and "Was that you or your brother that was killed in the war?" Such joking helps to

dispel tension surrounding death and shows an acceptance of death. Death is neither a sacred nor a taboo topic. The pranks associated with wakes have no place in a modern funeral home with its sterile atmosphere and soft music. The freedom to joke gave people some power to deal with death on their own terms. However, as Peter Narváez pointed out in regard to wakes in Newfoundland, pranks were played only at wakes of elderly people (1994:280). Untimely deaths were much more solemn occasions and the narratives about them are generally serious (see also, Small, 1997:23).

Eight stories include illegal activity, seven involve reckless behaviour (fighting, drinking heavily, being unnecessarily in dangerous settings), and two contain violence. All these tales are about men. In most cases, their behaviour was condoned and treated as a source of amusement by the storytellers and listeners. Rum-running is simply part of the region's history. Pranks that went beyond the bounds of legality are remembered with nostalgia. The MacLeods take pride in their local brawlers who appear to have been fighting for their village's honour. This view of a society in which violence was common and laws often broken may be surprising to those who have an idyllic view of the country and who believe that the past was more peaceful than the present. However, such narratives are common in rural communities.

My study of family stories from Prince Edward Island, entitled "Rural Respectability and Male Recklessness," as the title implies, indicates similar behavioural patterns. Eleven of the fifty-seven P.E.I. stories are about reckless or violent behaviour by males (I did not include illegal activity as an analytical category). The popularity of these narrative themes indicates that violence, vandalism, and a disregard for rules—all within limits—are not

deviant or subversive actions but behaviours which are expected of young men, if not actively encouraged.[17] In the past, country boys in both areas were clearly expected to be tough, willing to take risks, and to fight when necessary. Even if some lads were cautious and law-abiding, those who crossed boundaries of respectable behaviour and indulged in recklessness were not deviants but young citizens following well-established social patterns. However, recklessness among women is not tolerated in most rural communities. Stories of female misdeeds are generally whispered rather than used to evoke laughter at social gatherings.

Five narratives have supernatural themes.[18] Of these, four are about prophetic experiences. The other is about a dream of treasure (if the treasure had been discovered, this story too would have been classed as prophetic). Certain supernatural experiences, while common throughout the world, are talked about more openly in some cultures than in others.[19] In the Gabarus-Framboise region, forerunners, prophetic dreams, and the Second Sight are talked about openly. The stories told at the MacLeod gathering were typical of such stories. Despite the popularity of these topics, they are as debatable in this community as supernatural beliefs are anywhere. Jimmy's comments indicated clearly that he doubted the truth of such stories.

One story, about Hector disguising himself as his dead aunt, involved a play on the supernatural. Where there is belief in ghosts, there are often traditions of stories which debunk such beliefs ("... so I went up above and it was only a cat walking across the grain bin") and pranks involving fake ghosts. However, although belief in forerunners is and has been much more prevalent than belief in ghosts in the Gabarus-Framboise region, I did not collect a single story of anyone creating a practical joke involving a

forerunner. (Supernatural stories and beliefs will be explored in greater detail in Chapter VIII).

Two stories are about history in a formal sense—nearly all the stories are about the community's history. Lena's story of her family immigrating was a straightforward telling of an important event in her family's past. Jimmy began his story of the wreck of the *African Prince* as a tale about another notable local happening. Not surprisingly, given Jimmy's personality, it developed into a humorous personal experience narrative about his receiving a drink of well-aged rum.

Finally, one story is about a famous person. Anecdotes about famous people are very popular. There is a certain delight in being able to connect ourselves with celebrities, however distantly, and in getting a glimpse of these people when their public personas are set aside. As well, the teller gains some status by knowing something about a celebrity which is not generally known. The evening's storytelling also included examples of other themes which will be discussed in more detail in regard to the repertoires of other storytellers in the following chapters.

5.5 The Storytellers

All four people had different roles in this storytelling session. Flora and Jimmy were the dominant storytellers. Jimmy told twelve stories (eight with everyone there and four after Roy and Flora left), Flora told eight, Lena told six (four when all were there and two after), and Roy told four. As well, Roy and Flora told one together.

Flora's areas of interest were quite broad and included five humorous

tales of local happenings, two supernatural stories, and one anecdote about Prince Charles. As well, she was a very active listener, encouraging the others by expressing her agreement or disagreement and her surprise or disapproval during their stories.

Jimmy was only slightly less vocal than Flora, continually making comments throughout the evening. His stories were usually longer than hers. They were also more specialized, eleven out of twelve being humorous. Although he told one tale about forerunners, he was clearly uncomfortable with the subject and soon led the conversation back to funny stories.

Jimmy's humorous narrations not only indicate that he has a good memory for comic tales but also reflect his attitude to life. We all laughed heartily as he described himself and others pushing an unmuffled truck, loaded with rum, out of the boggy earth of the barrens on an otherwise silent night. This story is an example of what Margaret Read MacDonald calls "[t]he disaster-as-humorous-anecdote" (99). Jimmy's adventure could not have been very funny while it was happening, with men working frantically, knowing that there were Christian Temperance Unionists living nearby and Mounties regularly patrolling the coast. But, as MacDonald explains, this type of tale "functions as a means of defining reality" (101). It enables one to perceive the world as a place filled with irony and fun, where even trouble is not without its humorous side. In MacDonald's words, "Perhaps the raconteur whose narrative sense lets him see at a glance that 'It could have been worse...' is already on the road to feeling a little better about his disastrous experience" (100). Jimmy demonstrated his ability to see life's comic side by turning this dramatic incident into a funny story.

The evening's other participants, Lena and Roy, while competent

storytellers, told fewer narratives than Flora or Jimmy. Lena told four stories with everyone there and two after. Three of the first four were humorous, the other was a serious tale about family history. The stories told after Roy and Florence left were about forerunners. Lena became quite involved in their telling and perhaps, in other circumstances, might have told more. But the talk in her kitchen on this night was generally light-hearted and the setting was inappropriate for more serious stories. Besides telling stories, Lena made numerous comments during the evening. She asked questions, expressed viewpoints, and made several witty remarks. For instance, when Jimmy finished his story of successfully removing the truckload of rum from the bog, Lena provoked great laughter with her quip, "The devil's good to his own." She also provided vivid descriptions of past situations (e.g., returning home after listening to Lauchie MacDonald's ghost tales) which helped the others recall related stories. Lena's final role in the evening—besides the important one of being hostess and serving tea—was to act as a prompter to Jimmy. She obviously enjoyed his narrations and reminded him of relevant, humorous stories from his repertoire.

Roy told four amusing stories. His tale of the man discovering bodies in the barn was particularly entertaining. Flora told me during another interview that Roy often relates a humorous and exaggerated account of her returning from California to marry him (RT92-34B, Aug. 13, 1992). Although he is able to tell a story well, Roy was more inclined to listen quietly than were any of the others. During both recording sessions, he was more concerned with presenting facts and developing a picture of life in earlier times than in providing entertainment with narratives. His role in these recordings was primarily that of an oral historian rather than of an anecdotal

storyteller. At times, he also directed the talk away from its celebration of the community's rambunctious and disreputable side to show that the region's citizens were hard-working, religious, and community minded. His reminiscences, like Lena's descriptions, served as memory aids for the other storytellers, reminding them of stories from their own repertoires. Roy obviously enjoyed the stories of the others, listening attentively and laughing heartily.

The storytelling session was a highly participatory event. Despite Flora and Jimmy's dominant roles, the participants could not be divided clearly into performers and audience. All told some stories and listened to others. The line between performer and audience was thin. There was constant verbal interaction within the group as people expressed agreement or disagreement, made corrections, filled in gaps, or simply reacted to what had been said (e.g., "Oh, no! She was the Sunday school teacher too.") However, when Lena told of her ancestors being captured by pirates, this was clearly her own story and the others were silent. At the other extreme of storytelling, Flora and Roy together developed a narrative about rum-running during a conversation in which everyone participated.

Ranald: So, did anyone ever get arrested around here?

Jimmy: No, nobody got arrested.

Flora: In Framboise, they did.

Ranald: What happened there?

Lena: Well, somebody informed on them.

Flora: Yeah. Somebody squealed on them and three guys were arrested.

Roy: Two.

Flora: Yeah, but there were three. One fella got out of it. I don't remember the third fella but Malcolm Dan and Dan Norman, they went to Arichat [site of the Richmond County courthouse and jail].

Roy: Roddie, wasn't it, Roddie MacLeod too?

Flora: Which Roddie?

Roy: *Rodaidh Dhòmhnaill Ruaidh* [Roddie Red Donald].

Flora: Oh, yes. That was the third guy. He was such a comical guy, that Roddie.

Roy: See, a lot of those people at that time had adopted a boy to work, to do some work for them. And this young fella wanted to borrow the horse.

Flora: He had a date.

Roy: He had a date and couldn't borrow the horse from his stepfather or whoever he was.

Flora: That was Dan Norman with the George Alison horse.

Roy: And Dan Norman wouldn't give him the horse for the date, the horse and sleigh.

Flora: Because he was going to go to the landing. And he couldn't tell him either what he was doing.

Roy: He was going to go to the landing and use the horse, I guess. So, anyway, the boy squealed on him and (Flora: He [the boy] was upset.) -they had to serve time, thirty days or so. The adopted boy squealed on them.

Flora: And he left and never came back.

Jimmy: Where did he ever go to?

Roy: I think he went to Halifax. Halifax.

Flora: Some people saw him different places but he was scared to go back.

Roy: Oh, yes. He just ran away. (RT92-4A)

Throughout this part of the conversation, both Roy and Flora took active roles in developing the narrative and moving it along. However, most stories were clearly told by one person although others might have contributed comments to the narration.[20]

This interactive storytelling style seems anarchistic to those raised in other styles of oral communication. Margaret Read MacDonald commented, "My entire paternal family, whose adults were all raised in Southern Indiana, carries on this kind of rapid conversational patter complete with incessant 'jumps' [i.e., jumping ahead in the story, telling what will happen next] by listeners. To my husband, raised in a family structure of taciturn men, who are slow to come to speech and very respectful of each other's verbal space, our entire family seems rude and inconsiderate" (35, footnote 6; bracketed section is my addition). However, MacDonald says that this type of interaction is expected by the people of Scipio: "By such continued verbal support of the speaker, the audience affirms that they are still 'with him,' that they are still 'playing the conversational game'" (32).

The conversational game has its own rules and becoming a competent player requires considerable skill. On this evening in Belfry, the group worked together to create the storytelling event. When a person related a story, the comments, rather than interrupting the story, almost always fit into the narrative flow. The exceptions happened when someone wanted a point of clarification. The narration halted while the details were established. Otherwise, questions and comments which required a response from the

narrator were saved until the end of stories when listeners were allowed, if not expected, to join in. The conversation moved easily from one topic to the next with stories usually arising in response to a previous tale or topic of discussion (although I occasionally elicited topics with a question).[21] The narratives were not weighted down with superfluous description, yet the tellers were aware of my presence and provided enough details so that I too could follow all the stories. Everyone's talents were respected. Lena's and Roy's descriptions and Lena's witty remarks seemed as important to the evening's entertainment as did the actual narratives. Despite the dominance of two storytellers throughout the evening, this was a shared event in which all participants had active and important parts.

5.6 Summary

During the course of the evening's conversation, the four storytellers presented a vivid picture of life on the Gabarus-Framboise coast during the 1920s and 30s. The talk revealed important aspects, both positive and negative, of the community's social history. The style of storytelling, with everyone participating in the creation of stories and with humour emerging regularly, parallels the content of the stories. These narratives show a society in which everyone knew each other, differences in social status were minor,[22] and humour was a regular element of life. Still, the narratives of sudden death, shipwreck, and the willingness of ordinary citizens to break the law (Jimmy did not even drink during his rum-running days) show that life was not without serious problems.

The MacLeods' storytelling was, in many ways, typical of evening visits

in numerous rural communities. The focus on local people and settings, the interactive flow of conversation, and the combination of humour and drama, are aspects of socializing at home in many locales. Not all country people are as talkative though. Either rural or urban dwellers may, like Margaret Read MacDonald's in-laws, be used to keeping silence and be uncomfortable with the seeming "interruptions" of group narration. Many city people, on the other hand, communicate in a manner similar to the MacLeods. Urban families or co-workers may create stories together in highly interactive conversations. City friends may gather in doughnut shops or cafés and laugh about shared experiences.

The uniqueness of this evening's narratives lies in the uniqueness of the community itself. Aspects of life on the Gabarus-Framboise coast—such as particular inter-village rivalries, the use of Gaelic words, local turns of phrase (sometimes influenced by the Gaelic mother tongue), a history of work on land and sea, and strict Presbyterian practices—combined with an idiosyncratic collection of people to create a community unlike any other. All the storytellers know this community and virtually all its residents. Unlike a great many urbanites, with the exception of those from stable and longstanding neighbourhoods, the MacLeods share numerous points of reference going back to their earliest years.

The MacLeods would understand the stories and storytelling styles of Scipio, Indiana or Borden, Saskatchewan. They would be able to contribute to an evening's storytelling and evoke some laughter in either setting. However, their storytelling during this evening's visit was primarily, despite my presence, a sharing of narratives from their own folk community. The stories were set in an environment familiar to the four friends. The people

and events of years ago were brought to the surface, as they had been many times before. Despite the fact that Roy, Flora, Jimmy, and Lena had all lived away for lengthy periods, the history and values of their home community were reinforced.

The recurrence of this type of storytelling in a folk community keeps the past close to the present. The environment in which one's concepts of reality were formed and social identity was developed is recognized, re-examined, and reinforced during the course of visiting and socializing. As mentioned in Chapter II, a city person may have a variety of identities and can create personas based on a selective or imagined history. However, such options are not available to members of a rural folk community. Jimmy, Lena, Roy, and Florence were either participants in, or close to the events described in the stories and can see whether their own memories and understandings accord with those of the others. For these people, one's past is not something private and personal which can be edited and re-formed by a narrator and then presented to others unchallenged. Instead, one's memories are questioned and examined, perhaps even reassembled, in the course of an evening's entertainment.

Flora, Roy, Jimmy, and Lena MacLeod are typical of the Gabarus-Framboise region's anecdotal storytellers. However, community members also speak highly of other more specialized storytellers. In the next three chapters, I will examine some of these narrators and their repertoires.

Notes

1. A major portion of this interview was published in Cape Breton's Magazine 74 (Spring, 1999):51-62 (R. Thurgood, "A Visit... ").

2. Roger Abrahams (1978) explained the basic elements of conversation:

> Though *conversations* or *having a talk* tend to be catch-all native terms for a wide range of our speech activities, the common thread of these diverse interactions are (sic) that; (1) theoretically there is equal access to the state-of-talk for everyone involved; (2) all will listen to what the speaker is saying; (3) all are expected to impart significant information, i.e., have a *point* and *make* it during a *turn;* and (4) no one should deliver prepared speeches in such engagements, but rather interact spontaneously and responsively. (author's italics; 35)

Martin Laba (1983) summarized the relationship between conversation and narrative:

> ...conversation is not merely a speech context out of which the casual genres of folklore arise, but rather... narratives are situated in, and largely structured by conversation. Conversations of sociability then, can be understood as speech activities that are foregrounded and focused and sharing in the same aesthetic function of the narrative itself. (209)

3. This saying may be inspired by the song "Out Behind the Barn" (1954), which includes the line, "I got my education out behind the barn," written by Boudleaux Bryant (Horstman, 1996:118-19) and recorded by Jimmy Dickens, though country song titles are often taken from popular sayings.

4. Lena's oral recounting of a story from her family's written records is not unique. I have heard other people tell dramatic stories which they had shaped from accounts discovered by the family genealogists.

5. While visiting Scotland, I heard from others that Prince Charles was a frequent visitor to Berneray.

6. Today, local storytellers treat the wreck of the *African Prince* as a humorous subject. At the time, however, at least two local bards regarded the flow of free rum into the community as a serious social problem. A song by Christene MacKiegan and Dan N. MacIntyre begins, in translation from Gaelic: "Many evils plague our people,/ Many troubles plague our

country,/ Lately the **African Prince** was wrecked here,/ And it brought the drunkards to the village" (editors' use of bold type; Cumming et al., 92).

7. Elements of this story are widespread (Thompson Motifs N531, Treasure discovered through dream, and N563, Treasure-seekers find hole from which treasure has been recently removed). For both folklore about and contemporary accounts of searches for treasure in the Gabarus-Framboise area, see: Storm, 1967; and Caplan, "Alex Storm Plans for Buried Treasure" CBM 17:17-19. See also, Caplan, "Stories about Buried Treasure," CBM 17:9-16 and Coldwell 1977:111-55 and 218-38. For more on treasure and associated beliefs, see: Christiansen, 1958, no. 8010; Creighton, 1950:4-14; 1957:42-68; and 1968:73-81; Fauset, 1931:88-93; and Hand, 1980:112-17.

8. For an overview of nineteenth-century Presbyterianism in Cape Breton, see M. D. Morrison (1940). Jimmy, Lena, Roy, and Flora were brought up by those who were raised in the earlier, stricter practices. See also Laura Stanley's The Well-Watered Garden: The Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860 (1983).

9. I use the term "local character" as it is understood by folklorists although, in this context, the word "character" by itself might actually be a better term. Maritimers often use "character" to describe someone, such as Hector, who shows, usually by using humour, that he or she has a strong and unique personality. However, they often use the term "local character" in a pejorative manner to refer to an extreme eccentric. Dorson (1964), the first folklorist to discuss the relationship of local characters and narratives, used both terms, saying that characters may display either positive or negative attributes: "His eccentric behaviour may include, on the positive side, low cunning, effrontery, chicanery, verbal cleverness at making sharp retorts, or special offbeat talents like a genius for gadgetry. On the negative side, local characters display shiftlessness, parsimony, degeneracy, stubbornness, stupidity, and gullibility" (23).

   David Stanley (1996) emphasized the "trickster" aspect of local characters in an analysis that could easily be applied to the stories about Hector:

> Local-character anecdotes bear close resemblance to narratives of trickster figures who confront community standards; the local character's freedom constitutes an implicit critique that reveals simultaneously the value-laden basis of those standards and the potential consequences of departing from them. As trickster, the local character challenges and disrupts by demonstrating the rigidity and artificiality of social norms and by suggesting the possibility of violating

> them; in this sense, the local character not only proves a mischievous and entertaining source of disruption, but also demonstrates exactly the community's rules for behaviour and the interrelationships among these rules. (444)

10. For a discussion of similar humour in Texas, see Bauman, 1986:53-77.

11. This couple have similar attitudes to Steve and Ida Boda, the Hungarian-American couple whose storytelling was analyzed by Linda Dégh. In both cases, the men enjoy telling humorous stories and are quite skeptical about the supernatural while the women have a great interest in uncanny phenomena (Dégh, 1995a:286-305).

12. Gershon Legman (1964:491), James Leary (1980:360; 1984:7), and Margaret Read MacDonald (1996:32-3) observed that in informal storytelling, a story may extend beyond its verbal climax or apparent ending.

13. See: Cothran, 1974:348; M. R. MacDonald, 132; and Tallman, 1974. Gwyndaf (1976) said:

> Anecdotes relating to untoward incidents are characteristic of small, closely-knit communities in which the participant is generally known to every one and in which those who narrate the incident can do so in an atmosphere of non-malice, fun-poking and leg-pulling, without, except on rare occasions, fear of any ill feeling. (286)

He includes practical jokes in these "untoward incidents." However, Brandes (1980:97-114) and Read MacDonald (134-36) see a more aggressive aspect to practical joking (and, by implication, to the associated anecdotes). In MacDonald's words, "some of the pranking in Scipio is just plain *mean*" (author's italics; 134). See also Bauman's study of narratives about practical jokes (1986:33-53).

14. Bauman observed:

> As imaginative products ungrounded in a known community of real individuals, jokes can only be metaphorical (and speculative in their relationship to actual experience). They tell us in hypothetical terms about how structure *might* fall apart or be overturned, whereas the true anecdotes are told to keep us aware of the vulnerability of life as it really *is* and the capacity of speech both to make this vulnerability apparent and to bring it under control. (author's italics; 1986:77)

15. Stanley Brandes, in his study of Andalusian male folklore, says that pranks and riddles carry a message which is a primary theme in Spanish life:

> ...appearances are deceiving; they do not represent reality. In pranks, a person is victimized essentially for being off his guard, for being too trusting of his physical and social milieu. In pretended obscene riddles, likewise, the riddlee is tricked into believing something to be correct that is incorrect; the accurate response is not at all what one imagines it to be. Pranks and riddles socialize people into a basically skeptical state of mind that, it is said, will serve them in more critical everyday affairs, particularly those dealing with the management of resources." (1980:136)

16. Stahl's viewpoint is essentially functionalist, based on the idea that social activities contribute to the maintenance of a social system. From her viewpoint, deviant behaviour and talk about it reinforce, rather than threaten, the community. Such an interpretation is questionable. Local character stories could pass on the message that a community's rules are easily broken and their transgression is a joke rather than an outrage.

17. Michael Robidoux (1998) and Laura Robinson (1998) made similar arguments about the seemingly deviant off-ice behaviour of professional and junior hockey players respectively. (Many of the practices of these hockey players would be unacceptable by the standards of the Gabarus-Framboise residents.)

18. The word "supernatural" was never used in discussions with community residents. I use supernatural in its popular usage. Hufford (1987) has provided a good definition: "referring to an order of reality that is different from the world of matter and energy and also different from purely subjective imagination, that at least occasionally interacts with this world, and that is in some ways superior to this world" (31). However, "superiority" is not always a feature of the supernatural. Cape Breton forerunner stories lack any sense of a better world or superior beings.

19. David Hufford (1982) and Leea Virtanen (1990) both provide considerable evidence that such experiences are cross-cultural and not produced by particular societies or ethnic groups, for example, "Celts."

20. Such conversational storytelling is not limited to the English-speaking world. Siikala observed that in Finland, '[w]hen there are several people in the audience familiar with the subject for discussion, the telling

becomes a dialogue, a social exchange, in which each will contribute to the stream of conversation" (1990:207).

21. Taft said of a similar storytelling session in rural Saskatchewan, "Despite the seeming random nature of the talk, there were rules, themes, and associations which linked one part of the conversation to the next" (80). Gwyndaf says that James Goddard tells stories informally "in the company of a small group of friends and acquaintances who share a common code of interaction" (1990:200).

22. However, Rusty Bitterman (1988) challenged the view that nineteenth-century Scottish immigrant communities in Cape Breton were egalitarian either economically or socially. The fact that some residents of the Gabarus-Framboise area did wage labour for others confirms his point. Despite this, Jimmy, Lena, Roy, and Flora were probably of a similar status to many of the Gaelic country people in the Gabarus-Framboise area. For reminiscences of a more privileged upbringing, see L. Morrison, "With Lottie Morrison from Gabarus" (CBM 40:1-11).



Plate 5.1 Mosquito at Mike and Carolyn MacKinnons' store, Framboise. Sculpture by Mike's brother (Aug. 1992).



Plate 5.2 Jimmy Philip MacLeod at his home, Belfry Road. The Gaelic on the sign translates as "Welcome, Lena and James" (Aug., 1992)



Plate 5.3 Lena MacLeod as a young woman (photo courtesy of Cape Breton's Magazine).



Plate 5.4 Flora and Roy MacLeod at their summer place in Malquish (August 1997; photo courtesy of Cape Breton's Magazine).



Plate 5.5 Hector MacCormick in the Navy during World War II, Middle Stewiacke, N.S. (photo courtesy of Mary Maggie MacCormick).



Plate 5.6 Hector MacCormick and Friend on naval ship, WW II (photo courtesy of Sarah "Belfry" MacCormick).

Chapter VI

"I like stories with a humorous twist": Arthur Severance and His Stories

When I last saw Arthur Severance (Plate 6.1) in the summer of 1995, he was ninety years old and quite feeble but was refusing to "go gentle into that good night." Arthur had been a strong, active man. He was highly intelligent and still mentally alert. He could converse easily about either the day's news or his youthful experiences. However, his body had deteriorated and he was forced to exchange a relatively independent life in Fourchu for chronic care in Richmond Villa at St. Peters. He was a recent widower and his sons did not live close by. Friends and neighbours from his home community visited less often and he could no longer look out his front window and watch the grandsons and great-grandsons of his childhood friends working with their fishing boats. He complained, "Well, I don't know, the kind of a life I'm having now, IT'S BORING" (RT95-7A). Nonetheless, Arthur looked forward to his evening talks with a ninety-five-year-old former seaman named Mombourquette from L'Ardoise. The two undoubtedly exchanged many good stories.

When I talked to people in the Gabarus-Framboise region about storytellers, I was asked repeatedly, "Have you visited Arthur Severance?" He had a reputation as, perhaps, the preeminent storyteller in his

community. However, no performer is able to please everyone. A couple of working men, not appreciative of his extended tales, grumbled that "he'll talk your ear off." Arthur's stories, unlike the short anecdotes of most of his neighbours, were often long, involved, and highly detailed. Arthur was an entertainer and a teacher of sorts, passing on information about life in his community and the skills formerly needed by seafaring people.

Arthur Severance was a storytelling enthusiast to a degree shared by few of his neighbours. He was self-conscious about his telling. He commented before beginning one tale, "I'LL RISK THIS ONE. Probably won't resurface anyway," implying that he might not be able to remember the story well enough to tell it properly (RT92-46B, Aug. 17, 1992). He also evaluated his performance of the Cooper MacLeods' tall tale session (in Chapter III), stating, "I had trouble with that one there because I didn't tell that as SMOOTHLY as it should have gone. I have to get a measure on that" (RT95-6A, Aug. 28, 1995). He appraised the abilities of other storytellers, rating Truthful Paul MacLellan from near Meat Cove at the northern tip of Cape Breton and his own neighbours, the Cooper MacLeods, above the rest. He used them as a standard against which to measure other storytellers. Arthur said of John Rafuse and his tales, "He couldn't dress them up like the Coopers but he used to tell some awfully bloody tall tales just the same!" (RT95-7B, Aug. 28, 1995).[1]

Arthur had a decided preference for humorous tales (see Table 6.1). I recorded thirty-seven of his narratives (three repeated twice for a total of forty). Of these, twenty-five were humorous and ten of these funny stories were tall tales. (Once again, these figures should be regarded as general rather than exact indicators—the account of the tall tale session in Chapter III

Table 6.1 Thematic Patterns in Arthur Severance's Narratives

37	narratives related (3 told twice, for a total of 40; 8 over 15 minutes; 12 brief)
29	something is not what it seems
25	humorous
21	local (Gabarus-Framboise region)
21	sea
17	technical details
13	local characters
11	work
10	tall tales
10	work techniques
9	danger
9	solving problems
9	speculation about aspects of the story
8	personal experiences
6	witty remarks
5	unintentionally funny remarks (made by a character in the story)
5	death
5	disasters (shipwrecks, storm at sea, taking many lives)
3	reckless behaviour
3	illegal activity (rum-running, bootlegging)
3	strong or hardy old people
2	deviance from local values
2	defying authority
2	family history
2	history (settlement, long-ago happenings in the region)
1	play on supernatural
1	strong man
1	anonymous character
1	pranks
1	origin of nickname
1	entrepreneurship

Note: Most stories contain multiple themes. Numbers reflect general patterns; they do not provide exact data.

contains two complete tales within a framing story, so I have counted this as three narratives though I could as easily have counted it as one.)

Arthur appreciated the best storytellers not only for their humour but also for their ability to create vivid pictures with their words.

> Arthur: Now, (chuckles) I remember at the time when old [John Cooper], when the old fella told about (chuckles) how the twister struck when they were threshing. But he'd tell those stories in such a way that, well, it'd be almost like you were reading it. You know, it went right along smoothly, and HE'D TELL IT AS IF IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED. ALTHOUGH HE KNEW DAMN WELL IT NEVER HAPPENED, YOU SEE. But (chuckles) I don't know whether after years, maybe, of telling those stories, they'd come to believe in them themselves. (chuckles)
>
> Ranald: There's an art in it though, isn't there? They make ninety per cent of it believable and you're following it along (Arthur: Oh, yes.) and then all of a sudden, everything turns inside out, just like the boiler [referring to John Cooper's tall tale of the twister on the prairies in Chapter III].
>
> Arthur: Now, when this Paul MacLellan told that story about when he was coming home in the spring and walking down in the heavy snow and all of it, and falling in with this bunch of young people, mostly, that were going to a milling frolic at a house, the way he told that story, I don't know, it just REGISTERED WITH ME. I knew it was, (laughing) right almost from the start, (laughs) that it was a [tall] one. But, I don't know. IT'S A GIFT, that's all. The same way with a writer, particularly a writer of fiction. Jesus. Probably the fiction is based on something that actually happened but it also got a bit of window-dressing in the writing. (RT95-6B, August 28, 1995)

Later in the same interview, Arthur praised the intelligence of the outstanding storytellers, once again describing their abilities in terms of a "gift."

> ...I think there are some people that have, well, THEY'RE GIFTED in different things and there are some people who have A GIFT OF THE IMAGINATION. And they can make them up. I don't really know of any of those people that had any more FORMAL education than to be able to read. I wouldn't say they were great readers at all but they

> COULD READ. They could WRITE THEIR NAME good, a lot of them. But, oh, THEIR THINKING PROCESS WAS ACTUALLY THE KEY TO IT. (RT95-7A, Aug. 28, 1995)

The first story that Arthur told me, probably his favourite and one that exemplified the qualities he admired in other storytellers, is the tale mentioned above of what happened when Paul MacLellan was heading home in the spring.

Ranald: You were saying to me that you like stories with "a humorous twist to them." And what kind of stories are you thinking of?

Arthur: (chuckles) I don't know. Those are the stories I'd be most apt to remember. I try to think of them, they don't come. It's (laughs) something like the story that Ron [Caplan] got there. I think that was the first one [of Arthur's narratives] he put in the Cape Breton['s] Magazine. [See Severance, CBM 33.]

Ranald: Is that the "Story of Truthful Paul"? [referring to the article's title, "A Tale from Truthful Paul"]

Arthur: TRUTHFUL Paul.... WELL, when I heard that story, I was storm-stayed at the time, down north. I was down at Bay St. Lawrence and intended to go around to Cheticamp and there were no roads across there then. They were doing a survey for the Cabot Trail at the time and the only way of getting around to Cheticamp directly from there was by boat, a lobster smack was going over. And I had to go up to Meat Cove to get this smack. And when I got up there, they were intending to leave the next day and there was (chuckles) a northeast breeze came up, pretty heavy one, and they had to pull the smacks up, haul 'er up. There's no harbour there at all or anything. So I was over there for two or three days before I got away.

So, this old Paul MacLellan worked at the lobster cannery there, not really in Meat Cove but quite close to it. So, we were sitting in the bunkhouse there at the cannery, the afternoon that I got down. Paul was quite a storyteller, he had a wonderful imagination. We had some [too], we had a whole family of men here in Framboise and now, Jimmy Dan E. [MacLeod] would be a nephew of those men, MacLeods, too. And they just IMAGINED stuff. There was IMAGINATION, nothing else, and the stories they told were purely for entertainment. You'd never get anything in the way of gossip from them at all. But pure

entertainment. And some of them travelled around a bit in the world. There was one of the brothers that never left Framboise and he could tell stories like the fellas that spent some time—well, not travelled the world but travelled the continent here in North America. (softly) Yeah.

BUT ANYWAY, old Paul got on this story. He was a young man then and a lot of the younger men at that time used to go to the lumberwoods for the winter. They'd go to Maine, logging, northern New Brunswick and Maine. And he was coming home—they fished, of course, in the summer and the spring—he was coming home, late in the winter or early spring for to get ready for the fishing season. And —— he got down to INGONISH, I think it was, he got to Ingonish on a boat from Sydney. He had to walk from there [about fifty kilometres]. And there was still heavy snow through the area. Now, he was hiking for —— down further north.

So, he started walking anyway. "My God," he said, "the walking was bad, you know. HEAVY SNOW." He was going over Broad Cove Mountain, it was getting dark. He wasn't too well acquainted in the area there for to know whether he was getting close to where somebody was living. And going along, anyway, over Broad Cove Mountain, all of a sudden, he said, he heard these GAELIC SONGS. It had to be a party, at least it would be a number of people that were all singing. "My God," he said that he put on (chuckles) a little harder effort, he said, and then he caught up with them—a bunch of young people that were going to a milling frolic. So he went along with them and, well, it was getting quite [dark]—, it was twilight, deep twilight, anyway. And they came to this house and let them in. He said there was an old couple at the house. This was where the milling was to be. They were awful glad to see them, you know, invited them to come in. He barely got in, he said, when the teapot was on, made the tea and had it. So, they got the milling underway. 'Course the music was supplied by the people who were doing the milling, it was all Gaelic songs, you see. Have an idea of what—?

Ranald: Yeah, I was at the frolic up at Gabarus Lake, just a couple of weeks ago (Arthur: Yeah?) so I've got some idea of what it's like.

Arthur: They had a milling frolic there? (Ranald: Yeah.) Yeah. Well that's what it was now, anyway.

So, they had the cloth to be milled and they got around and

they were singing the Gaelic songs, swinging the cloth, you know [bangs table to demonstrate]. After a while, he said, they heard somebody knocking at the door. The man of the house went to the door. He said this old fella came in with him, he had a bottle wrapped in a shawl he carried under one arm. Right behind him, he said, this old woman came in, she had a spinning wheel—I don't know how she was carrying the spinning wheel but she had a pair of wool cards and SHEARS hung on a belt or something. They come in and the old fella said, "Rory," he said, "you're late." And Rory, "Oh, well, yeah, the travelling wasn't so good, you know." So—and Morag, that was the old woman—so, they had to make a cup of tea for Rory and Morag.

And the milling was getting pretty well along. They had their tea, anyway, and then Rory turned to Morag and he said, "Morag, it's time to get to work." "Yeah." She and the spinning wheel, of course, were set on the floor. Morag got up and went out. And Rory called one of the other fellas there at the party and told him to go out and told him what he wanted [in the way of] a switch and he described the length and thickness of it. There was a lot of shrubbery out near the house and he wanted a switch from this. He'd cut that and bring it in. So, all right, the young fella went out, he brought the switch in. Morag came in and she had this handful of wool. She carded the wool, made rolls, you know, and then she got at the spinning wheel and he said, "Now, now," he said, "you do the e-string first." (laughs) She started spinning, spun the strings for the fiddle. He unwrapped the parcel, took the shawl off, and he had this INSTRUMENT in it. Paul said he'd never seen anything like it. It had to be something of a fiddle but it was kind of bottle-shaped, you know. But —— Rory took that out and the old lady hung the strings over the back of a chair. When she got the four strings done, he said, "Now you'll do the little ones." "Fine." So, this was like spider webs (laughs) for size. Hung them over the back of the chair, one after the other. And he put the strings on the fiddle and tried them, tuned it. And when she got this bunch of little ones done, he gathered them up, strung them out, just took an overhand knot in one end, brushed them out again, got them all equal, an overhand knot in the other end. And then he got the switch. He cut a notch in one end, then he decided by the length of the bow hairs (laughs), how long he should cut it. And he cut the switch off, put a knot in the other end. He parted the bunch of—let's call them hairs, eh—he just parted them and he strung the bow through the middle and it

come out. The knots, hooked them in the notches cut at the end, and that was the bow.

So he tuned up the fiddle then and got finer tuning on it with the bow, you know. And THE MILLING WAS DONE and everything was moved back and—the young folks got on the floor and Rory started to play. Well, he said, he'd heard a lot of violin music from the best fiddlers too, he said, it was wonderful, he said. But that music that the old fella played, he'd never heard ANYTHING in his life like it. He had never been able to dance, himself, either. He wouldn't—whether it was shyness or what—but he wouldn't try to dance. And of course, I guess, the dancing then, there was a lot of stepdancing in it, you see. But he said that he couldn't understand it, he realized that he was dancing on the floor with the rest of the young people. And for weeks afterwards, he said, he'd wake up at night, he'd be out of bed on the floor, in his bare feet, DANCING, he said. That music would be ringing in his ears! (laughter.)

But anyway, the dance went on till the wee hours of the morning. I don't know whether the strings went first or the hairs or whether they went simultaneously but the fiddle strings and the bow just simply disintegrated.

So, everybody was leaving, going, you know. Rory and Sarah would—or Morag, well, Morag is the Gaelic for Sarah—Rory and Morag were the last to go but he waited till they were gone. They left then. He thanked his hosts, himself, for the shelter and entertainment and all, for the night, you know and he started. So, when he left, he was going back to the road, it was broad daylight by that time. He started down and there was a little—I guess it was the little garden. He said it was a fence anyway, like a garden fence, just below the house. And tied to a corner of it, here was this ram tied to the corner of the fence. And he was all SHEARED except he had one little patch of wool on his hip. And when he was going by, Morag and Rory were standing there, they were untying the ram from the fence. And he heard Morag telling Rory there was just enough wool on the ram for one more dance. (laughter)

I never forgot that story. It was a really good one. (RT92-7A, July 24, 1992)

This is an unusual narrative. With its magical elements, it bears a greater resemblance to a supernatural legend than to most tall tales. One almost expects Truthful Paul to return to his home community and find that

a hundred years have passed, as is often the case when Scottish or Irish wayfarers dance all night with the fairies. Perhaps Paul took a traditional legend and converted it to a first-person account. Lauchie MacLellan, a storyteller from Dunvegan, Cape Breton, related a wonder tale as his own dream, so there might be a tradition of such cross-generic reworkings of tales (MacLellan, CBM 23). (The two MacLellans are from different regions and, as far as I know, are not related.) However, perhaps Truthful Paul was simply a creative person who made up this story. The only other narrative told by Truthful Paul that I am aware of was one in which he chopped down a tree and found a mermaid inside, not a traditional motif and indicative of an unusual imagination.[2]

This story typifies important aspects of Arthur's storytelling. He described the setting in which he first heard the narrative and both credited and praised the original storyteller. The tale is typically lengthy, taking about twenty minutes to tell. It is humorous. It contains considerable detail (seventeen of Arthur's thirty-seven narratives contain technical details), for example when Arthur describes the making of the bow. Arthur, like many storytellers, takes delight in the story, laughing as he relates humorous incidents or images in the story.[3]

Most importantly, the story ends with a humorous quip. However, while the discovery of the ram which has been supplying the winter's dances is certainly a "humorous twist," the incident provides more of an anticlimax than a punch line; it is a final circumstance to conclude the story rather than a peak to which the tale is building up. Throughout the narrative, Arthur dwelt on the immediate imagery rather than preparing for a dramatic conclusion. The story works by leading the listener gradually from a man's

tale of personal hardship to a series of fantastic and magical images. The final scene is an indication of Truthful Paul's storytelling ability: he brought his audience back from from fantasy to reality by making them laugh.

Despite Arthur's love of humorous tales, some of his best stories concerned dramatic adventures at sea. Twenty-one of Arthur's thirty-seven narratives took place on the water and another one was about boat-building, not surprising considering that he dropped out of school at fourteen to become a fisherman. After a year of fishing, he decided that "there must have been an easier way to make a living" and "fished [his] way" through high school. He received his grade twelve, a good education for a man of his time and place. However, as he explained, "[b]y then the salt water got under my skin and I stayed at fishing" until the age of forty. He spent the rest of his working life managing co-ops, employed for many years in mainland Nova Scotia. Finally, he "wanted to hear the Cape Breton fiddles" and applied for an opening at a co-operative creamery in Baddeck. He finished his career there and retired to Fourchu (field notes, July 24, 1992).

Having spent twenty-six years working on the inshore fishery, Arthur was well-acquainted with the fisherman's life. He also had a great interest in ships and the sea. He distinguished fishermen like himself from "sailors" or "seamen" who go out on the ocean for months at a time. Nonetheless, his understanding of the lives of the latter group was well beyond that of most members of his community. Although he was born after the age of square-riggers, he was able to relate a detailed story of Captain Donald Ferguson's experiences in that era. Arthur's complex story tells how Donald solved a technical problem—how to replace broken bobchains while drifting at

sea—and involves considerable knowledge of a sailing ship's structure (see Appendix 5).

Captain Donald's tale, like all Arthur's sea stories, can be classified as an occupational narrative.[4] Not only does the story contain a great deal of technical detail of primary interest to other seamen but it ends with Donald—at the time, a sailor—reversing the usual social order by taking charge of the repairs and giving orders to the mate.

> "Well," old Donald says to the first mate, "Mr. Baldwin," he says, "here you are, first officer and a man before the mast is telling you how to do your work" (laughs). "Well, you go ahead, Donald!" Oh, my. "'Yes, sir,' says I. 'Mr. Baldwin,' says I, 'can you reeve the tackle?'" (laughs) (RT92-7B, July 24, 1992)

The two main elements in Captain Donald's narrative are his using his wit and skill to solve a work-related problem (described in detail) and his putting a boss in his place. According to Jack Santino, these elements are typical of occupational narratives.

> Occupational narratives provide insight into and an index of the specific challenges and problems that arise in a job. Two kinds of problems are indicated: (1) the kinds of physical challenges requiring the skills a worker in that job would be expected to have, and (2) the sociological problems of responsibility, status, and authority. The volume of stories in which hostility is demonstrated toward one's superiors, outsiders, and the general populace indicates that these problems are quite real and extensive. (Santino, 1978:70)

The story of Donald Ferguson fits this pattern, although his abilities went beyond "the skills a worker in that job would be expected to have" in that he was able to solve a problem which neither other experienced sailors nor the ship's officers could unravel.

Donald's extraordinary talents and willingness to make an insubordinate remark to a superior place him in the category of a seaman's folk hero. Given

the brutal discipline aboard square-riggers, insolence could be dangerous. Perhaps Donald only got away with his remark because his skills were desperately needed at the time. Santino says of overtly rebellious acts by contemporary workers, "given the facts of status differentiation and authoritarianism in a job, such an act is heroic, and such behaviour, framed in narrative, is prized" (63). Arthur's story of Donald Ferguson celebrates him as a working man's hero. It also celebrates a local sailor whose personal attributes—independence, intelligence, skill, self-confidence, and a refusal to regard others as his superiors—allowed him to work his way up to the position of ship's captain, an occupation with significant status locally—therefore this story should not be regarded simply as a tale of class hostility and the triumph of the working man. Listeners in the Gabarus-Framboise region are aware that Donald Ferguson was a person who rose above his position as a sailor and became a boss. The tale, in part, extols the qualities which led to his upward mobility.

Problem-solving is an important theme in Arthur's stories: about a quarter of his stories, nine of thirty-seven, deal directly with overcoming a difficulty. The following personal experience narrative of an adventure at sea explains clearly how Arthur's father, Little Henry Severance, was able to guide his men out of a dangerous situation. As in the case of many occupational narratives, this fisherman's story involves considerable technical detail and illustrates the skills needed to perform a job—in this case to guide a small boat safely through a storm. Like Truthful Paul's tale, it is lengthy (about twenty-two minutes) and detailed, dwelling on an equally weighted sequence of moments rather than leading to a dramatic conclusion. The story begins with an understated comment which is typical of the people

of the Gabarus-Framboise coast and which also indicates the danger that is ever-present in the lives of those who fish. This story of high drama ends rather anticlimactically and then drifts into a discussion of boats and people connected to the main story.

Ranald: Did you have any adventures when you were fishing or catch anything unusual or—?

Arthur: Ohhhh, nothing more than what fishermen usually have—get caught in a hard breeze or something of that sort. The worst I remember of was down on Glace Bay, in Lingan. Late in September. And we got caught offshore. Rum Row was then about, well, theoretically, it was twelve miles off and that would be on a boundary measured from headland to headland. You could be probably twenty miles off in some areas for to be outside the legal limit, to be in international waters.

Well, there was a fella from Glace Bay went out with us that day, a friend of ours. Poor Jimmie! He thought that was his last day and I wouldn't wonder if he'd be PRETTY SCARED because anyone who wasn't used to the water, it'd be quite an experience for them.

It was beautiful, flat calm. The water was just like smooth ice, it was that calm. Not a ripple. And we got outside off there, we were hunting swordfish. John Henry Burns was with us. There was my father and I and John Henry Burns and this Jimmie Bannister come out with us. We were outside of Rum Row. Anyway, there's a lot of boats out. There wasn't a sign of fish. Oh, there was a rum-runner, one of the big ones, supply ships, was anchored. We were about a couple of miles outside of her. And Jimmie said, "Oh, Henry, we ought to go aboard of that one and get a bottle." "Okay. We'll run in. Put the dory out." My father and Jimmie went aboard the rum-runner.

So John and I were (chuckles) just sitting there, she was drifting around and I said, "My God, John, I'm going to (chuckles) bait up a line and see if there's any codfish here." We had a bucket of salt clams, shelled salt clams and I got the bucket of clams and baited a couple of hooks and slung her out and—MY GOD, CODFISH! It was still very shallow water, something around, I suppose, about thirty fathoms where we were. I was hauling codfish no end. Jesus, well John baited up a line, then I baited another line. One line was running to bottom, he would be pulling the other one with a pair of fish on it. Ah, we were having a great time, hauling these codfish in.

Finally, my father and Jim left the rum-runner and they rowed out to come aboard.

So Father started fishing, and Jim. Oh, I got in the dory. Tied the dory on aft. Just got in the dory and two lines in there AND I WAS WALKING THE FISH IN. After a little while, Father said, "Look, we're going to have some dirt," he said, "You'd better get aboard. Haul in." I was having too much fun, pulling fish there, right then, and I didn't (chuckles) haul my lines in right away but by God, the next time, he let out the holler and he said, "YOU—. Come on, now," he said, "No fooling about it. You get up here." Well, you could see the cloud away to the northern in the skies. OH, IT LOOKED DIRTY. And anyway, I figured the old man knew better than I did.

[End of side A, I turn tape over.]

Arthur: I figured Father knew better than I did so I hauled the lines in and pulled the dory up alongside and fired the fish aboard the big boat. I took the lines out of the dory and I tied her on the stern for the time being. Incidentally, when we struck from there, after Father came aboard, we anchored. He said, for [to put] the grapnel out, he said. "With fish coming like this, we could drift into them." So, we were at an anchor.

Well, boy, I don't suppose I was aboard the boat more than five minutes when you could see just a white face on it, coming from the northern. The water was boiling. The wind was coming, just a GALE, aye, a squall. And when that struck us, there was hail and rain mixed. And that hail and rain was coming so hard that the sea wasn't, the lop[5] wasn't forming, it was beating down the lop, it was coming that heavy. And we swung around. We had been tailing towards it before it but when it struck, we swung around and we went before the wind till she fetched up on the cable, and God, I don't think the anchor held half a minute after she straightened out. She took the anchor up and the cable was out like that, she was going that fast to leeward. Cable right out ahead of her like a— (chuckles).

Well, Father said, "Well, we just hang on for a little. It might be just a bad squall. But hang on for a little and see what happens." Well, boy, there was no let up to the hail or the rain or the wind. Oh, LORD, it was a blowing. Then all of a sudden, nothing but WIND and plenty of it. And then the lops started heaving up. Well, what would we try, oh? Do we try to go back for Glace Bay. Wind was nor'west. We head out on our starboard quarter. Either that or try to head up into [Port]

Morien and get in Morien Bay and go into Morien. The only trouble with Morien, with that wind, Morien'd be fine but if you got a shift o' wind, while you were in there-. At that time, you didn't have much of a harbour. It was breakwatered—with a nor'west wind, you'd be quite comfortable in there but if you got a wind ashift, come in from the east or the northeast, PARTICULARLY ——.

So anyway, we had to get the anchor in. Haul the anchor. Start it in. We had a big tarpaulin which we put over the engine, it was outside the forecastle. Just an engine house built over it. We put this big tarpaulin over the engine house. I suppose it was about four thick and it was doubled and re-doubled. Water flying. Jesus, man. Most of that water that was flying, was going clear of her altogether, it was. It wasn't coming aboard. It was going right by, right over the boat, past her. So, John Henry'd get down on the hand-pump, pump her, because if the engine flywheel caught water and threw it up, then you could SHORT YOUR ENGINE.

BUT FATHER WAS AN EXCELLENT MAN TO HANDLE A BOAT. THERE'S NO QUESTION ABOUT IT. So he told me—. Well, the wheel was on the forecastle bulk-head, on the starboard side, and he was there and the engine house was—, well like he'd be standing there [points across his living room]. I was at the end of the engine house, just about like where that chair is there. He told me, "You watch the engine," he said, "You tend to the throttle. So, when I give you a sign to slow down," he said, "you slow her down." And then he said, (chuckles) " When I give you the sign then for to come up," he said, "You can speed her up again." That's the way we went, coming along.

Those seas, they usually run in threes, when they're coming, you know. You'd get three—they weren't actually seas, they were heavy lops. But short and sharp. And he was watching that and when the sea was coming—it was on our starboard quarter—when he'd see the sea coming up, he'd give me the sign to slow her down and he'd haul her ahead up towards the sea, the direction it was coming from. And when the sea was taking her, then he'd ease her off a little. And she'd take the sea pretty easy. She wouldn't pound into it, you see. And after the third sea was by, then SPEED HER UP.

Well, we were about an hour and a quarter in the morning, or an hour and a half about, running off to where we were when the wind struck. And we were over four hours coming in from there. There was another rum-runner, the *Inez G.*, she wasn't as

big as that one. She was further to the northward than where we were fishing. But they slipped their cable and they were heading for North Sydney, try to get in there. She was a big schooner. NINETY TONS. Well, she wasn't nearly as big as that, where my father and Jimmie went aboard. They [the crew of the ship Arthur's father visited] just slipped their cable and run before it, let her go. Run before it, bare poles. But this other one figured they'd make North Sydney and they started. And they got in—FOUNDERED—at Lingan Bay. ALL HANDS LOST. Yeah. ——

But we made her into Glace Bay anyway. —— That was the *Old Dan*, that boat. She was about forty feet, not too wide, about nine-foot beam. She was a good sea boat if handled right. So anyway, we sold her that fall to people in Glace Bay. Oh, he figured if she was a good enough boat to come in, to do that, she was a good enough boat for anything.

Fella bought her and—(chuckles)—I don't know, it was one of those, was it a LIBERTY motor? An airplane motor, LIBERTY, I think we called it. (laughing) They took the marine engine out of her and they put one of them in her. And she went into (laughs) rum-running (laughs). Shooting out of [i.e., from] shore from the big ones to (laughs) the middle man. Yeah. My God, they put that engine in her there, Lord man, she'd fly! God, that thing could go! She had the power in her. She had a great bottom. That was a fifteen-horsepower, we had in, marine engine, double-cylinder. Oh, she'd make about ten, around ten, eleven knots with that . But when they put that Liberty in her, boy, God land! She'd come half out o' water. Just SKIM over the top with only her stern in the water. Boy, would she go it!

I think Willie R. Fraser had her afterwards. And he used to go to St. Pierre with her. He could make it so fast. Only a matter of between four and five hours from Newfoundland to North Sydney. —— Yeah.

But that's something I couldn't get interested in. They were trying to get me, trying to get me for to (laughs) handle that when I had the old sloop, the old *Minnie White* (laughs). The old *Minnie White* would never do for the job unless you had proper [police] protection (laughing) for to make sure that you weren't interfered with. BUT I COULD NEVER SEE anything in it. Funny thing, you know, the people that were in their heyday rum-running then, and the KING-PINS ashore—I knew one man, he practically OWNED the town of Glace Bay and he died, well not quite a pauper but almost. He was living in the cellar. He had a little basement apartment in a beautiful big home that

> he built when he was in his heyday. And he had that house rented and he was living in this basement apartment himself and that's what he was existing on when he died.
>
> I remember when that man had a bar-room in Glace Bay. It was unbelievable! This was in prohibition days, of course. And you looked at it from the outside, in the way of architecture, it was pretty plain, just a big, long shed. Now, when you went in, there were about four or five little booths, each with a door on it, table, two or three chairs. They went along and you just went in and you went down this corridor by these doors. And you went into the bar room. He had a bar with a mirror behind it, just as long as this room here, the mirror behind it (Ranald: About twenty feet.) A mahogany bar, brass rails, sawdust on the floor, spittoons all over the place. I don't think there was any kind of a liquor or a liqueur that you couldn't get in there. Bottles of all kinds of descriptions lined up. God. PROHIBITION [inaudible]. Yeah, he had the police department in his pocket. JACK MacRAE was the man [i.e., the bar-owner]. I remember he got a little schooner built—I don't know just where it was up in Nova Scotia where he had her built but she was designed by W. J. Roué, the man who designed the *Bluenose*. And he had this little schooner built. And whether he had her for a pleasure yacht or what, I don't know. Possibly. But he also had another big boat and he had a powerhouse in her. There was a man (chuckles) that ran her, Jack Nutter ran that one. Boy, (laughs) that one put a lot of kegs (laughs) from Rum Row to the shoreline! (RT92-46, August 17, 1992)

Arthur told the same story differently three years later (see Appendix 6), making evident that he was creating the story from his memory rather than reproducing a narrative which he had refined and related frequently. A storyteller who narrates the same tale regularly tends to give it a relatively fixed form. Arthur had little opportunity to tell his lengthy stories in recent years. In this case, the wording changed considerably and specific parts of the story were lengthened or shortened. For instance, in the second version, Arthur supplied much less detail in his description of how his father managed to get the boat safely to port. However, the structure remained

largely consistent (see Table 6.2) and some specific expressions were repeated. In both versions, Arthur described the rum-runner, *Inez G.*, as having "foundered" in Lingan Bay with "all hands lost."

Despite any differences, the two versions of the story have much in common. The second telling is also lengthy (about nineteen minutes), has many details (although they are not always the same ones), and dwells on the events of the moment rather than building to a finale. Both tellings of this dramatic tale end rather anticlimactically, drifting to a conclusion rather than leading to a dramatic peak.

The second telling, like the first, begins with an understated comment:

Ranald: Did your father have any adventures at sea?

Arthur: Yeah. ---- Yes, I suppose, in a way. (RT95-15A, August 31, 1995)

Arthur employed similar storytelling techniques both times. In each case, for instance, he used Jimmie Bannister's fear to illustrate how frightening the situation really was.

> Well, there was a fella from Glace Bay went out with us that day, a friend of ours. Poor Jimmie! He thought that was his last day and I wouldn't wonder if he'd be PRETTY SCARED because anyone who wasn't used to the water, it'd be quite an experience for them. (RT92-46A)

> Well, Jimmie Bannister—I don't think Jimmie had ever been out on the ocean, only maybe a couple of times and not very far off. My God, it's no wonder JIMMIE WAS REALLY SCARED. Well now, you couldn't blame him. We all were A LITTLE BIT MORE THAN CONCERNED. (RT95-15B)

Undoubtedly, Jimmie was more scared than the rest. Not being a fisherman, he was unable to gauge the danger of the situation. As Arthur related the story, Jimmie did not appear to have been assigned a useful role—probably

Table 6.2

Structural Comparison of Two Tellings of Arthur Severance's Story of the Storm off Glace Bay

Elements are listed in the order in which they were told.

Version A: August 17, 1992 (Chapter V)

a) begins with understatement
b) happens in September off Glace Bay
c) Jimmie from Glace Bay along
d) Jimmie's fear
e) John Henry Burns working on boat
f) beautiful day
g) father and Jimmie go for drink
h) Arthur and John Henry fish to pass time
i) fish plentiful
j) continue fishing when other men return
k) father tells Arthur twice to come aboard
l) description of approaching storm and sea
m) anchor cable sticking out
n) father decides whether to make Port Morien or Glace Bay
o) activity of storm and how father managed boat through it (seas in threes, water flying, no mention of rain and hail)
p) hour and a quarter going out, over four coming in
q) 90-ton rum-runner foundered in Lingan Bay on way to N. Sydney, all hands lost
r) make Glace Bay
s) extended discussion of boats and rum-running

Version B: August 31, 1995 (Appendix 5)

a) begins with different understatement
b) happens in September off Glace Bay
c) Jimmie from Glace Bay along
e) John Henry Burns working on boat
g) father and Jimmie go for drink
f) beautiful day
h) Arthur and John Henry fish to pass time
i) fish plentiful
t) drift away and have to return
j) continue fishing when other men return
k) father tells Arthur twice to come aboard
l) description of approaching storm and sea (wording quite different)
m) anchor cable sticking out
d) Jimmie's fear
u) rum-runners running before storm
n) father decides whether to make Port Morien or Glace Bay
o) activity of storm and how father managed boat through it (seas in threes, water flying, rain and hail)
p) hour and a quarter going out, four and a half coming in
r) make Glace Bay
q) 90-ton rum-runner foundered in Lingan Bay on way to N. Sydney, all hands lost
v) end of swordfishing

because of his unfamiliarity with this foreign environment—which would have helped keep his mind focused on something other than his own imminent demise. However, Arthur also used Jimmie's fear as a dramatic device. In a society in which people generally do not discuss emotions and are expected to prove stoic in times of crisis, it is not easy for a narrator to discuss the emotional impact of a dangerous situation. However, a passenger out for a day in the fresh air could hardly be expected to respond like the fishermen who are required to continue working calmly for the good of all throughout the crisis. (They must be cool in their demeanour even if they are not in their hearts.) Jimmie was more like a civilian who accidentally wandered onto a battlefield. Nonetheless, his terror was probably felt by the others too. As Arthur said in another ironic understatement, "We all were a little bit more than concerned."

One of the most consistent characteristics of Arthur's stories is the careful attention to detail. This feature is not his personal idiosyncrasy but an element of a certain style of traditional storytelling. Hugh Miller said of the residents of his village of Cromarty, Scotland:

> There is a habit of minute attention almost peculiar to the common people (in no class at least, is it more perfect than the commonest) which leads them to a kind of microscopic survey of every object suited to interest them; and hence their narratives of events which have really occurred are as strikingly faithful in all the minor details as Dutch paintings. Not a trait of character, not a shade of circumstance is allowed to escape. (1850:4)

Arthur's stories, too, possess that quality of Dutch painting, giving the listener a vivid verbal picture of the situation he is discussing. Such attention to detail is common both in Scotland and among Scottish Cape Bretoners, as is evident in numerous oral accounts in the Scottish journal

Tocher and in Cape Breton's Magazine. Arthur was of Scots background, his mother, Annie MacQueen Severance, being descended from North Uist emigrants; as well, his greatest storytelling influences, Truthful Paul and the Cooper MacLeods were all Gaelic-speakers of Scottish descent. However, such storytelling is not limited to either Scotland or to people of Scottish descent. Many of the speakers in Cape Breton's Magazine come from other ethnic backgrounds. As well, the literature on oral narrative includes numerous examples of similar storytelling throughout North America.[6]

Arthur's approach to storytelling also typifies a widespread rural narrative style. The American folklorists Utley and Flamm (1969) observed that dramatic punch lines are not an important element of rural comic stories: "...the city joke is verbal and the rural jest situational. When the rural jest uses verbal art it distributes it throughout the tale, and mirrors words in action, whereas the city joke makes the word the center, the point and climax of the tale....the contrast is not wholly polar" (570). Arthur's tale of the storm off Glace Bay indicates that such "situational" storytelling is not limited to jests. This narrative (like Truthful Paul's tall tale) is situational. The drama is spread throughout. In fact, the sea story totally disregards what would be the obvious conclusion in a literary re-working of the same experience, i.e. the arrival of the crew and passenger safe on shore. To Arthur, the story is not about getting back to land—his presence, seven decades later, made that aspect of the story obvious—rather, it is about a dangerous situation at sea and how it was overcome. The lack of a dramatic ending suggests that this story is primarily an occupational narrative which communicates a great deal of information in an artful form to fishermen. Their interest is in the type of storm and how Little Henry dealt with it. For

men who are at home on the sea, the moment of arrival on land may be of less importance than the skills involved in weathering the storm. The landsman Jimmie Bannister's version of the same story would likely be considerably shorter on technical details and more focused on the terror of the experience and on the goal of being safe on land once more.

The two main points of Arthur's story reflect his own and his community's interests. These categories cannot be separated entirely. Although an individual narrator may favour particular themes due to his or her personality and taste, the storyteller needs an interested audience for these themes to develop into narratives. The first point—how a "beautiful, flat calm" can suddenly become a storm—brings us back to the communal theme of "things are not what they seem," a theme that is contained in twenty-nine of Arthur's thirty-seven narratives. This topic also occurs twice in his addendum to this story: first, a rich and powerful man ends his life in poverty and, second, during "Prohibition," a well-stocked urban barroom is readily accessible to a visiting fisherman.

The second point—that a dangerous situation was overcome, a problem encountered and solved—is an important theme of nine, about a quarter, of Arthur's narratives (another two have a similar sub-theme). Seven of these stories about problem-solving involve boats and the sea (as do the stories which contain problem-solving as a sub-theme) indicating that these narratives represent an occupational preoccupation. In this seafaring community where many people have at least a passing interest in fishermen's work, such work-specific narratives represent an important part of the community's repertoire. (As well, work itself is important to many individuals, as is reflected in their storytelling. Work is a significant element

in the narrative repertoires of Lloyd MacDonald and Dan Alex MacLeod in Chapters VII and VIII.)

Perhaps Arthur's occupational storytelling represents a fishermen's tradition which has either become less common or was not accessible to me. I was not the best audience for such tales. Though I was able to absorb the basic message of the stories, that you should stay cool and use your brain in a bad situation, the technical details of a fisherman's life meant little to me. However, for a young fisherman sitting in a shanty, mending nets with his elders on a "dirty" day, such stories must have provided a real education. If working on the boats was the practical part of their learning, storytelling would have been the classroom lectures. Even humorous stories recounting details about fishing conveyed a great deal of useful information.

Stories dealing with problem-solving contained vital lessons in survival. From Arthur's stories, one learned how other men survived after going overboard or when a schooner was bearing down on their small boat, how they rescued shipwrecked sailors on a stormy sea, made difficult repairs to a ship, and designed a better swordfishing harpoon. The younger men would have learned much from both the practical details and the attitude conveyed by the storyteller. They would have absorbed a model which was vital to a fisherman's survival and an understanding that while bad things happen, often unpredictably, on the ocean, people survive by keeping calm and using their intelligence.[7]

Besides being interested in nautical problems, Arthur was curious about how things worked. This curiosity was reflected in his narratives. Nine of his thirty-seven stories included speculation about aspects of the story. Even while telling tall tales, he would reflect on realistic elements

within the story. What kind of fence was Rory and Morag's ram tied to? When Norman Cooper, as "high sheriff of Virginia," stopped at an abandoned mining camp while chasing an outlaw, where did he hobble his horse? Did the mine grounds have "hay land?" (RT95-7A, August 25, 1995)

It is difficult to gauge whether Arthur Severance's storytelling style is becoming uncommon. Arthur was a specialist who was not representative of the community's more common storytellers. Telling lengthy, detailed narratives is a different kind of folk art than anecdotal storytelling and requires considerably more dedication. Oral testimony suggests that although there were more narrators of such tales when the region was more populated, they were always a minority. Today, a few others tell lengthy stories and some of these people will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Arthur's long tales would have been out of place in a fast-paced session of anecdotal stories such as I attended at Jimmy and Lena MacLeod's. He spoke slowly and thoughtfully as he recalled the details of his longer narratives and re-created them orally. However, Arthur was also a conversational storyteller like a great many, perhaps the majority, of his neighbours. He regularly expressed himself in narrative, using stories not only for entertainment but to impart his thoughts and illustrate his point of view. He could at times, talk for some length without using narrative. He once provided me with a long description of the process of swordfishing. On another occasion, he delivered an angry discourse on the state of the fishery which was in crisis due to such factors as overfishing and government mismanagement. Arthur, as an ex-fisherman and activist in the co-operative movement, expressed his opinion forcefully: "I can get MAD AS HELL just thinking about those miserable BASTARDS back in the late '20s when we

petitioned them to put restrictions on these BLOODY BEAM-TRAWLERS. Instead of that, they increased them."

Despite his ability to express himself clearly without using narratives, his talk usually led to more stories. When Arthur told me about his MacDougall bagpipes, he did not simply say that Sandy Boyd, a Scottish piper, referred to them as "the Stradivarius of pipes." Instead, he told a story about searching for information on his pipes and finally encountering Boyd. This was followed by another anecdote about meeting the Cape Breton piper Barry Shears who now owns these same bagpipes.[8] In another instance, after explaining to me about religious divisions in Fourchu during his childhood, Arthur summarized his viewpoint by relating a narrative.

> ...it just seems like (chuckles) the story of the—what was it?—this PRIEST was taking an immigrant, IRISH, around the city, NEW YORK. And, you know, there were a number of churches that they came in, in the tour around with the priest. Now, the priest was talking about [how] some of the churches were built of brick. And he mentioned to Paddy that these churches, THE BRICKS WERE THE PEOPLE and the CEMENT WAS RELIGION THAT WAS HOLDING THEM TOGETHER. Paddy shook his head, "Oh no, Father. IT'S THE CEMENT THAT'S KEEPING THEM APART." (laughter) (RT95-16A, August 31, 1995)

This was the only story I collected from him which contained solely fictional characters. It was part of his repertoire because of its important message—it is less of a joke than a fable. Most of Arthur's narratives (twenty-two of thirty-seven), like those of Jimmy, Lena, Roy, and Flora MacLeod, took place in the Gabarus-Framboise area. Many others took place elsewhere in Cape Breton or involved local people (thirteen included local characters).

Arthur's last years accentuated some of the problems of elderly people living in small rural communities. Although he had home-care and drove a

car when I first met him, his mobility was limited because of his physical condition. His neighbours were also concerned about his driving habits. His children, who were not young themselves, visited him but they had followed their father's example and moved to distant jobs. Arthur spent his last years in a nursing home and although former neighbours still visited, he was more isolated from his community. He could not engage in his other artistic passion, piping, due to a "frozen shoulder." Though the people of the Gabarus-Framboise area praised his storytelling, he seldom had a venue for performing.

However, as an outstanding narrator of lengthy tales, Arthur entertained members of his community for many years while passing on stories about their shared past. He kept alive stories of people who were elderly during his youth. Arthur represented a certain category of traditional storyteller, less common today, who savoured long stories, recounting exact details and explaining precisely how complex problems were solved. His repertoire was not entirely unique. Lloyd MacDonald tells some of the same stories of Captain Donald Ferguson, the Cooper MacLeods, and Arthur's Uncle John Severance. However, Arthur's choice of stories and his way of telling were his own. He was recognized by his fellows as an important tradition bearer and will be remembered in this respect for many years. Arthur Severance passed away in 1996.

Notes

1. Wm. Hugh Jansen (1976) also uses a variation on the term "dressing up" tales to refers to a similar creative process, that is, crafting them into better stories. He says of an American storyteller, "Friends tell stories to him so that he can 'fix them up.' Wilson knows that he has added such dressed-up tales to his repertoire..." (297).

2. This story came from Ron Caplan, who believes he heard it from John D. MacDonald. Caplan says MacDonald also told of a tall claim, but not a narrative, by Truthful Paul. "He told one of Paul testing a fellow's rifle, aiming away off to the side of the mountain, aiming and holding it a long time. It was so far you could barely see individual trees. After a while the owner of the gun asked him when he was going to shoot. He said he was waiting for the deer to turn his head so he could shoot him between the eyes" (e-mail, Nov. 17, 1998). A joke of this type, though traditional, could have been made up by Paul in this instance. It is so simple that it cannot be assumed to have only one origin.

3. That the narrators delighted in their own stories was also evident in the storytelling session at Jimmy and Lena MacLeod's (Chapter V). Leary (1980) says of the Wisconsin storyteller George Russell, "George would often repeat the final line several times, savour it, and chuckle" (360). Tall-tale tellers, of course, usually keep a "poker face."

4. For analytical works on occupational narrative and occupational folklore generally, see Byington, 1978; Lloyd and Mullen, 1990; McCarl, 1984; Mullen, 1988; and Willis, 1979.

5. Ron Caplan says of "lop": "It is a very common Cape Breton usage and refers usually to a kind of not fierce wave, rather small—they talk about 'a little bit of a lop on' (e-mail, Nov. 17, 1998). The Dictionary of Newfoundland English defines "lop" as: 1) "the rough surface of the sea in which the waves are short and lumpy," 2) "a choppy wave," 3) phrase, *"have a lop on*: of the sea, to be rough, choppy." The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines "lop" as "a state of the sea in which the waves are short and choppy, the sea or its surface when in this condition."

6. See, e.g.: in Nova Scotia, Bauman, 1972:342-3; in Prince Edward Island, K. Campbell, 1983; in Newfoundland, Thomas, 1992; in Labrador, Them Days magazine; in Maine, Meader, 1988; in Ontario, Staples, 1981; in Louisiana, Lindahl, Owens, and Harvison, 1997:33-59; in Texas, Mullen, 1978:98-99; and across Canada, Fowke, 1986:127-44.

7. See Caplan, CBM 31:1-5, for Severance's telling of a narrative about a dramatic shipwreck at Fourchu.

8. For more about Arthur and piping, including a story of how he got his MacDougall pipes, see Severance CBM 57:IFC and 63-67.

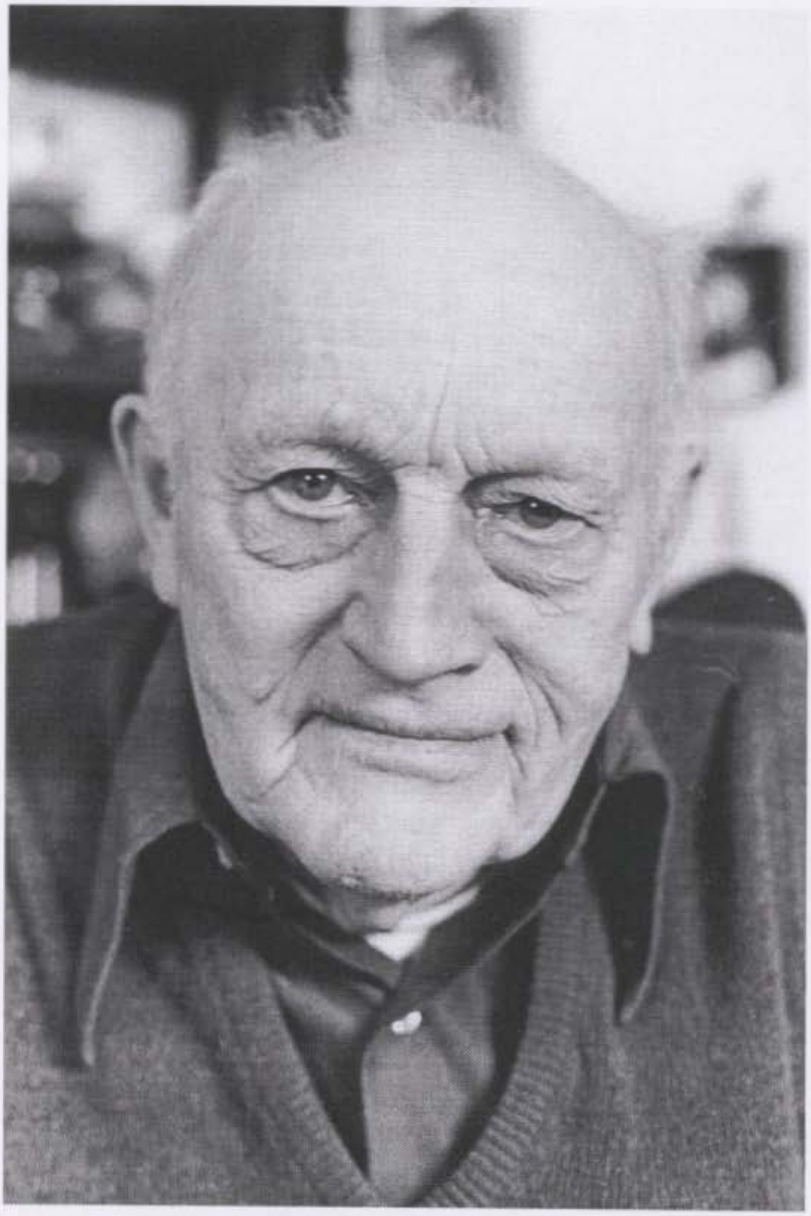


Plate 6.1 Arthur Severance in the 1970s (photo courtesy of Cape Breton's Magazine).

Chapter VII

"Lloyd has lots of stories":
The Repertoire of Lloyd MacDonald

A good storyteller usually knows others and so it was Arthur Severance who directed me to Lloyd MacDonald (Plate 7.1), another resident of Fourchu. I soon learned that Gabarus-Framboise residents generally regarded Lloyd as a notable storyteller. They told me again and again that, "Lloyd has lots of stories." Indeed, he has the most varied and extensive repertoire in the community. In two two-and-a-half-hour interviews with Lloyd in 1992 and 1995, I recorded ninety-three narratives on a variety of themes (seventeen of these stories were told twice, for a total of one hundred and ten tellings—see Table 7.1). As well, I visited Lloyd and his wife Deana on a number of other occasions and found that he is never without stories.

As storytellers, Arthur Severance and Lloyd MacDonald have much in common. Both tell lengthy stories of local happenings. They are worldly men who bring their own experiences into their tales. Their repertoires overlap: the two told me nine narratives each about the same local incidents, primarily adventures on the ocean. They both have a passion for storytelling far beyond that of their neighbours. They easily recalled long-departed tellers and related their narratives. They often thought about stories and their tellers. Unlike most of their neighbours whose narratives were prompted

Table 7.1 Thematic Patterns in Lloyd MacDonald's Narratives

93	narratives related (17 told twice, for a total of 110; 9 also told by Arthur Severance; 11 told by others, including 1 of the 9 told by Severance)
87	local (Gabarus-Framboise region)
60	something is not what it seems
43	humorous
43	danger
35	sea
34	local characters
31	hardship
29	death
22	personal experiences
17	illegal activity (rum-running, bootlegging, murder, illegal fishing, assault, threat with a firearm, gambling)
15	disasters (earthquake and tsunami,shipwrecks, storm at sea, taking many lives)
15	work
13	people lost
12	unintentionally funny remarks (made by a character in the story)
10	reckless behaviour
9	play on supernatural
9	family history
8	supernatural
8	history (settlement, long-ago happenings in the region)
8	shows skills through something he did
7	tall tales
7	witty remarks
6	prophesy
5	deviance from local values
5	work techniques
5	solving problems
5	forerunners
4	violence/murder
3	pranks
3	strong men
3	strong or hardy old people (2M, 1F)
3	technical details
3	speculation about aspects of the story
2	family emergency
1	healing by traditional cures
1	defying authority
1	travel
1	ghost/return of dead
1	treasure
1	showing superior skill or knowledge to others
1	famous person

Note: Most stories contain multiple themes. Numbers reflect general patterns; they do not provide exact data.

mainly by my questions, these men prepared in advance for my visits, choosing specific tales to tell. However, they too told stories which emerged from my questions or comments or were inspired by a previous story. Arthur and Lloyd both relish the opportunity to tell stories.

In other respects, they are quite different storytellers. The pacing of their narrations represents two extremes. Arthur spoke very slowly, trying to recall every detail and savouring each moment. He often reflected on the last narrative for some time before moving to the next. Lloyd speaks rapidly, telling a story in about a third to a half the time it takes Arthur to tell a tale that is just as wordy. Lloyd rushes to get to the point of the story and is immediately on to the next tale. There seems to be too little time for all the stories Lloyd has to tell.

Unlike Arthur, who spent a great many years working away from his home community, Lloyd spent almost all his life in Fourchu with the exception of five years in the army and a brief stint as a fisheries officer in Newfoundland. It is from his home community and his own experiences in and near that community that he gathers and constructs his stories. Lloyd is an expert on the social history of the Gabarus-Framboise region. As a man with a love of narratives and an ability to recall them, he is able to communicate about a great many aspects of the area's past through storytelling. In fact, it is often through the medium of stories that he expresses his views on life. When I asked other area residents about their families' pasts, most related specific details about the hardships which their ancestors endured, often as a series of disjointed facts rather than as a narrative. Lloyd, however, had a story to tell.

Ranald: Have you heard much about the early settlers here?

Lloyd: Yeah. Well now, my great-great-grandfather was one of the first settlers here. Hardy. Not the MacDonalds, the Hardys. And as far as I know, he came over here as a soldier with Wolfe and he got a grant of land here. They gave him a grant of land in the early 1800s. Now, he raised a family. He lived here—he had a summer home here [Fourchu] and a winter home in Gabarus, at Gull Cove. That's where they lived then. He had a grant of land down there and he had seven daughters and one son.[1]

After he lived over here, my great-grandfather, Colie [Colin] MacDonald, left [Tobermory] Scotland, him and two other brothers. They were only young men then in their early twenties or nineteen, yeah, around twenty anyhow. So they came over and they landed in Pictou. And then they left Pictou and they walked down to Oban, that's up at Seaview above St. Peters, and they settled there that fall. There was Alex, and Colie was my grandfather, and William. William, he has a family here too. There's still relatives here.

So anyhow, two of the brothers, they didn't like it up there but Alex, he stayed in Oban and his descendants are still there. But when the spring come along, they heard down in there, and I don't know how the word used to get around, but they heard [that] down in Gabarus that there was a gentleman down there that had seven daughters. And the neither one was married and women were scarce in those days, around. The only thing they had to eat was oatmeal or rough-ground oats. So they left Oban anyhow, to walk to Gabarus and they had an axe with them and when they got to the rivers, you know, at the oceans—there were no roads in those days, they were following the beaches down—they'd make a raft, they couldn't wade them, and they'd come across. So, finally they got to Gabarus anyway and each one of them got a Hardy girl and my great-grandfather, he married Hannah. And this land here that I'm on now, her father gave her fifty-three acres of land when she got married as a wedding present and I still have the land. (RT92-36A, Aug. 13, 1992)

Within this short tale, Lloyd related the settlement history of two branches of his family, hardships endured by settlers, the gender imbalance created by settlement patterns, kinship connections with other people inside and outside his community, and how his family came to live in Fourchu. The

difficulties of communication and the predominance of men in this pioneering society are illustrated succinctly and memorably by the brief account of the extremes to which the MacDonald brothers went in order to find wives.

Lloyd's repertoire is typical of his community in that his stories are almost entirely local (eighty-seven of ninety-three) and humour is usually an important element. Forty-three stories were either humorous tales or contained important comic elements and many of these were about local characters, often remembered for some striking flaw or eccentricity. The following story celebrates two such people.

Lloyd: Oh, I want to tell you about Hooper and the shipbuilding over here when he used to build his ships. I wish I could think of that fella's name. He was a MacKinnon and they used to call him "Rory the Corker" [caulker],[2] I think that's what he is. He used to cork [caulk] all the vessels at Hoopers. So, he had a long beard down to the middle of his vest and he was over there one day and he was alone corking. He had no helper but he was alone corking and he was driving, you know how they work the corking right in that, and he was—.

Ranald: Can you explain to me what corking is?

Lloyd: Well, a corking iron is a metal bar, about eight inches long, and it's tapered and wide, about four-inch blade on it but tapered down and it's thin enough to go in the seams of the ship. You could drive oakum into them. That's what they used to use for that, oakum, and they had a wooden mallet, they used to use to hit this with it. You know if you had an iron one and hit it—they were usually made out of brass, the corking iron, it'd be soft. If you hit it with an iron handle, well you'd groove it all up. Used to use a wooden handle on it.

But anyhow, he was tucking the corking in, the oakum in, and he hooked the end of his beard. He had a pointed beard and he hooked it with the corking and he never noticed it and he was corking away and the first thing he knew, he was tied into the vessel, he couldn't get clear. [Ranald laughs] So anyhow, he had to get someone to help and he had to cut the beard off him. So

> he told Hooper then he wished he could get someone to help him because he was getting in trouble, see. He didn't want that to happen any more.
>
> So Hooper knew this young fella and his father had just died and their mother was pretty poor. There was two sons and a daughter, very young, and Henry Seever, they called him. Henry MacDonald, his name was. So his mother came over to Hooper's store and Hooper told her if she wanted to send young Henry, he'd hire him on. I don't know, he wouldn't be getting maybe a few cents a day, it wouldn't be very much but it'd be a help to her, anyhow. So she got Henry up early in the morning and he went over and he went to work. They were working on stages up along the ship, on the vessel they were building. So the old fella explained it to Henry what he wanted him to do, you know. He would hold the corking iron and Henry'd tap the corking iron on the head. So he told Henry, he said, "Now," he said, "when I nod my head," he said, "you hit it." So when he nodded his head, Henry hit him as hard as he could with the mallet, right on top of the head. And he knocked the old fella off of the stage and he pretty near KILLED him and he got scared and he headed for home. He never went back no more. (laughs) Oh, gosh! (RT92-37A, August 13, 1992)

This story, which is actually two connected incidents, involves humour and local people; it also contains traditional themes. Stories of men getting trapped by their beards are widespread and, in many cases, probably based on real incidents. Although Rory MacKinnon could well have sealed his beard in the ship, someone could as easily have attached this traditional motif to Rory, as a joke about his long beard. The story of the assistant who takes his master's instructions too literally and hits him on the head with a hammer is a widespread numbskull story, told in many countries.[3] The humorous possibilities and the danger inherent in the ambiguous meaning of the instructions apparently crosses language barriers, as the story is told in a variety of tongues. Lloyd's narrative may be an example of the tendency, discussed earlier, of rural humorists to localize stories and tell them as true

accounts. Acts and comments, whether witty, foolish, or outrageous, are often applied to known characters who would seem likely to do or say something of the sort. However, some recurring motifs in relatively simple stories may be due to similar events happening in different locales.

Some of Lloyd's humorous stories are based on traditional tales. However, whether his versions of these tales are products of his own creativity or whether he is passing on stories as he recalls them is unclear. Lloyd himself, although he enjoys relating the tall tales of others, is not entirely approving of their humour, saying that one deceased local storyteller went "overboard on some of them, he went too far" (RT95-21B, Sept. 1, 1998). When I was able to compare Lloyd's tales to his neighbours' versions of the same stories, I found that they were consistent in most details. Though Lloyd usually told his versions particularly well, there was no evidence of his adding to them. In fact, his narratives of adventures and disasters at sea were consistent (allowing for differences in the narrators' perspectives) with those of Arthur Severance, who had a reputation for being truthful in his storytelling.

Ironically, while some people say that many oral storytellers make up or embellish their stories, others claim that writers of fiction lack imagination and generally produce thinly-disguised autobiography. The novelist W. P. Kinsella (1984) has questioned how his books about professional baseball players and Canadian Indians, of which he is neither, could be autobiographical. He commented, "Much fiction fails because it is autobiographical, the lives of ninety percent of the population are so dull that no one would care in the least about them, the lives of the remaining ten per cent are so bizarre that no one would believe them" (x). If Kinsella is right,

then Lloyd belongs to the latter group. Besides living in a community with rich oral traditions, he draws on his own experiences for material for numerous personal experience narratives. He fished out of Fourchu, stormed the beaches at Normandy, and as a fisheries officer was involved first-hand in unusual and dramatic happenings. Part of his work for the Department of Fisheries involved rescue work when someone was lost in his region. This provided substance for the following group of narratives which are based on happenings outside the realm of most people's experience.[4]

Lloyd: We had a fella got lost back here in North Framboise one time and I was up there for two or three days looking for him and couldn't find him in the woods. Finally they sent a big helicopter from Summerside down, one of them double, you know, with the two props [propellers] on it at each end, a big one from Search and Rescue. So we were [working as?] a guide anyhow. We were hunting around all morning. FINALLY, by golly, we spotted the guy and there were trees in the woods and we were trying to get him out to a barren so we could pick him up but we couldn't do nothing with him. Another guy and I went down. They put a horsecollar on us, you know, and dropped it down. So, we caught onto him and hung onto him because he went right haywire. And they landed on the barren and we got him over to the helicopter and we got him aboard. He was five days in the woods and he told us he had found a cabin, there was lots of liquor in it, and he was drunk the whole time. And he was still drunk, I guess. So we took him in, anyhow, to St. Rita's hospital and dropped him off there and he ended up in the Nova Scotia Hospital. Cracked up there. Only a young fella, sixteen or seventeen.

Ranald: Had he really found a cabin or did he just dream that up?

Lloyd: I don't think so. I don't know. We don't know. We had coffee, we tried to give him a little bit. He didn't seem to want it. Whether he went that far, you know, that-

Ranald: They say that people go kind of crazy sometimes. I was reading about kids being lost and they said sometimes the kids will hide and they'll search and search—.

Lloyd: Oh, yeah. You search for them. We've been looking for a kid one time over in Mira, two of them, a little boy and a girl. They went out looking for the cows in the evening and they never come home. They were in the pasture and we were over there DAYS looking. I was there myself. And, you know, they had died under a windfall and they were covered over with leaves and they figured the birds covered them over. I think what happened, they covered themselves over with the the leaves and lay down there to sleep and they died there. The two of them died there together. And they were right alongside the pasture and we were hunting for miles and miles around them. And it was a WEEK before they found them.[5]

And then up here between Stirling and Loch Lomond, there was a fella from L'Ardoise. He had been cutting pulp and he come back there deer-hunting, him and his buddy was in there. Come dark and they got lost and he got scared and he threw his gun away and he run away from the other fella. Well, they called me, that was on Saturday night, and they called me and I went up that night. We got one fella the next morning, Sunday morning. Couldn't find the other guy. But we could HEAR him. You'd hear him over here on the hill and we'd get over to that hill—it was all heavy brush, you know, heavy timber in there then before it was cut—and when we'd get there, there'd be no sign of him, then we'd hear him somewheres else. He was going on the run, like he was on the rye. So we hunted and hunted and hunted. But the last day, I took a bunch and I walked through from Gra— [Grand Mira?], from that end of the road right through and come out to St. Esprit. There was no roads across there then. But they found him that day anyhow and he was right close to the road and he died under a windfall. He never had a stitch of clothes left on him. Run himself to death, the doctor said. He had been dead there a couple of days when they found him. Funny how he went, you know. He just went HAYWIRE.

...The last thing I had, an old fella, eighty-years-old, went in there through [inaudible] and got lost. And we hunted two or three days for him too. He was down there till, finally, we got a helicopter and we went looking for him. A couple of times before, he got lost and he come out in Framboise. There's a river runs down along, a big river there. So I had an idea that he might have gone to that river. And it snowed while he was in the woods. So anyhow, it was just getting dark that night and the helicopter pilot said he'd have to quit. It was just getting too dark. He'd have to go back. So I asked him if he'd be coming

back the next day and he said no, that was all the time that he had. I said, how about taking a run up over this hill here to go to the river which ended at Goose Lake. Well, I kind of convinced him anyhow. There were a couple of Mounties with us or game warden and a Mountie and they wanted to come out but we went anyhow.

And when we swung over the hill to the river, I seen his tracks. I could see them and they were about that far apart, you know, like he was wet, see. (Ranald: Yeah.) No, but spread out this way. (Ranald: Oh, I see.) It looked like two fellas was walking. (Ranald: Wide, yeah.) He was wet, see, and I guess he was chafed or something. And I said, "There's his tracks there." "Oh no," they said, that was probably the people that were looking for him. I said, "No, there was never anybody ever in here." I said, "Follow them back." So we were following back. I was looking. The first thing I seen was him with his arm and leg up, laying on a little barren in the woods alongside of a tree. I thought he was alive first. We called, told them we had found him, get an ambulance. And we dropped down and I went up and he had died there the night before. He had froze to death and that's the shape he was in, his hand was up and his leg was up. But he had WALKED ALONG, you could see where he had, for probably an hour or more. He was just trying to keep himself warm and I guess he lay down there and fell asleep and died. He had broke his hand, he had broken hands and that was all. One boot was rolled down and the other was rolled up. That's the way the old fella used to go all the time anyhow, the poor old fella.

But he died happy. He was always in the woods so I guess he died happy in there. Never was married. No. That was my last rescue.

Ranald: When was that?

Lloyd: Let me see, it'd be sixteen years ago, before I come out of the Fisheries. I guess it'd be the year I quit. Fog came in on the land that night. That's what happened, he got astray, couldn't find his way back. (RT92-38A, August 13, 1992)

Many of Lloyd's stories reflect on the unpredictably of life. The theme of "things not being what they seem" is an element of sixty of ninety-three stories. This group of stories about lost people involves familiar landscapes

becoming strange. In two of the four narratives, losing one's bearings led to losing one's mind. In the story of the lost children, the searchers examined the woods for miles around when the children were, in fact, close to home. Within these stories, Lloyd reflects on the sometimes disturbing circumstances: "Whether he went that far, you know..." "Funny how he went, you know. He just went haywire." "I guess he died happy." In other stories, Lloyd tells of serendipity rather than misfortune, for example, he told me of searching for a wartime friend's grave while visiting France as a member of the Canadian delegation for the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day (June 6, 1944). He was surprised to discover that his long-lost companion was the man standing next to him.

Danger and hardship are other dominant themes in the stories about lost people, as they are throughout Lloyd's repertoire. Forty-three of the ninety-three narratives that I recorded involve danger and thirty-one involve hardship. Although other regional storytellers sometimes tell tales with these themes, only in Lloyd's repertoire are they such consistent subjects. This interest reflects the circumstances of Lloyd's life. His childhood and teenage years were hard economic times. He was born in 1919, ten years before the Great Depression began. However, Atlantic Canada also suffered a depressed economy throughout the 1920s. While still a child, Lloyd worked alongside grown women in a lobster factory. As a teenager, he cared for sick families during a measles epidemic, helped prepare a dead body, dealt with drownings of friends and relatives, and watched his mother succumb to mental illness. As a young man, he took part in the Allied invasion of Normandy, an experience which left a lasting impression on him. He explained to me, "War is awful....I couldn't sleep for years afterward because

of the nightmares" (field notes, August 13, 1995). In 1970, Lloyd's snowmobile froze while he was using it in an unpopulated area. He had to walk and crawl through deep snow for eight miles before finding shelter in Gabarus. This gruelling experience damaged his heart and forced him to retire from his job with the Department of Fisheries. Lloyd's experiences indicate why stories of danger and hardship may be especially meaningful to him. Nevertheless, he tells these narratives in a straightforward way without complaining or communicating a sense of injustice, even when the stories are about his own experiences.

Hardship and danger are elements in the following story of the 1929 earthquake which I judge to be Lloyd's narrative masterpiece, at least among the stories that I recorded—although I suspect I have only scratched the surface of his repertoire. Michael Owen Jones (1989) discussed the concept of a masterpiece in his study of the life and art of Chester Cornett, a Kentucky chair-maker. Describing the significance of a highly unusual chair, Jones said:

> It is a masterpiece in the original meaning of this word. To be conferred the status of master in the guild system, a craftsman had to present to others a piece that demonstrated his skills and capabilities—his mastery. The two-in-one, bookcase rocker, masterpiece of furniture testifies to what Chester could accomplish through a lifetime of learning. If the masterpiece has become "just something to look at," it is not because it is useless, but because its form transcends our experiences, transmuting the commonplace into something uncommon indeed. (77)

Lloyd's story is not as peculiar as Chester's "two-in-one, bookcase rocker," a truly unusual piece. Nonetheless, it does demonstrate Lloyd's mastery of the storyteller's art.

The predominant thematic elements of Lloyd's repertoire are all contained within this one lengthy story, revealing how a skilful narrator can

express his own personality and interests while entertaining others through his verbal art. Of the ninety-three narratives which I collected from Lloyd, the most common themes are as follows: eighty-seven are based locally, sixty contain the idea that something is not what it seems, forty-three are humorous, another forty-three involve danger, thirty-five involve the sea, thirty-four have "local characters" as central figures, thirty-one mention hardship, twenty-nine contain a death, twenty-two are about personal experiences, and fifteen involve disasters (each narrative contains more than one theme, see Table 7.1). Furthermore, stories of the supernatural comprise a small but important part of Lloyd's repertoire. Of eight supernatural stories, four are memorates, personal experience narratives involving the supernatural. All of the ten most common themes in Lloyd's repertoire plus a memorate are contained, to varying degrees, within the following lengthy tale. Lloyd also includes an account of a close call with disaster which touches on but does not enter the realm of the unbelievable, another feature common to Lloyd's repertoire. This tale is an outstanding example of how a person can express himself while addressing communal interests and values through traditional storytelling.

The story demonstrates, as well, Lloyd's ability to create drama and shows his special skill at melding a number of shorter narratives, which could be told separately, into one long tale. Lloyd introduces a number of characters and takes his listeners through time and space within the Gabarus-Framboise region over a period of sixty years. Starting with a natural disaster, Lloyd has developed a masterful tale which, like Chester's chair (in Jones's words) "transcends our experiences, transmuting the commonplace into something uncommon indeed."

Lloyd: I was going to tell you that story about the earthquake in 1929. Did you [ever hear of it]?

Ranald: Never heard of that, no.

Lloyd: You never heard of that?

Ranald: No, no.

Lloyd: This earthquake that happened down somewhere, it must have been on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. But anyhow, I was ten years old at the time. Then, the post office used to be on the other side of the harbour over where the government wharf was, that's where where the big store was at, and the post office was there and I went over for the mail, it was on a Saturday. And when I was coming over by where the hall is over here now—well, in them times, the road was all puddles, you know, and it was only a rough road, potholes—the ground starts shaking and the the ground started cracking, the water run out of the puddles. And I was coming over the hill, we call it Severance Hill there, doing about sixty miles an hour and my father and Uncle Dave MacGillivray, the old fella I been talking about before, they were working on the Mussel Bridge down here, fixing it, and the ground started to shake and they got on the rocks over there and Dave told my father, he said, "That's an earthquake." Anyhow, I got home here and my mother said the dishes had been shaking on the table. IT LASTED FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES. And she said, my grandfather was alive then, and he had heard it and he was in the room and his walking stick was against the wall like that and he was trying to get it in his hand. The walking stick was going along the wall and he couldn't catch it (laughing).

But anyhow, that night, a tidal wave come in here. It took all those buildings too, there was a whole lot of fish houses and boards down all along there. The next morning, they were all up in this bog down here, they come all over the Mussel Bridge. All that bridge was on there then, there was rails on and everything went under that night. I don't remember us even seeing it but people, you know, heard the rumble and that. And down in Gabarus, it come over the beach there. You've been in Gabarus, you know where the breakwater is there along all this, (Ranald: Yeah, yeah) where the boats and that are. Well, the sea came right over that and went right out through the Upper Barachois[6] and across the beach there. AND DOWN IN NEWFOUND-

LAND, it came into some of the harbours there and it washed the houses right out to sea. There was a lot of men and women, and children drowned at that time in Newfoundland. It's funny you never heard of it, it's in history.[7]

My aunt [Winnie], at that time, had quite an experience. She had been on this side. They lived over where the lighthouse is there now in Gabarus, that's where. There were a lot of houses over there. But she was going across, they call it "the Level" there. There was a factory and a lot of wharfs, fishermen, and buildings and stuff. That beach was full of buildings then. And she could hear this rumble coming up the Barachois this way, the Upper Barachois and she ran. She tried to make the factory wharf but the water caught her and she caught the roof of the factory going out over the factory wharf and hung on and when this tidal wave went by, she got ashore and before the next went in, she got home. And they tell me there wasn't one fish house or a thing left in Gabarus, everything washed with all the fields over on this side of the Barachois, everything went [inaudible].

Ranald: I did hear about the water going over the breakwater so I guess maybe that's what they were talking about.

Lloyd: No. There was one here about six or seven years ago, washed out and washed the firehall down there too, took part of it out and so on, a lot of the boards and stuff here, on a northeaster. But maybe, you might've heard about this. It was back in 1929, it was back a long time. A lot of people wouldn't remember it.

But anyhow, at that time, that night, I was—I had a great-aunt down there, my mother's aunt [Sarah], she was never married, the one I was telling you with the harelip. She took a stroke. And anyhow, she lived for three or four weeks after that and she finally passed on. My mother went down to help her sister [Winnie] at the last days and she said she [Sarah] was trying to tell them something but she was trying to talk to them but she didn't anyway, she never told them anything. She had told them before that, you know, when she was all right, that she had money, some money to bury herself with. She wasn't broke. But although she was never married, she always had a few dollars. And so, after she died, they went through everything, they went through the house. They tore everything apart, I guess. They couldn't find nothing. So Mother gathered up a few clothes and she put them in a suitcase and was going to make dresses or something for I had two sisters, they was only young

and things were pretty rough in them days. We were all pretty poor, I guess.

So, my mother brought the suitcase home. I was sleeping alone in the front part of the house and she put the suitcase under my bed. So, anyhow, I don't know, some time, midnight or some time, I thought I was awake, looking out through the window. I remember it was a moonlight night and I heard something. I looked around. Here was Aunt Sarah coming through the door right over to my bed. Well, scared the devil out of me. I think I let an awful holler out of me. And my father and mother jumped up out of bed and they come in, they quieted me down and I said, take me into the room with them, I was so scared.

The next day when I come from school at dinnertime, my mother was in pretty good humour. She said, "I found what the old woman was looking for last night." I said, "What was that?" She said, "I found her money!" And she said, "Winnie, the devil, put it there and didn't know it." She said, "Now, when I opened the suitcase," she said, "there was an old pair of Sarah's corsets in there and inside the corsets was a HANKIE folded up and pinned to the corsets and there was two hundred dollars and two gold pieces." Well, anyhow, my mother wrote Winnie a letter and told her about it and my grandfather come up—it was close to Christmas time—and he took the money and he gave my mother twenty dollars of it. That was our Christmas.

Well, years afterward, about five years ago last winter, my old aunt was still alive then. She was ninety-two and she was staying with Mary MacLean at Marion Bridge. Deana and I were in for her birthday, that was her ninety-second birthday, so she said, "How about telling Mary about the time that old Sarah come back looking for her money?" "Oh," I said, "Oh, I don't know." I said, "Okay," so I told her the story anyhow, Sarah's story. So after I was all over it, Winnie said to me, "You know, me boy," she said, "some day, you'll get that gold piece, one of them gold pieces," she said. "One of them's for you," she said, "that dollar one." There was one was a dollar, one [was] two-and-a-half. I never heard tell of a two-and-a-half. But there was one. "Oh," I said, "Okay." I didn't pay no attention to it.

So a couple of days after that she, she was crocheting in the chair and she just passed on, that was it. Her heart went, I guess, on her. She had a heart condition, so-. That was in April. So in September, Truman and I went down, her brother, cleaned the house out. We were getting ready for to-, they were going to sell a lot of the stuff, see. She had no will and to settle the estate, we

had to sell everything that was in the house and she had a lot of trophies there and a lot of old stuff, people were looking for. So Truman come across this letter and, "Oh," he said, "there's a letter," he said, "that your mother wrote to Winnie. You might as well have it." So I took it, looked in it. Here was the dollar gold piece inside the letter. (laughs) That's where it come back to me, anyhow. Oh, yes.

I don't know [inaudible] says ghosts, if you believe in them or not. But if there's such a thing as ghosts, I often thought in wartime, that many ghosts would be there, you wouldn't be able to live (laughs) No.

Ranald: Have you heard many other stories about ghosts around?

Lloyd: Oh, yes, all kinds of them, they used to tell it. But I think they were only telling us that to scare the devil out of us. (RT92-36B, August 13, 1992)

This story is not atypical of local storytelling in that it contains a number of popular local themes and it strings together related anecdotes in a manner practised by other storytellers. However, Lloyd's tidal wave story is a particularly sophisticated tale. It flows smoothly from beginning to end, yet it contains ten characters (Lloyd, his father, Dave MacGillivray, Lloyd's mother, Aunt Winnie, Aunt Sarah, Lloyd's grandfather, Lloyd's wife Deana, Mary, and Uncle Truman) and changes settings six times (outdoors in Fourchu to Lloyd's home in Fourchu to outdoors in Gabarus to Aunt Sarah's house in Gabarus to Lloyd's home in Fourchu to Aunt Winnie's residence in Marion Bridge to Aunt Winnie's home in Gabarus). As well, during the outdoor sequences, the characters are moving about within their villages. If we were to compare Lloyd's story to a literary work, it is more like a novel than a short story. In Lloyd's narrative, which contains about seventeen hundred words and took less than ten minutes to tell (rapidly, mind you), Lloyd takes us through a natural disaster and a close escape, through the hardship of the

depression and a supernatural experience, into modern times and another uncanny experience, finally setting our feet on the ground in the present.

The contradictory attitudes displayed by Lloyd in the telling of this tale illustrate the complexity of issues of belief generally. Despite the fact that Lloyd tells of a visit from his dead aunt, he ends his story with a couple of comments on ghosts which indicate clearly that he doubts whether people return from the grave. Like other members of his community, even those who believe in supernatural phenomena of particular types, Lloyd feels that many tellers of ghost stories were simply entertaining themselves by scaring others. He also suggests that war would create an overpopulation of ghosts.[8] Although Lloyd told me eight stories about the supernatural, he also related nine which involved plays on the supernatural (that is, stories in which a naive person or dupe fails to see the actual cause of an event, instead believing it to be of unearthly origin).

In this community, as in most, issues of belief are disputed and individuals develop their own opinions about specific supernatural concepts based on local traditions, personal experiences, accounts from trusted friends and relatives, and their own logic (that is, what seems reasonable to them). Those who accept unearthly figures unquestioningly or who react in fright without first trying to find a logical explanation for an untoward situation become comic figures themselves, as the following stories indicate.

Lloyd: I think I was telling you the one about the old fella from Grand Mira that used to work over at Hoopers, Neil Campbell.

Ranald: I don't know.

Lloyd: Well, they had him for a handy man when Hooper had the store over there and he used to look after the horses. TRAVELLERS and that used to stay there, like the different agents for the

different businesses. This fella came here one day with the horse. Of course, it was all horse and sleighs or horse and wagons. So he told Neil to put his horse up for the night. So Neil took the horse up to the barn, took the harness off, put him in the barn and he gave him some hay and he was going to tend some more horses. And the horse turned around and he said, "Neil," he said, "where's my oats?" So, by golly, Neil looks at the horse and he went over and he said, "Were you talking to me?" "Yes," he said. "Hurry up and get my oats, Neil." Boy, Neil got scared and he took off for down to Hoopers and he said, "Look, Mr. Hooper," he said, "THE GOD DEVIL is up there in that horse." (laughter) But the fella that owned the horse could throw his voice, see. Poor old Neil.

Now another night, he was here and he always used to stop at my great-grandfather's, they were great friends. And at that time, they used to haul out the wood for the lobster factories, for the boilers, you know. They burnt cordwood at that time, hardwood or whatever. I guess it was mostly hardwood. And they'd haul it out to Hoopers in the wintertime, across the lakes here and across the barrens from Grand Mira. It's only about four and a half miles across there. That day, apparently, there were about nine or ten horses out with loads of wood. And when Neil come, he stopped at my great-grandfather's when the rest was going in and he had his supper and he talked [until] about eight o'clock in the evening and Neil left for home. And he had got a bag of oatmeal.

So when he was going in across the lakes here, when he got into GOOSE LAKE, it was kind of a pretty dark night and all of a sudden he could hear this HORSE coming behind him. He looked and kind of slowed up the horse and he looked behind. This old white horse come right up and put his head right in over the box, over the sleigh. He got kind of scared and he was kind of a timid fella anyhow. He believed in all this stuff, you know, so he whipped up his horse and the faster he went, the other fella come up to him. So anyhow, he made it home. And going down the lake, he cut the bag of oatmeal and he let the oatmeal out of it and he pulled the bag on over his head and he kept on for home. When he got home, he just jumped off the sleigh and he run into the house and he told the boys, he said, "The God devil is after me!" and he fell on the floor and he fainted. So they went out and sure enough the white horse was there and they tied it and put him in the barn.

But apparently, that afternoon when they were going back, a MacMullen horse took the colic going in and they thought he

> had DIED and they took the harness off him and they left him on the lake and the horse got better, see, and he followed Neil home. And poor old Neil wasn't (laughter). Poor Neil.[9] (RT95-21A, Sept. 1, 1995)

Earlier tellings of these same stories are included in Appendix 7 for comparative purposes. As with Arthur Severance's stories, although the words vary, the basic structure and motifs are consistent from one telling to another (See Table 7.2).

Neil Campbell seems to have been renowned for his fear of the devil. Arthur Severance related an anecdote in which Neil fell to his knees and prayed at the sight of a wide-mouthed monkfish, rarely caught in the area, which was netted after Neil told another fisherman that he hoped the fellow caught the devil. Both Arthur and Lloyd mentioned, when they told their devil stories, that Neil was from Grand Mira, a nearby Roman Catholic community.

Lloyd and Arthur's stories of Neil Campbell and the Devil may contain elements of exoteric stereotyping, that is to say, Protestants from the region might be ascribing literal belief to their Catholic neighbours. However, in researching stories of supernatural experiences in Cape Breton's Magazine, I found that tales of the devil appearing in earthly incarnations are almost entirely the property of Catholics, as indicated by mention of priests and religious paraphernalia.[10] Martha MacDonald (1986), described a ceilidh attended by elderly Gaelic-speaking Roman Catholics on the Iona Peninsula in Cape Breton in the early 1980s. Referring to a storytelling session at the ceilidh, she said:

> One of these stories involved an encounter with the Devil, and that one precipitated a number of others about local tangles with Satan. These legends were all localized and strongly believed, as the people

Table 7.2

Structural Comparison of Two Tellings of Lloyd MacDonald's Stories about Neil Campbell

Elements are listed in the order in which they were told.

Version A: September 1, 1995 (Chapter 6)	**Version B:** August 31, 1992 (Appendix 6)
1st Narrative	1st Narrative
a) Neil worked at Hoopers	a) Neil worked at Hoopers
b) puts horse in barn for traveller	b) puts horse in barn for traveller
c) horse demands oats	e) traveller could throw his voice
d) Neil goes to Hooper, "The God Devil" in horse	c) horse demands oats
e) traveller could throw his voice	d) Neil goes to Hooper, "The God Devil" in horse
2nd Narrative (told immediately after first)	2nd Narrative (told immediately after first)
f) Neil stops at great-grandfather's at night	f) Neil stops at great-grandfather's at night
g) hauling wood for factory	g) hauling wood for factory
h) left with bag of oatmeal	h) left with bag of cornmeal
i) at Goose Lake, heard horse behind	i) at Goose Lake, heard horse behind
j) white horse put head in sleigh box	j) white horse nearly to sleigh box
k) whipped horse	k) whipped horse
l) put bag over head	l) put bag over head
m) ran in house, fell on floor, said Devil chasing him, fainted	m) ran in house, fell on floor, said Devil chasing him, no mention of fainting
n) sons put horse in barn	n) sons went out to see grey horse outside
o) MacMullens left horse to die on ice	o) MacMullens left horse to die on ice
p) horse got better and followed Neil home	q) took harness off, sleigh towed by others
	p) horse got better and followed Neil home

> involved were known at least at second hand. The stories showed a strong religious conviction with a literal belief in the powers of Satan and Hell; this was evident not only from the content and narrative style, but also from discussion of the Devil between the stories. (71)

Although Gabarus-Framboise residents tell the story of the devil and the card players, as related in Chapter II, they do not appear to believe it contains literal truth. Nonetheless, residents of this Protestant community might apply a different supernatural interpretation to events similar to those which many Roman Catholics would accredit to the devil. Lauri Honko points out the importance of culture in categorizing unusual occasions: "[a] person who has experienced a supernatural event by no means always makes the interpretation himself; the social group that surrounds him may also participate in the interpretation" (17-18). In fact, one man told me of a horse which acted in a bizarre manner due to witchcraft, once a common reading of such events by the Scots in the Gabarus-Framboise region (see Chapter VIII).[11] However, beliefs are individual as well as cultural matters. Not all of Grand Mira's citizens would apply Neil's interpretation either. According to the story, even his sons were willing to look at the empirical evidence and take the situation in hand. Despite the differences in local belief systems, perhaps I am placing too much significance on Arthur and Neil's mention of Grand Mira. Both storytellers often identify characters by their home communities.

Lloyd, in his role as a storyteller, is primarily an entertainer, telling stories which amuse listeners or absorb them with dramatic tension. But he is also a narrative man. Any conversational subject—local history, belief, or the weather—quickly evokes a story from Lloyd. Generally, it is through stories rather than direct comments that he expresses his views and his questions about life. People's resilience through hard times, the frailty of the

human mind, questions of the afterlife, and Lloyd's observations of foibles and foolishness are all expressed through narratives. He tells his stories with passion, taking delight in their humour, feeling the pain of the protagonists, and wondering about the fickle finger of fate. His stories are not theoretical abstractions but are grounded in his own experiences and in the life and history of his community. Life's important concerns are acted out on the ground upon which Lloyd has walked and explored by the people he knows.

Lloyd's storytelling does not have the unqualified approval of all his neighbours. Though many praised his abilities, a few said that "he'd talk your ear off," the same words used to describe Arthur Severance. Still others expressed concerns about the reliability of his stories. As mentioned in Chapter IV, several people advised me not to take Lloyd too seriously. Lloyd does like to entertain and perhaps, to a degree, shares his Uncle Truman Clark's attitude that "[t]here's no use in telling something unless you can stretch it a bit" (Chapter IV). Lloyd's attitude to the truth appears to vary depending on the type of stories he is telling. He enjoys a comical tale and will pass it on, even if it is a little far-fetched. Perhaps in some of his personal experience narratives, he exaggerates to make a better story. However, when telling stories of historical importance (e.g., shipwreck stories), he appears to stick to the facts as he knows them. Even in the story of Rory the Corker and his foolish helper, Lloyd might be entitled to use the storyteller's traditional disclaimer, "If it's a lie, it's a lie that was told to me."

However, in a community such as Gabarus-Framboise, in which people share work patterns and traverse the same paths, whether on land or sea, they feel a need to distinguish truth from falsehood for reasons that are often more practical than aesthetic or moral. Bauman (1972), in his study of

storytelling at the general store in La Have Island, another Nova Scotia fishing community, explained:

> The islanders lived a life full of strong external forces and risks, from the natural and supernatural world. Many of these...were confronted alone but were constantly discussed with others at the general store. The sessions at the store thus constituted a forum in which wisdom could be shared, and safe, proper, and productive reactions to situations and forces that any member of the group might potentially encounter could be shared. It is here, perhaps, that the limits on stretching stories might be accounted for. While a certain amount of exaggeration might be tolerated as an outlet for self-aggrandizement in recounting one's experiences, the community had much to gain by sanctioning relative accuracy as well, in order that each man's experience might contribute to the communal wisdom. (337)

Despite the importance of some truthful storytelling in such situations, a great many people—not only in the Gabarus-Framboise region—express discomfort, irritation or even outrage at perceived lies, even when those lies seem harmless and provide immediate entertainment. This reaction suggests either moral indignation on the part of the listeners or resentment at being victimized by storytellers who can manipulate a person into believing what is not true. For those who like their world orderly, storytellers who play with the truth are tricksters creating chaos and unpredictability.

The concept of truth in storytelling and in oral history is always complex. A narrator may be "truthful" in that he or she attempts to pass on stories unaltered while the stories themselves may be false or unverifiable. Belief also complicates matters of truth. A listener who is not open to the idea that supernatural experiences can happen will regard anyone who relates such stories as either a fool or a liar. Another, who believes in such occurrences, might regard the same teller as entirely truthful. Furthermore,

individual storytellers may, like Lloyd, express varying attitudes toward truth when relating different narrative genres.

The issue of truth in an individual's repertoire raises the question of the validity of oral accounts (and of history generally). Ultimately we must ask, is there any past truth which can be discovered through research? Despite the subjectivity of eyewitness testimonials, there is an ultimate truth to most events. Few people, except perhaps defence lawyers, would dispute the mechanical recordings of a bank's camera when it captures an image of a thief with a gun in his hand. However, history is complicated by such issues as the biases and viewpoints of participants and witnesses, personal or cultural concerns and obsessions, the memories or imaginative powers of witnesses or transmitters, and the lines of transmission themselves—what do individuals preserve and what do they forget? Moreover, storytellers, whether writers or oral narrators, often shape and re-order events so that they become art. Fortunately for folklorists, our concern is rarely with finding the absolute truth but rather with examining what is said about the past and how it is communicated. Oral narratives tell us what people now believe rather than providing a perfect account of earlier times. Nevertheless, an oral account passed down from actual participants in an event may have more validity than a newspaper article which, although it may have been written by a hurried and confused reporter, is preserved as an accurate historical document.

The Gabarus-Framboise region has its local historians who, like academic historians, are interested in preserving and ordering facts, either orally or through writing. Storytelling, in contrast, is an art form. Although stories have many purposes, which may include passing on historical

information, a prime purpose of storytelling is to entertain ("education" and "amusement" are two of "Bascom's Four Functions of Folklore," 1954:290-98). Even if the narrator regards the story's content as vitally important rather than as light entertainment, he or she attempts to convey it in an interesting manner A good storyteller edits or extends the basic facts to create drama or humour. As a result, the story leaves a much stronger impression of the past in most listeners' memories than would a non-dramatic recitation of facts. Oral narratives of past events are comparable to historical novels or movies rather than to history books. The images of the past transmitted by storytellers, like those of other artistic media, might not satisfy historians. However, Lynwood Montell (1970) argues that it is through oral accounts of the past that we "consider the people as a living force" (xxi):

> Folk history...can be defined as a body of oral narratives that are told by a people about themselves, and, therefore, the narratives articulate the feelings of a group toward the events and persons described. Folk attitudes are included as a part of this definition because they are an integral part of almost every narrative recorded from the informants." (xxi)

Though Lloyd crafts his stories himself, they generally conform to broader patterns in his community's narrative repertoire. His personal idiosyncrasies are expressed in the emphasis which he places on hardship and danger and in his emotional involvement with his stories. His tales also reflect a questioning of fate to a greater degree than is evident in most of his community's narratives. Otherwise, his stories express attitudes widespread among Gabarus-Framboise residents. He produces images of a community in which people suffered many hardships and where danger was always close at hand. Land and sea, the common, well-known environments for work or pleasure, could be transformed quickly into hazardous, unpredictable places.

The people in Lloyd's stories worked hard but seldom received significant financial rewards. Despite these difficulties, he presents an image of a community in which people were quick to see the humour in life around them and laughter was frequent, a community whose members made their own entertainment and especially enjoyed storytelling.

Lloyd, as a tradition bearer, exemplifies McLuhan's idiom that "the medium is the message." Residents of the Gabarus-Framboise community value personal interaction and enjoy creating, transmitting, and listening to stories about their immediate world. Lloyd observes what is familiar to all, adds his own unique experiences and perspectives on life, transforms life into art, and, in his traditional role of storyteller, shares it enthusiastically with his neighbours.

Notes

1. A fifty-seven-year-old Thomas Hardy of Gabarus had been resident in Cape Breton for thirty-four years according to an 1818 census. Also listed are three native-born Hardy men, presumably Thomas's sons, James (age twenty-six), George (twenty-two), and Charles (eighteen). Women were not included in this census (Lavery & Lavery, 35-36).

2. "Caulking" is sealing the seams in ships. The Dictionary of Newfoundland English implies that "corker" is also used for "caulker" in Newfoundland, see definition for "caulker."

3. Baughman, motif J2460 Literal obedience (under Literal fools).

4. The stories focused on his work that I recorded from Lloyd are not occupational narratives in the sense that Arthur Severance's fishing stories are, in that: 1) Lloyd's narratives are not detailed accounts which pass on educational information pertinent primarily to other Fisheries workers or woodsmen, 2) they do not contain specialized occupational jargon, and 3) they do not include any information which is not readily comprehensible to an outsider. In summary, they do not appear to be designed primarily for communicating among occupational peers. (No doubt, Lloyd relates occupational narratives with considerably more woods-lore and esoteric information, when conversing with fellow workers.)

5. Regarding a lost child in Newfoundland, Rieti says in Strange Terrain (1991): "Around 1955 near Seal Cove, a girl named Anne was lost and given up for dead but found twenty-one days later: 'she claimed that birds and fairies had brought her food in the morning and evening. Just after sunset, she said, they would cover her with leaves and this kept her warm'" (176). Rieti discusses tradition-based explanations of the unusual behaviour of lost people throughout her book. (Newfoundland has a dynamic and widespread tradition of fairy belief.)

6. For definitions of barachois, see Chapter II, note 19.

7. According to Donelda MacDonald of the Beaton Institute:

> "The earthquake took place on Nov. 18, 1929. The Dalhousie seismograph registered the quake at 4:34 p.m. and an aftershock at 7:04 (Cape Breton Post, Nov. 17, 1975)." "In rural Cape Breton the damage was minimal and consisted mainly of broken dishes and flooded roads (if near a water source highways were most likely flooded with logs

> and other debris). In Sydney there were more obvious signs of destruction like the chimney falling down from a house on the corner of Townsend and Bentick Streets. Some even believed there had been an explosion in the Glace Bay mines. People poured out of shops on Charlotte Street and motorists stopped their cars in confusion." (e-mails, Nov. 24 & 25, 1998)

Gabarus and Fourchu being low-lying villages on the east coast likely sustained more damage from the tsunami (tidal wave) than many other communities. Captain Raymond P. "Robbie" Robertson was in Gabarus at the time of the earthquake and witnessed the collapse of a church chimney. Although he was in Louisbourg when the tsunami struck, he returned to Gabarus shortly afterward. He did not mention water damage in Gabarus. However, he did say that John A. MacDonald of Gabarus had "two thousand pounds of smelts to ship to Canso, same having been picked up along the shoreline after having been deposited there by the tidal wave." He also told of a frightened lighthouse keeper "who implored me to transport his wife and family from Guyon Island to the mainland," which Captain Robertson did (Caplan, CBM 50:29). For the more devastating effects of the wave on Newfoundland, see Ruffman 1994, 1994a, 1996, and St. Andrew's Anglican Church, 1996.

8. For two accounts of a First World War soldier's encounters with battlefield ghosts, see the Nova Scotian writer Will Bird's excellent memoir of WWI, Ghosts Have Warm Hands (1968).

9. The Devil appearing in animal form is a traditional motif (Baughman J1785, Animals thought to be the devil or ghosts; J1785.4, Thinks colt is Satan). Beryl Rowland (1973) says, "Witches flying to the Black Sabbath to have intercourse with the Devil were said to mount a broomstick, a token form of the horse, or the Devil himself in the form of either a horse or a goat" (106). Angus Hector MacLean (1976) tells of a drunken Cape Breton man mistaking a horse for the Devil (66).

10. However, Angus Hector MacLean writes of supposed visitations of the Devil in Seal Cove, a Presbyterian community (8-9, 66-7). McLean, who grew up to become a Presbyterian minister, summarized his relationship with God and the Devil as shaped by the conventions of Cape Breton Presbyterianism during his turn-of-the-century childhood:

> ...In the Cape Breton of my time, no matter what respect was given Jesus, the Old Testament God was enthroned as the thing that mattered most in all times and places.
>
> I didn't like him. Who could? He disapproved of the very hungers

> he planted in us. He watched and recorded every little misstep. He allowed no privacy. That he might forgive never occurred to me. The Devil, on the other hand, was an intriguing puzzle long before I ever formulated a theological problem. At times he was God's enemy; at others, God's tool to keep poor wretches in order. At times he was exciting, like a story character, but he was never as fear-inspiring as God. No one ever seemed to see God, but the appearance of the Devil was reported now and then by those who had imbibed too freely. (8)

For narratives about manifestations of the Devil in Roman Catholic Cape Breton communities, see Fitzgerald, 31; Francis; and Dan MacNeil.

11. The bewitching of horses and other farm animals, either consciously or through 'the evil eye,' is a common theme in narratives. See, e.g., in Nova Scotia, Creighton, 1968:18-72 (includes Motif-Index numbers, pp. 67-72); and Fraser 63-68; in Prince Edward Island, Cousins, 182-234; in Scotland, Thompson, 42-53; and in Tennessee, R. R. Turner, 343-400. See also Chapter VIII of this thesis.

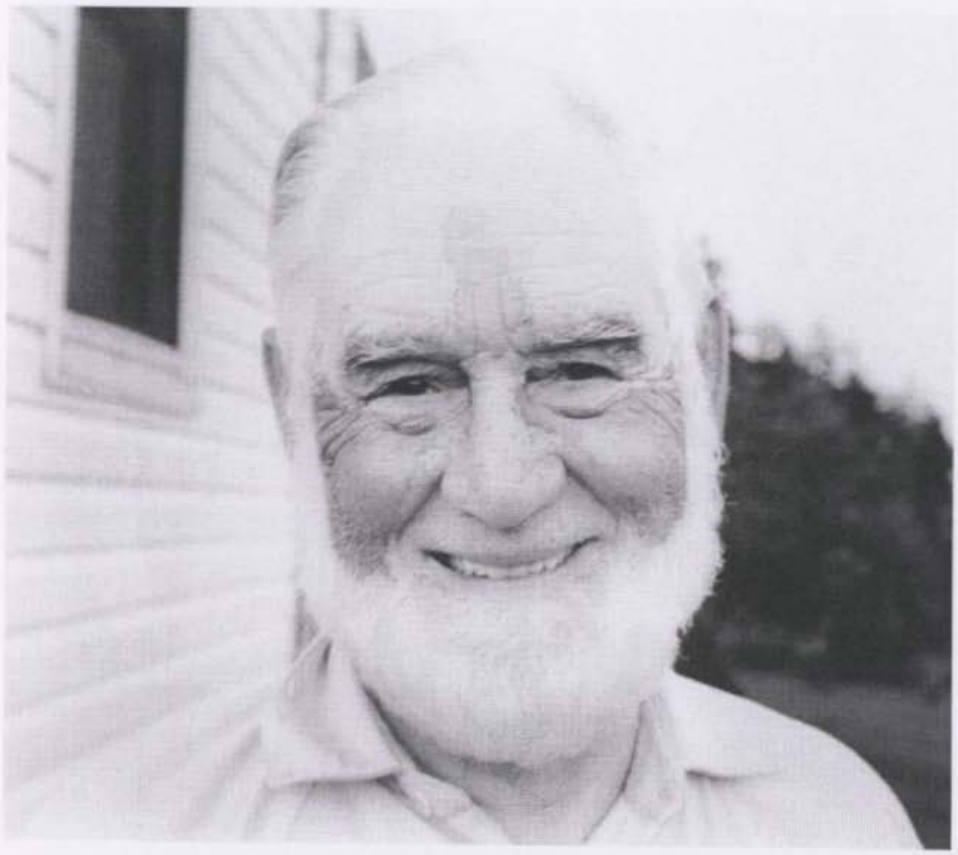


Plate 7.1 Lloyd MacDonald, 1997 (photo courtesy of Ron Caplan).

Chapter VIII

Work and Visions:

Personal Experience Narratives from Dan Alex MacLeod

Dan Alig am Muillear (Dan Alex the Miller—the nickname refers to the fact that he operated a sawmill, see Appendix 3), had been telling me about the difficulties of raising sheep in the Gabarus-Framboise region (see Plates 8.1 and 8.2). He had been forced to sell his stock around 1980 because of recurring thefts. One morning, Dan Alex (despite its spelling, "Alex" is pronounced "Aleck" locally) discovered forty-five sheep missing. As is often the case when researchers spend time in an area not their own, I chose to pass on what little news I had that might interest him. My comment led to the following conversation:

Ranald: I saw sheep on the side of the road, just past Jimmy and Patsy MacLeod's place, down the road another mile.

Dan Alex: SHEEP?

Ranald: Yeah, there's a house up high on a hill and there's a house down below with a couple of little buildings. Yesterday, I saw a few sheep there. I'd never noticed them before.

Dan Alex: You don't have DREAMS, do you?

Ranald: (laughing) No. Not usually, no.

Dan Alex: Near that Bailey bridge?

Ranald: Yeah. I think so. Near one of the bridges. I guess it's Bailey

Bridge. [A "Bailey bridge" is a type of bridge. I think he is naming a specific bridge.]

Dan Alex: No sheep supposed to be anywheres down there.

Ranald: I'll have to ask Jimmy about that 'cause I never noticed them before. I was going by last night and I noticed.

Dan Alex: Are you sure you weren't down in Dutch Brook? There's sheep there.

Ranald: (laughing) No, no. I've seen them in Dutch Brook. If I was in Dutch Brook, I was well off the track.

Dan Alex: There's no sheep there. There's goats over Crooked Lake Road, if you go over there.

Ranald: No, no.

Dan Alex: They're on the main road?

Ranald: Yeah, the road that goes right through Framboise.

Dan Alex: Near the church?

Ranald: Down the coast, past the church, another mile or so.

Dan Alex: That must have been white dogs.

Ranald: (laughing) A herd of them.

Dan Alex: Huh?

Ranald: A herd of white dogs.

Dan Alex: If there are sheep there, they must have just came there.

Ranald: Yeah. Maybe they have. I'll ask around about that, see what I hear about it. (RT92-22B, August 6, 1992)

When Dan Alex said, "You don't have dreams, do you?," he was asking me whether I envisioned things from other times. To the best of my

knowledge, I do not. Although I was laughing during this conversation, Dan Alex was serious. I have spent enough time around animals to tell sheep from goats—let alone dogs—so I had no doubt as to what I saw. In fact, I saw the sheep many more times so either they were there or my vision kept recurring. However, I never did inquire into what other people knew about the sheep.

Dan Alex MacLeod of Stirling is a highly-regarded tradition bearer. He was first recommended to me by the region's two merchants, Annie Hardy of Gabarus Hill and Michael MacKinnon of Framboise. Other local residents also referred to him as a person "with stories." Dan Alex was a vigorous man in his late eighties when I met him in 1992. He ran a sawmill near his home and was engaged in both the milling and the office work. He was also an active Mason, an elder in the Presbyterian church, and the district deputy for the Sons of Temperance. Dan Alex still maintains a house with his wife Margaret and his son Dan Norman. It was only in 1998, at the age of 94, that Dan Alex finally closed his sawmill. He explained that the closure was due more to his son's health problems than his own. He continues to be active in the community. Besides maintaining those organizational duties that he had in 1992, Dan Alex has a leading role on a committee to restore local cemeteries. He also created and maintains a community museum (*Taigh an Iongantais*—House of Wonders) in a building beside his house and is continually pursuing woodworking projects in his cellar. He is well read, especially considering his grade-seven education, and has a substantial collection of books, many dealing with Scottish and Nova Scotian culture.[1] Dan Alex is curious about what goes on around him and enjoys a challenge.

On my last visit in 1998, he had made a few facsimiles of an unusual spinning wheel owned by an acquaintance and was attempting to trace its origins.

A native Gaelic speaker whose first exposure to English came when he began school, Dan Alex speaks fluent but heavily-accented English. He is a passionate proponent of Gaelic, a language he and Margaret use habitually at home. Community residents consider Dan Alex knowledgeable about the region's Gaelic traditions; he was consulted by the compilers of community histories of both Framboise and Fourchu (Cumming et al., MacGillivray et al.). Moreover, his reputation extends beyond the Gabarus-Framboise area. He was visited by the well-known Dartmouth-based folklorist Helen Creighton and has been interviewed on a variety of topics for such media as Cape Breton's Magazine, Am Bràighe (the Cape Breton-based Celtic paper), and, even further afield, the BBC.

As well as being a storyteller and an expert on Gaelic culture, Dan Alex possesses a reputation as a person with a special knowledge of what is referred to locally as "forerunners and such," that is, supernatural lore.[2] He readily admits to being able to see forerunners. Dan Alex uses the word "forerunner" and understands such expressions as the second sight and the evil eye (the usual translation of *an droch sùil* ; Dwelly also translates *droch-shùil* as "blasting eye"). However, for the sake of accuracy, he sometimes uses a literal translation of Gaelic when discussing such matters. While relating a story of a sick cow, he said, "I don't know what you call it in English where somebody's eye laid on her," (RT92-22A, August 6, 1992). In another interview with Jamie Moreira, Dan Alex said, "When I was growing up, I used to see things, you know, double-sighted or something" (96-051, side A). Many Gaelic expressions change their meanings when translated so that, in

some cases, English replacements are not adopted. Mary Fraser explained one such linguistic difference: "That some people are endowed with the gift of Second Sight is a well-authenticated Celtic belief. The Gaelic name for it, *da-shelladh*, does not mean literally 'The Second Sight' but 'The Two Sights,' the vision of the world of sense and that of the world of spirits" (1932:32). In addition, local anglophones may not have English equivalents for particular Gaelic words. For native Gaelic-speakers, their own vocabulary for the supernatural is more familiar and precise than the English.

These linguistic distinctions suggest differing patterns of belief between the English and Scottish residents of the Gabarus-Framboise region. Both groups generally regard the Scots as being more inclined to believe in supernatural phenomena. Some people of English background use the term "superstitious" in a disparaging way when discussing the local Scots, especially those of earlier generations. John Cousins (1990) made a similar observation about western Prince Edward Island, saying that both Scottish- and English-descended residents referred to the Scots as superstitious and the English as not (233). However, Cousins observed that although the two groups were inclined to believe in different supernatural phenomena, neither was more inclined to believe in the supernatural.

Understanding other people's attitudes toward belief is always complex; after all, people's inner thoughts are not accessible so we may never know what another person really believes. The best we can do is examine what people have to say, ask them questions, and then look for patterns in their testimonies. The study of belief is further complicated by ethnic stereotypes when we are dealing with Highland Scots, the Irish, or other so-called "Celts." Some outsiders regard the Celt as being akin to the "noble savage" celebrated

by the nineteenth-century Scottish romanticists and the early twentieth-century Irish "Celtic-Twilight" movement (espoused by Yeats, Lady Gregory, and their peers); others hold an image of the Celt as a superstitious, backward rustic or peasant. Outsiders often regard rural "Scots" as either superstitious, mysterious, backward, closer to nature, childlike, wise, or gifted, among other things (the Mi'kmaq are similarly stereotyped). Cape Breton's rural Scots themselves may share, or occasionally exploit, some of these same images. Therefore, attempts to link local belief patterns according to ethnicity are complicated by a vast web of esoteric and exoteric beliefs, some extending far beyond the region.

Be that as it may, the oral evidence suggests that there are two distinct patterns in this community. As was mentioned earlier, although some residents can trace their ancestry on all sides to Scotland, virtually all people with English names are descended from Scots and many with Scottish names are descended from English. As well, a few people from other ethnic backgrounds settled in the region and married local people. Therefore, dividing residents into Scots and English is somewhat artificial. However, the Scottish people—those bearing Scottish names and being either Gaelic-speaking or brought up by Gaelic-speakers—are more inclined than the English to express supernatural beliefs comfortably in their storytelling.

My interviewing style, although flexible, involved asking similar questions of most individuals, whatever their background. Only two "English people"—that is, monolingual English-speaking residents of Gabarus and Fourchu, bearing English names—implied that they do or did believe in ghosts or witches. Both laughed awkwardly as they spoke of such matters. Most others rejected the idea of the supernatural. However, many

of the "Scots" comfortably volunteered information about and related testimonials to a variety of phenomena. While some rejected specific types of uncanny phenomena (for example, ghosts or witches), few, if any, dismissed the whole concept of supernatural belief. The Scots speak more openly and easily about the supernatural.[3] Nonetheless, any cultural patterns reflecting Scottish and English beliefs in this region do not always indicate an individual's beliefs accurately. For instance, we have seen that Jimmy Philip MacLeod, a native Gaelic-speaker, was skeptical of supernatural beliefs generally.

Dan Alex is a believer in various supernatural phenomena and tells numerous stories of his own visions and other uncanny experiences, as well as those of his friends and neighbours. His willingness to relate such narratives to me is not merely evidence of my own interests (folklorists are often concerned about whether we are recording what we want to hear rather than what our sources wish to discuss). Dan Alex talked about supernatural experiences in two interviews with Ronald Caplan of Cape Breton's Magazine and one with the folklorist Jamie Moreira, all of which focused on Dan Alex's working life. In each instance, Dan Alex introduced the topic of supernatural experiences and related some of the same stories that he told me.[4] However, Caplan's and Moreira's interviews indicate that personal experience narratives about work are at least as prominent a part of Dan Alex's repertoire as are supernatural narratives. The differences in narrative themes in their interviews and mine indicate a major weakness of repertoire analysis; that is, except in rare cases in which a person has a learned a finite number of stories (party pieces, perhaps), a person's complete narrative repertoire cannot be collected (see Chapter II). Such factors as interpersonal dynamics, the

interviewer's interests, the questions asked, events happening outside the window, and serendipity will influence the storyteller to recall and relate particular stories. I was unaware of Dan Alex's repertoire of work stories mainly because I discovered his interest in the supernatural during my first interview. As this is an important topic for Dan Alex, who could see that I too was curious, we did not stray far from that subject. Whereas Moreira, who was focusing specifically on farming, bypassed comments which could have led to more supernatural narratives, I never asked those work-related questions which may have led to the type of stories recorded by Moreira and Caplan. Nonetheless, Dan Alex's introduction of supernatural themes into his interviews about work demonstrates his concern with the subject.

Tales of work have an important place within the local repertoire (see chapters VI and VII). Dan Alex is one of the community's outstanding storytellers and, like Arthur Severance and Lloyd MacDonald, he shares his knowledge and experience through narratives. Many of Dan Alex's stories give practical advice as well as conveying an attitude about how one should deal with difficult tasks and troublesome authorities. However, work and visions are not distinct categories within Dan Alex's worldview. The two topics, both of prime importance to him, overlap considerably in his narrations. By relating supernatural memorates, Dan Alex plays an important local role as a tradition bearer who provides testimonials of unusual events and thereby gives legitimacy to beliefs which are widely held in his community. He both contributes to the community's narrative repertoire and perpetuates a framework used by others in interpreting extraordinary happenings.

In many ways, Dan Alex is as practical as Arthur Severance. Dan Alex

spent his life as a working man, focusing a great deal of his energy on getting jobs done and dealing with the particular difficulties they entailed. The two Cape Breton's Magazine articles about Dan Alex's reminiscences are entitled "'I Moved Houses'" (CBM 35) and "A Working Life" (CBM 41). In one of these interviews, Dan Alex commented "I like work" and "If you get enough rest and good food to eat, I don't think hard work will ever kill you. I think it's good for you" (CBM 41:15). Besides being a farmer, a trapper, a miner, a highway-repair worker, a truckdriver, an iceman, and a coal shoveller, Dan Alex was an entrepreneur who blasted on contract for the British Metals mine in Stirling, moved houses, operated sawmills, and experimented with sheep production. He explained that he started lumbering and moving houses in 1939 as a result of an unprofitable employment experience. "I had been working down in Guysborough for a contractor on the highway, driving a tractor, and I figured I ended up by getting 9 1/2 cents an hour for my work, working 16 hours a day. So I swore, 'That's it! I'll never work for another boss as long as I live'" (CBM 35:13).

Many of Dan Alex's personal experience narratives about work (the theme of thirty-nine of his eighty-six stories, see Table 8.1) are similar to occupational narratives; for instance, some contain detailed accounts of spects of his various jobs. In twelve of his stories, he illustrates his skills by telling about a difficult task that he accomplished. In ten, he describes work techniques. Nine of his narratives are specifically about farming. Twelve contain that favourite working person's theme, defying authority, though in Dan Alex's case, the authorities are not always employers.

Despite the similarities of his work stories to occupational narratives generally, Dan Alex has worked at so many different jobs that it is hard to use

Table 8.1 **Thematic Patterns in Dan Alex MacLeod's Narratives**

86	narratives related (18 told twice, 5 told 3 times, for a total of 114)
72	local (Gabarus-Framboise region)
59	personal experiences
39	work
33	something is not what it seems
31	supernatural
20	solving problems
18	showing superior skill or knowledge to others
17	entrepreneurship
17	prophesy
16	death
15	forerunners
13	technical details
12	defying authority
12	shows skills through something he did
10	work techniques
9	farming
7	speculation about aspects of the story
5	disasters (earthquake and tsunami, shipwrecks, storm at sea, taking many lives)
5	healing by traditional cures
5	deviance from local values
5	history (settlement, long-ago happenings in the region)
5	danger
4	haunted houses
4	family emergencies
4	illegal activity (murder, threat of violence, gambling)
3	prayer or use of God's name brings results
3	treasure
3	ghost/return of dead
3	violence/murder
3	evil eye
3	witches and witchcraft
3	hunting
3	local characters
2	travel
2	anonymous characters
2	sea (local shipwrecks)
2	humorous
2	unintentionally funny remarks (made by a character in the story)
1	learned from book (ghost ship)
1	famous person
1	synchronicity (person perceiving something happening elsewhere)
1	disbelief regarding supernatural
1	origin of nickname
1	prank
1	family history
1	hardship

Note: Most stories contain multiple themes. Numbers reflect general patterns; they do not provide exact data. These narratives were compiled from two interviews by Ron Caplan for Cape Breton's Magazine 35 & 41 and by Jamie Moreira (Tape 96-051) as well as from my own taped interviews (see Dan Alex MacLeod in Bibliography).

the word "occupational" to describe his reminiscences. His stories are occupational narratives in that they tell about his work experiences but they are not stories primarily meant to be shared by members of a particular occupation. Moreover, he is not a narrative hero in Jack Santino's terms; that is, Dan Alex is not a labourer who masters skills and defies authorities but sticks with the job. Santino summarizes the relationship of narrative to the stresses in the lives of working people:

> The network of relationships a worker has is complex: he must relate to and work with subordinates, peers, bosses, management, outside agencies, and the general public. Narratives arise along each of these relationships, and allow aggressive feelings fictive release. People working with each other will conflict. Nevertheless, in order for an overall operation to be productive, the individual workers must function well together. They are each moving parts of a larger machine, and they must avoid friction with each other or the machine will break down. Occupational narrative, by allowing the fictive expression of negative emotions, is a kind of lubricant that reduces the friction between the parts and allows the operation to function more smoothly. (70)

Santino, like many scholars studying occupational folklife, focuses on urban labourers working for large corporations. Dan Alex's employment experiences include working with corporations in both town and country. He had to get along with people in his varying roles as employee, co-worker and employer and probably released some aggressive feelings while telling or listening to occupational narratives. However, he does not fit conveniently into Santino's functionalist model of the workplace. Dan Alex was not content to "avoid friction" and did not depend on narratives to allow "the fictive expression of negative emotions" when working for others. According to his stories, when he was not treated properly, he did not become an employee hero who expressed his defiance or, more likely, allowed it

"fictive release," and went on with the job, making sure that the "machine" did not break down. Instead, he quit. The machine be damned! His work history verifies the spirit if not the details of his stories.

Dan Alex's stories of conflicts with employers fit the pattern shown by Martin Lovelace (1979) in his study of English farm-workers "having words" with farmers. The following two stories by Dan Alex share with the farm labourers' stories the theme of "personal vindication and the assertion of competence" (37). The second story also "stress[es] the exchange of words" between Dan Alex and his employer (37). In addition, it contains the "four main elements of meaning in such stories: firstly, a statement of location, which also serves as an opening formula; secondly, an account of the problem; thirdly, the description of the verbal conflict; and fourthly, its consequences" (31). The first story also follows this pattern but, rather than focusing on the verbal conflict, Dan Alex describes it briefly but dramatically. His two narratives fit the theme of class conflict emphasized by Santino. However, narratives of this type are not simply about class conflict. Dan Alex tells similar stories in which he has verbal conflicts with people who are not of a higher social strata—a policeman, a government expert on sheep,[5] a clerk selling schoolbooks, and a customer who has gone to a competitor for a better deal. Furthermore, stories with the themes of "personal vindication and the assertion of competence" are common among social equals such as co-workers and family members. The next two narratives say as much about Dan Alex's character and self-image as they do about his relationships with superiors. In fact, they suggest that he sees himself as an equal to those who contract his labour.

In the first, a narrative about his last day of work at a "coal plant" in Sydney, Dan Alex illustrates his sense of self-worth and spirit of defiance:

> So anyway, we were dumping coal in the coal bank. I worked there all winter. Then out of 175 people, I was one of the 5 that were picked out to work all summer. And then that fall, we started dumping coal again. I and another fellow—oh, a great worker—we got a car of screened coal, 16 screen coal—that's long lumps like this—they were jamming in the car. And it had snowed in the morning, soft snow, and we were trying to get this car out. Anyway, the boss used to walk on top of the car. I thought I and the boss were great friends. There was steam coming out of our oilskins, we were working that hard. He got snarly, you know. I just fired the shovel as far as it could go and I went in. My time is still there—I never went looking for my time. That was at 3 o'clock, and at 9 o'clock I was over in the old place (at Stirling) with the furniture.[6] (CBM 41:5)

In this story, Dan Alex is saying that he never collected his pay cheque but instead packed up his household and left town on the same day his boss acted abusively—making a definitive statement to his employer about how Dan Alex could be treated. (Note the use of workplace language in this narrative: "screened coal, 16 screen coal.")

In this second story of defiance against an employer, Dan Alex portrays a conflict between local, rural values, which stress neighbourliness and mutual dependence, and the impersonal and seemingly efficient corporate rules of a large corporation. Dan Alex was a truck driver working for British Metals' Stirling mine when the following incident took place.

> ...a new manager had come in for the mining part. So he warned me, "No passengers—you're not allowed to take any passengers." I used to go to Sydney—there were no snowplows then—and I used to get in every night. Oh, I had all the right equipment you could talk of. Long ropes—there were drums on those wheels. Tie them to a tree or something, and pull yourself through. Chain blocks and shovels and bars—we had everything. Kept her going all winter. See, sometimes there'd be a bunch of miners going home on weekend, and they'd want to get a drive back. And I always had lots of shovels. I'd take them back.

> But anyway, I was coming through Loch Lomond one day, and I had two in the cab. And the manager met me. Next morning I was hauled into the office and put on the mat. If anything happened, (the riders) could sue the company. I never said a word. I just let him go. But the next day, he met me with two in the seat, one on each running board!
>
> So when I went in—I went in to see Winger, who was the boss of the construction company. He was after me all the time to go to work with him. I said, "How about a job?" "Sure," he said. "Well," I said, "I'll be with you tomorrow morning."
>
> I was called over to the office. I said, "Before you open your mouth," I said, "I quit last night when I landed your truck in here." I said, "And I'll tell you why. I come in here every night with my load." "Oh, yes, good driver." I said, "You know those fellows you saw with me, they even took their team of horses down to pull me through snow. They shovelled the snowbanks." I said, "When I've got to pass them, the job is yours." "Oh, wait, wait," he said. "There's no waiting to it," I said. "I'm not going to be coming in and put on the mat here every day—that's it." So I turned around. "Wait a minute," he said, "we'll give you passes. Get them to sign it, and you can take anybody you want." And he gave me a yearly pass for my girlfriend! He never bothered me after that. (CBM 41:6)

(The passes might have been insurance waivers.) Although Dan Alex does not make clear whether the passengers who owned the team of horses were mine workers, neighbours, or both, he shows that the rural principles of helping someone in need and fulfilling personal obligations override corporate principles demanding adherence to company rules.

Today the extent of mutual dependence has lessened considerably in rural areas. Dan Alex regards the decline in shared work and the parallel decline in socializing as aspects of the same cultural trend.

> I think, myself, I and Johnny MacInnes down in Breton Cove—I go down there often, he comes up here—we always get into the business [i.e., talking about social changes]. I said, "When I was growing up," I said, "you had lots of time to go ceilidh or go playing cards. If any farmer lost his barn or something, the whole congregation was there and the barn was up in no time. No charge. They had lots of time to visit and talk." I said, "But once refrigeration and television and that, you gotta work all the time to keep those things going. You haven't got time to go visiting or go to ceilidhs. Nobody today hears of, if you're

> cutting wood, of their neighbours all coming to cut it or anything. There's none of that. They were a lot happier then without improvements. (RT92-22B, Aug. 6, 1992)

Though oral testimony throughout this rural community makes clear that the degree of sharing has declined considerably since Dan Alex's younger days, I saw many instances of neighbours helping each other when there was need. Furthermore, few, if any, local people would drive past a person with car trouble on the roads of the Gabarus-Framboise region. Such an attitude is not limited to Cape Breton. When my car slid off an icy road some years ago in a francophone region of rural Quebec where I did not know a soul, my urban companion was perplexed by my calm reaction. I knew that by simply walking down the road to the nearest farmhouse, help would be at hand without any thought of money being exchanged, which proved to be the case.

Dan Alex's work stories, while incorporating community values and motifs common to occupational narratives, are primarily stories about himself. These stories must be seen not as self-enclosed but as components of Dan Alex's "*family* novel" and "*personal* novel," as William Wilson puts it (author's italics; 1991:146), and of his community novel. His personal experience narratives about his working life, while they may contain what Bauman calls "self-aggrandizement" (1972:337), also show those elements of Dan Alex's character which led him to be a successful businessman. Residents of the Gabarus-Framboise area know Dan Alex MacLeod as a strong-willed entrepreneur who regularly interacts with them. They understand that his work stories are about him as a character and thus are parts not only of a greater autobiography but of the community's story.

Dan Alex's stories illustrate that he became an entrepreneur as a result

of skill, pride, willingness to take risks, and absolute intolerance for authority figures—employers, civil servants, police officers, merchants, or experts of various types—who are incompetent, pompous, dishonest, or who see themselves as superior to Dan Alex. In many narratives, he portrays himself as a practical man whose life is complicated by the fact that, to use Jonathan Swift's words, "the dunces are all in confederacy against him." This attitude is typical of the narratives of other entrepreneurs I have known. Their stories could be classed as entrepreneurial narratives, a genre closely related to or a sub-genre of occupational narratives. Some widespread entrepreneurial narrative themes contained in Dan Alex's repertoire include: why I decided not to work for others, how I began (and improved) my business, how I accomplished a task when others could not, how I directly defied an authority, how I showed superior knowledge to experts, and how a customer went elsewhere for a bargain but returned repentant. Another theme, not included in Dan Alex's interviews but common to many employers' repertoires, is how I dealt with troublesome employees.

Dan Alex's entrepreneurial narratives show members of his community that survival in southeastern Cape Breton is possible without having to swallow one's pride by working for disrespectful employers. However, as in most places, being an employer does not draw unqualified approval. When I commented on Dan Alex's robust condition to one retired working man, he replied, "Dan Alex never hurt himself." I asked what he meant, and the man said, "Well, he always had other people to work for him."

The following story from Cape Breton's Magazine (41) has elements not generally found within entrepreneurial narratives. Nonetheless, it is a

personal experience story dealing primarily with a major business venture, relocating a sawmill (see Plate 8.3). Before he related this story, Dan Alex had been talking about running a sawmill in Loch Lomond during World War II. (The words in parentheses are the remarks of Ron Caplan, the interviewer.)

> Then in 1949 I bought this place. (Your home here at Stirling.) And my wife was telling me, "Oh, you're crazy. The mine isn't going." I said, "The mine is going, I know it's going." So I got this place for a song. I knew the guy that bought it from the old people that were here. He had bought it through this money from the war.[7] So I figured he was going to sell it. That's how we got this place. I had the mill all set up here, and the first time they wanted lumber for the mine, I had it for them. (At this time there was no mine or talk of a mine, 1949.) No. But they started in '50. (You felt sure they were going to start?) Oh yeah, I was sure. I moved the mill and everything down here to be ready for them. John G. came down when I was building the house and the mill. "Did you buy any shares?" She [the mine] was after starting. "Did you buy any shares?" "No," I said, "I didn't buy any shares. I've got shares enough right here." I had the mill down here just in time to supply them with the lumber they needed.
>
> (Why do you think you're able to foretell that sort of thing?) Oh, I don't know. (Was that in your family before you?) The MacDermots[8] and Morrisons, they were full of it. (9-10)

The story may seem somewhat cryptic and appears to imply that Dan Alex relocated his mill as a response to an intuitive hunch. However, an excerpt from earlier in the same conversation helps put the narrative in perspective.

> (Before there was ever a mine at Stirling was it you or your grandfather heard of it?) Both of us. The first time we heard it, one stormy night, I happened to go out—see, we had no inside toilets then—I could hear this roaring going over here. So I told my grandfather and he came out to listen to it. "Oh," he said, "That's the forerunner of somebody getting killed or something." So I don't know how many years after that the mines started and you could hear the same noise.
>
> The last time she started, I heard it three different times. I was saying there were three people going to be killed there and there were.[9] (Do you have any visions of it returning again?) Oh, it's going to return. We've heard it since the mine stopped. But when, we don't know. Even over there, we heard a diamond drill. It must be electric or

> something. But you could hear, you know, the way they grind. And it's in April you hear those things. (Have you heard it recently?) Oh, about seven years ago. (You feel it's foretelling that Stirling Mines will be producing again?) Oh, yeah. (1)

When the two stories are put together, it is apparent that Dan Alex is saying that he made the decision to move his mill as a result of his experiences with forerunners. That Dan Alex is speaking of forerunners in the narrative about moving the sawmill is further confirmed by a direct comment about the abilities of the Morrisons made in another interview. Dan Alex had been telling me about himself, his cousin Roy MacLeod (not the Roy from Chapter V), and another man seeing funerals and wakes before they happened. I asked, "Is there a name for that?" Dan Alex replied, "Forerunners, they say. And it seems to be in a family, you know, the Morrisons in here. And my grandmother was a Morrison and Roy's grandmother too. That's how we got it I guess" (RT92-21B). Clearly, what he is saying in the first narrative above is that he based a major business decision on psychic experiences.

A few other of Dan Alex's work stories incorporate both the mysterious and the mundane. These include a tale, unusual in a Protestant community, of a priest using his powers to intervene in the moving of a schoolhouse[10] (CBM 35:10), and two others testifying to the power of prayer to get Dan Alex's truck over an icy hill (RT92-21A; RT95-24B; CBM 41:8) and through "terrible snow" (CBM 41:8). Within another work-related story about his first childhood trip to Sydney, accompanying an uncle who was peddling farm goods, he includes a brief narrative of his first visionary experience (see Appendix 8). Although Dan Alex does not take these stories of uncanny experiences for granted—they are important enough to be the subject of

thirty-one of eighty-six stories—neither does he appear to separate them from other experience. He weaves supernatural themes comfortably into his work stories. In fact, he tells supernatural stories in a straightforward manner, no different from his telling of other stories, and makes no attempt either through vocal changes or gestures to be mysterious or dramatic. He accepts the second sight as a fact of life and does not appear to care whether or not others believe him.[11]

Many of his Dan Alex's neighbours do believe his stories. He is reputed locally to have predicted the three deaths in the Stirling mine, mentioned above. However, not all share this opinion. After I told one man that I had been interviewing Dan Alex, he strongly advised that Arthur Severance would be a better person to talk to as "his stories are true." Once again, this conflict of opinions points out the widespread discrepancy in issues of belief. In the Gabarus-Framboise region, individuals range from atheists with no belief in the supernatural to Christians who profess to have had experience with the supernatural. There are numerous grades in between, for example, churchgoers with belief in the powers of God but a high degree of skepticism about forerunners, people returning from the dead, and direct divine intervention of the kind that Dan Alex testifies to in his stories of answered prayers. Even individuals within families or married couples may hold divergent opinions, as in the case of Jimmy Philip and Lena MacLeod (Chapter V).

Such conflict in belief is not new. Evidence of skepticism toward and contempt for others' supernatural beliefs goes back hundreds of years throughout Europe and the British Isles.[12] Angus Hector MacLean, in his account of life in turn-of-the-century Cape Breton (1976), tells of one youth

who refuses to go along with his elders in their interpretation of a strange light as being a forerunner of a death.

> Once we saw a light wandering at the upper end of Uncle Dan's pasture, and the family and some guests watched it with an air of mystery and awe that gave it a sense of not being of this world. Someone noticed that the light was moving erratically toward Neillie John's home. Neillie was Ian Ban's son who was dying of tuberculosis. My brother Duncan suggested that "It's probably Uncle Dan out looking for a damn cow." (59)

Dan Alex himself, though he does not claim to understand why one would see forerunners, rationalizes such phenomena in terms of Presbyterian ideas of predestination. After telling me of a death in the mine that was preceded by forerunners, he concluded, "So, THE DAY YOU WERE BORN, YOUR LIFE WAS SLATED, ME BOY. I'm sure it's, you know, he had to die and why see all those things ahead of it? Is that spirits or-?" (RT95-24B, Sept. 2, 1995). In another instance, he expressed his disbelief in newspaper accounts of "those people that's supposed to have died and gone to heaven and told that they're to come back here" (i.e., "near-death experiences"). "I can't swallow that. I believe the day you were born or perhaps even long before you were born, your life was slated. You're supposed to be sitting right there now. And the day you die or how you die and all that is slated already. I'm a great believer in that" (RT92-21B, August 6, 1992).[13] It would be a mistake however, to assume that Dan Alex's visions are somehow created by his Presbyterian beliefs.[14] Forerunner narratives are common among Cape Breton's Roman Catholic population which does not share the dogma of predestination.

Folklorists in the past usually held that supernatural memorates were based on some form of faulty reasoning. Lauri Honko, for example, in his

important essay "Memorates and the Study of Folk Belief" (1964), used a psychological interpretation to explain "a simple and often-repeated supernatural experience," a visitation of a barn spirit to a man dozing rather than tending a fire to dry grain. Rather than citing an actual memorate or questioning individuals who claimed to have had such an experience, Honko created a stock situation and then rationalized the imaginary character's vision by saying that it was the result of "stress and feelings of guilt," "fear," "poor perceptual circumstances" under which "the tired man's 'creative eye' began to act," and familiarity with "explanatory models offered by tradition" (15-16). He offered no evidence that his interpretation was based on anything other than his own beliefs or disbeliefs about the supernatural. Honko's approach is typical of what David Hufford (1982) calls the cultural source hypothesis, the supposition that supernatural experiences are in some way created by and unique to the cultures of those who perceive them (65-66, 115-16, 143, 245, 248-53). Both Hufford and Leea Virtanen, who researched psychic experiences in Finland (1977), provide ample evidence to show that many accounts of supernatural experiences not only exist even where there is no tradition to support them but are similar to those experienced within traditional frameworks. In the conclusion to her book, Virtanen asks, "Why are the different experiences so similar right down to the minutest details even though the percepients (sic) know nothing about such similarities?" (151). Hufford (1982a) argues that scholars themselves are the upholders of traditions of disbelief about the supernatural and that their biases interfere with their scholarship:

> ...there is one kind of logical error that is the peculiar property of disbelievers; i.e., the *a priori* exclusion of one whole class of hypotheses—the supernatural ones—as unnecessary to consider. 'It

> can't be so; therefore it isn't.' Very few believers ever categorically exclude material explanations from consideration, because their world view includes both kind of possibility. (53)

Nonetheless, culture does have an important role to play in regard to particular supernatural experiences. A person who perceives something beyond understanding turns to the community for clues and guidance. When Dan Alex heard a strange roaring in the night, he turned to an older authority figure, his grandfather, who told him that the noise was "the forerunner of somebody getting killed or something." However, his own experience also influenced his assessment since, according to his account, he did hear the same sounds again later in life. Hufford explains, "Cultural factors heavily determine the ways in which the experience is described (or withheld) and interpreted" (1982:245). Forerunners are spoken of openly in the Gabarus-Framboise region where many residents are inheritors of Scottish Highland and Island belief systems. However, as I have shown in the discussion of the Devil in Chapter VII, Protestant and Catholic Scots may interpret similar phenomena differently.

In the following narrative, Dan Alex shows both his reliance on tradition to interpret his first visionary experience and his resistance to the opinions of others when they conflict with his own impressions. The narrative also demonstrates his faith in forerunners (for alternate versions, see Appendix 9 and CBM 41:10).

Ranald: So, do you see things anymore?

Dan Alex: No.

Ranald: You said you didn't. When was the last time? You mentioned it but how long ago was that?

Dan Alex: Oh God, I don't know. I used to know when the mine was going to start and how many people was killed. I told them the last time, THREE was going to be killed in it. The first time, I imagine I must have been eleven years old when I started seeing them things. I was skating on the ice there, all alone, one night in the wintertime and all this place here, all this hill, was lit up with street lights and little lights, houselights, down below. I HAD NEVER BEEN OUT OF STIRLING. And I went back home. I stopped skating and went home, told my grandfather. "Oh," he said, "that's the forerunner of a TOWN." He didn't say CITY. So a year or so afterwards, my uncle was peddling. I went to Sydney with him. When we got to Dutch Brook, you know, you could see Sydney. I told him, "That's what I saw." Then when the mine started—the two times she started—there was shacks along here, you know, a place for people to live in. "THAT'S WHAT YOU SAW!" But that's not what I saw. SOME DAY, this'll be a city. There'll be a mine start here some time and this'll be all set up. Might be a hundred years from now, two hundred years.

Ranald: So it isn't the town that was here when the mine was here?

Dan Alex: No, no, no.

Ranald: It hasn't come yet.

Dan Alex: No, no. A hundred lights to everyone that was here then. Yeah. (RT92-22A, August 6, 1992)

In the next personal experience narrative, Dan Alex interprets moving objects and unexplainable sounds as being forerunners. This deduction is highly influenced by his culture in which, despite a few ghost stories, inexplicable events are more often associated with the future than the past. C. I. N. MacLeod, in his study of Highland Scottish Folklore and Belief (1975) in both Scotland and Nova Scotia, cites a case of a stool moving before funerals (39).[15] However, throughout North America, strange phenomena within households are generally associated with the past and the dead. Repetitive occurrences of objects moving within houses are classed by many

writers as poltergeist phenomena and are usually associated with the dead or with evil spirits (though they are sometimes linked with the presence of angry or emotionally disturbed adolescents).[16]

As the following conversation begins, we had been talking about death and funerals.

Ranald: So when someone died, the same day they would build the coffin and dress the body, would they?

Dan Alex: Oh, they'd start. They'd start it right away and make it. Yeah, yeah.

Ranald: And how long would it be till they buried the person?

Dan Alex: Three days. Third day. At that time, if you kept a body more than that, over [inaudible]. See, I worked in the mine, we were sinking the shaft and our house wasn't fit to be living in! Doors opening and people talking down in the front room and, oh, dishes rattling and (chuckles) my mother was telling me, "Quit working in the mine, YOU'RE GOING TO GET KILLED." And I told her, "You know very well if all this were here, if I'm going to get killed, I'm going to get killed or DIE or something. This thing is going to come to pass." And Dan MacNab [pseudonym], he used to come to the door and holler at the horse, the mare, you know, you could tell his voice. Open the door, there was nobody there (chuckles).

John MacLeod, he was working up in some place in Nova Scotia and he came home. He was going to get a job in the mine and I had a bad, bad cold—and I think he stayed at our place till he'd get his own place, there was a place out further that he was going to fix—and he said, "I'll go and work your shift." So I said, "Okay." So I stayed home and he went to work and he was down in the bottom and Irv, the powder-man, was supposed to check after the blast, you know. He was supposed to check all the timbers—they were only wedged in there—see that they were solid. Whatever happened, he couldn't have checked the timbers that night. And an eight-by-eight came down and Johnnie was lowering the bucket, singing a Gaelic song, and it hit him right on the back there and KILLED HIM. Dead. They just took the body up to where the compressors and all that was, and his mother was up in Cleveland [Cape Breton] or Seaview, up the other side of St. Peters. And she was coming

> down and my mother said, "IT'S AWFUL." You know, the mother coming down and the body in there among those compressors and everything. So Dan MacNab—Dan MacNab would be this fella's mother's first cousin—and all the MacNabs [pseudonym], they never made any attempt, so my mother said, "We better bring it over here," the body. So they had an (entrance?) and he was on the top of the ground floor for five days. That's why we were hearing so many things. And the day Dan MacNab came with the body on the sleigh, he hollered at the mare right at the door, the same thing we had heard DIFFERENT times before.
>
> So, THE DAY YOU WERE BORN, YOUR LIFE WAS SLATED, ME BOY. I'm sure it's, you know, he had to die and why see all those things ahead of it? Is that spirits or-? I AM A GREAT BELIEVER, I don't know but I think perhaps your mother or father or somebody is right around you all the time, that's part of the reason. (RT 95-24B, August 18, 1992)

In an earlier interview, Dan Alex had commented on objects moving but had not provided a related narrative. He seemed to be talking about the same series of phenomena, however:

Dan Alex: You'd see a thing come off that shelf—you know, in this house—go across and go on a shelf there. Nobody near it.

Ranald: You've seen that, have you?

Dan Alex: Yeah. And lots of people saw that. What do you call it, Helen Creighton? (Ranald: Yeah.) She was there. Oh, she was here a long time too. And I was asking her, if you had a camera and you took a picture of that, would it show what was carrying [it]? She said, "I don't know." I was often thinking that I should go there with a camera and watch till that would come. (RT92-21B, August 6, 1992)

(At this point, we began talking about Helen Creighton, who was very interested in supernatural phenomena, and never returned to the original subject.)

It is not coincidental that Dan Alex told his story of the disturbances in his home immediately after telling me how long a body was kept till burial.

In this case, the norm was not followed nor was the corpse treated with due respect until Dan Alex's mother took charge. Both my research in the Gabarus-Framboise region and on supernatural narratives in Cape Breton's Magazine indicate that forerunners are often associated with disturbances or irregularities surrounding deaths (e.g.: untimely deaths including deaths of young people, murders, and drownings; disturbances in the funeral procession such as having to transfer the coffin from one vehicle to another; difficulties in moving the corpse from the house; and death far away from loved ones). However, some forerunners seem unconnected with unusual circumstances. Dan Alex told of a forerunner for his grandfather who died as an old man:

Dan Alex: I think the last coffin that was made here was made right here, where Neil and I made it for that Christie MacLean (chuckles) we were talking about a little while ago. Yeah. And the women would put a copper or something, the women that dressed them, and they had cloth, you know, different colours for women and men. There used to be, I'll show you IRONS out in there [his museum], that they used to go along with the cloth. But they were always made. My grandfather, he always warned us not to buy a coffin for him but they'd just fall apart, anyway. He had it sawed right over there, DOUGLAS FIR. You heard of the white rum that came ashore? A lot of those logs came ashore, square timber. That's what we sawed. He had it all at the house.

Ranald: From the *African Prince*.[17]

Dan Alex: Yeah. We heard them different times making the coffin. The coffin was made over at the woodhouse we had. The fella that lived in this house went up one night, he went and opened the door. He could hear the hammers and the saws working there. The minute he opened the door—it was in the nighttime—everything stopped. Yeah.[18]

Ranald: And this must be before someone died?

Dan Alex: Yeah, before my grandfather died. You don't see or hear nothing now. See, POWER. Where there's power, you don't hear nothing. (RT95-24B)

Dan Alex's style differs from that of many narrators of supernatural memorates in that in his accounts, the details leading up to the unusual happenings are sparse. Instead he jumps immediately to the heart of the story:

> I was skating on the ice there, all alone, one night in the wintertime and all this place here, all this hill, was lit up with street lights and little lights, houselights, down below.
>
> See, I worked in the mine, we were sinking the shaft and our house wasn't fit to be living in! Doors opening and people talking down in the front room and, oh, dishes rattling...
>
> We heard them different times making the coffin. The coffin was made over at the woodhouse we had. The fella that lived in this house went up one night, he went and opened the door. He could hear the hammers and the saws working there.

By contrast, other narrators pack their memorates with what Honko calls "unnecessary details" (11). Diane Goldstein (1991) argues that such "lengthy descriptions" are, in fact, important parts of the narratives. Referring to one Newfoundland storyteller, she concluded, "By contrasting the simple and the supernatural, Francis demonstrates his ability to distinguish one class from another. He is able to describe the familiar and thus define the characteristics of the unfamiliar. The contrast is dialectical; the supernatural is seen in contrast to the natural" (35). Narrators, by providing a thorough description of the mundane, are both testifying to their soundness of mind—I was sober, I wasn't over-tired, I was able to take in what was going on around me in a normal way—and using a rhetorical device in their storytelling—I'll tell you what everyday reality is, now here's what I experienced. There is a degree of

defensiveness in this approach in which an attack anticipated by the storyteller is, it is hoped, thwarted by a carefully built defence. When Lloyd MacDonald told of his visitation by his deceased Aunt Sarah (Chapter VII), he provided a testimonial to his state of mind at the time—"I thought I was awake, looking out through the window"—and showed awareness of what was going on around him—"I remember it was a moonlight night." Though his account is considerably less detailed than that of Francis, nonetheless he is creating an opposition between the natural world and the supernatural.

Dan Alex's confidence in his visionary abilities is such that within his narrations, he neither attempts to ground his perceptions in the mundane nor tries to ward off anticipated criticism. In one instance, he does say that he investigated before deciding that a particular incident was a forerunner.

Ranald: Now, when you see something, is it the very same as if you—? When it actually happens, you look out there and see the car and everything. Now, when you see it ahead of time, is it the same or is there something different about it?

Dan Alex: No, no. That's the only thing I ever seen any different. [Referring to an incident in a previous narrative.]

Ranald: Yeah. But is it as clear as day? Is it foggy or misty or-?

Dan Alex: Oh, perfect.

Ranald: And how do you know when you see it that it isn't something that's actually happening.

Dan Alex: I DON'T KNOW unless it disappears. If you take your eye off it, you don't see it any more. I know then, it's a forerunner. But Allan MacDonald, [Big] Ranald's brother, in North Framboise—he'd be related, a first cousin of *Raghnall Mhurchaidh*'s [Ranald Murdoch MacDonald's], I guess. He died of TB and Norman Alex—that would be a neighbour—I seen him coming up when we lived at the old place. The barn was between the house and the road and I seen him coming up the road with his leg like this in the wagon, horse coming. When he went

behind the barn, I waited and waited. He didn't come so I figured it's a forerunner. But anyway, I went over—he used to play tricks, you know, that he was there. He wasn't there. But then when Allan died, I seen him coming again. He kept coming that time. He was just coming to tell us that Allan had died. Yeah. (RT95-24B)

In another narration of the same story, Dan Alex again recounts how he investigated this incident (see Appendix 9).

In the following narrative, he tells about investigating strange and disturbing noises in his brother-in-law's house. It is only after both his natural and supernatural understandings fail to solve the mystery that he becomes truly disturbed. Dan Alex, in his search for an explanation, discovers that some people try to connect the strange happenings with disturbing events surrounding the residents of the house in times past. However, he is not comfortable with this conjecture.

Dan Alex: My brother-in-law, first wife, he bought a place up in Loch Lomond and every April, they'd have to leave there, the noise! There was a crooked steps coming from the attic, down alongside the flue, and it was just like a horse coming down. He'd come on the upstairs and he'd come down the front, the steps, and go into the front room and it was quiet, not a thing. And I was thinking it was somebody that was trying to scare them, you know, or it was a forerunner or whatever and in that case, I'll see it. So I was there one night and I sat—the table was here [gestures] and the lamp was on the table and the door going down the hall at the foot of the stairs was right alongside of me. So sure enough, ten o'clock, this racket started upstairs. LOUD, you know. So it was coming downstairs. When I figured he was where I could see it, I pushed the door open. Nothing there. I told Roddie, I said, "I'D GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE. I'D GET TEN MILES FROM HERE. I WOULDN'T STAY HERE AT ALL. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT WAS BUT I'M SURE IT WASN'T A FORERUNNER."

They were telling us afterwards that the old woman was a MORPHADITE [i.e., hermaphrodite] they claimed and she was never married. And her father was blind. And Angus D.—that's the fella, we worked on his land—he said when he went

> to school that she adopted a girl, then all of a sudden the girl disappeared. And at that time there was no communications, you know, like telephone or things like that. And he was thinking that she killed her and buried her in the cellar and that might be what's causing it. But I don't know what, what would that have to do with the attic. Unless that's where she killed her and had her left there. And her father was blind and they had a string going out to the toilet, outside toilet. They used to say that she used to cut the string so he wouldn't find the toilet. And then the day he was buried, there was water in the grave, you know, when they were putting him down. What in the world? It's in Gaelic, you know, like, something like "You son of a bitch. You'll have lots of water there," or something. THAT WAS HER FATHER. (RT92-21A)

(Dan Alex tells another version of this story, focusing on different details and omitting the second half in CBM 41:9.)

With the exceptions of the two examples above, Dan Alex generally makes no claims to either his soundness of mind nor of his searching for earthly reasons for strange happenings. Acceptance of forerunners, ghosts[19] (to a lesser degree), and other psychic phenomena was commonplace in the society in which he was raised. Various stories in his repertoire contain references to neighbours having uncanny experiences or to Dan Alex discussing such matters with his friends and relatives. In fact, his family was highly supportive of belief in such matters. Not only did the young Dan Alex approach them for confirmation or explanations of what he saw but they also shared their own psychic experiences with him. Many people in his community have had occasional experiences, which they relate as narratives, or can tell a few second-person memorates recounted to them by trusted friends or relatives.[20] In the Gabarus-Framboise area, among the Scots especially, supernatural matters are discussed openly. Despite the presence of skeptics, many people hold the conviction that it is possible for such things to

happen. The social climate then validates Dan Alex's narratives so that he can relate them in a straightforward manner without resorting to rhetorical techniques, such as long, detailed descriptions.[21] Because he has had many psychic experiences, his belief is continually affirmed. His own character is also important to his developing a repertoire of memorates. As a strong-willed individual, he has not been intimidated into either defensiveness or silence by doubters. Instead, his tales of his unusual experiences are confirmed by many of his peers. Not only are Dan Alex's memorates acceptable but they are important to his social status. As someone who is regarded as having the second sight and has a reputation for having predicted deaths, he has an important social role in the community. In his storytelling, he indicates that he has had a number of visions, well beyond that of most community members.

The language he uses to speak of his psychic talents is understated. Like his tales, which are told in a simple, direct manner, the simplicity of his words suggests a common acceptance of prophetic experiences. Describing his own declining visionary abilities, he told me, "I could see pretty near everything," words echoed by his North Framboise relative and neighbour, Maggie (MacDiarmaid) MacQueen, who said, "I can see anything."[22]

Maggie (Plate 8.4) is one of two local storytellers—the other being Soutor Strachan—whose beliefs about the supernatural will help illustrate the relationship of Dan Alex's supernatural repertoire to local traditions. Like Dan Alex, Maggie is a vigorous old person and a highly-regarded tradition bearer. Only recently, as she approached her ninetieth year, did she move from the large farmhouse where she lived alone into Richmond Villa, the seniors' home at St. Peters in which Arthur Severance spent his final years.

When I met her in 1992, Maggie was present at nearly every local gathering, whether a Presbyterian church service, a community dinner, or a senior citizens' meeting.

Maggie is also, like Dan Alex, a native Gaelic speaker who learned English in school and regularly uses her original tongue. She too is regarded as a storyteller and an expert on Gaelic culture and supernatural traditions. Maggie also has a repertoire of personal experience narratives about her work and travels. She is perhaps the only other member of the contemporary community who claims to have the second sight. Dan Alex pointed out that his visionary abilities were a family inheritance. He mentioned (above) that the MacDiarmaids and Morrisons "were full of it." Not only was Maggie born a MacDiarmaid but, as Dan Alex explained, "Her mother was Christine Morrison. It seems to be in a family, you know. Well, I don't know if I'd say a family, I should say a clan. If one person sees it, most of the whole kibosh sees it" (RT92-21B). This is given credence by Maggie who tells of other members of her family experiencing forerunners.

Maggie makes few concessions to a listener with limited knowledge of local references. Her narrations meander into sidetracks as she gives further information about individuals and sometimes brings in new characters (at times referred to only as "he" or "she") without introductions. Although the details of her narratives may occasionally be hard for an outsider to follow, the overall plots are generally understandable to a person with some knowledge of the area's traditions. One important similarity of her stories to Dan Alex's is that, despite any tendency to wander with regard to characters in the story, she does not separate the normal from the paranormal by providing details as proof of her sound judgment but instead jumps quickly to the point.

Like Dan Alex, she is totally undefensive about her supernatural memorates (see Appendix 10).

Despite the confidence that Maggie and Dan Alex have in their psychic abilities and their acceptance of forerunner beliefs that were passed on to them, their belief systems are complex and involve thought and questioning. The stereotype of many "rationalists" is that many people are "superstitious" and naive in accepting supernatural beliefs. However, this is rarely if ever the case. As mentioned earlier, manifestations of the Devil are given little credence in the Gabarus-Framboise area in which most people are of Presbyterian or United Church background. Furthermore, changing views of fairies and witches demonstrate that beliefs are not handed down unquestioningly. A few elderly people can recall some people of their grandparents' generation believing in fairies. Such convictions appear to have vanished.[23] Belief in witches was a more vital tradition and until the middle of the twentieth century, a few women in the community were regarded as witches by some residents of both the villages and the country.[24] Many of the rural Scots were especially worried about witches "taking the good out" of their farm animals or milk.[25] A few country people mentioned their elders claiming that particular witches either walked through pastures or attempted to borrow things on May Day. However, none explained the significance of these actions.[26]

Like most matters of belief, the existence of witches was disputed. Unlike many of the people of her generation, Maggie MacQueen's mother did not believe that her neighbour Christie *Borarach* (whose ancestors emigrated from Boreray or *Boraraigh*, an island off North Uist) was a witch. Maggie herself found the idea laughable. Dan Alex, while not a firm believer in

witches, readily admits to not understanding matters of supernatural belief outside his experience. He said of Christie:

> You know on the first day of May, she was bound to visit all the farms. They claimed that she could could take the benefit of the milk from the cows, or whatever it was, that she could have it for herself. I don't know if that was true or not. (RT92-48A, Aug. 18, 1992)

Dan Alex's neutrality notwithstanding, contemporary residents, with few exceptions, have rejected the old belief in the existence of witches. Even those who believe strongly in forerunners and allow for the possibility of visits from beyond the grave generally regard belief in witches as a superstition of previous generations.

Soutor Strachan (Plate 8.5) of Framboise Intervale, another Gaelic speaker who was in his eighties when I visited him in 1995, did not accept the popular labelling of local women as witches. Nevertheless, based on his own experience, he did believe in the existence of witches. I was discussing the topic with Soutor and his wife Edith when Soutor explained that he did not think that his parents believed in witches. Then, as often happens when people discuss issues of the supernatural, Soutor related a personal experience narrative rather than stating his opinion directly.

Edith: Tell him—excuse me, Soutor—tell about the time the horse fell down Lauchie's [stairs?].

Soutor: I was going to. Yeah.

I was to a certain place in Framboise. I was with the boy of the house cutting firewood for a couple of days, and the mail was carried from Grand River to Fourchu by MacLeods in here at the corner. In them days, you made the trip on one morning and back at night to Grand River with the mail. But this was in wintertime and it was late coming in. The man came in the house and he said to the lady of the house, he said, "Tell the boy to take the horse out of the sleigh and put him in," he said, "THE HORSE IS SICK."

That was all right. We took the horse out of the sleigh and

put him in the barn and there was two other horses in, they had three horses. We went to bed. And after everybody was asleep, we heard the CRASHING outside. And up they got and down we came, myself and the other boy, and this horse had come out of the barn and had JUMPED UP ON THE VERANDA, WENT THROUGH THE VERANDA, and FELL ACROSS THE RAIL and WAS ON THE GROUND when we got up. Went out. Well, WE GOT A POLE, a piece of wood, from the woodpile and we rubbed it back and we twisted him around and NOT A MOAN. And his eyes was rolling, his neck was stretched out and his head—COULDN'T GET A SOUND OUT OF HIM. COULDN'T GET A SOUND OUT OF HIM. And anyway, ALL OF A SUDDEN, he got up [claps] and he went like a streak of lightening, went down Crooked Lake Road, didn't go across the Lake. The snow was so heavy and banked up on the road so there was no traffic, [instead] it [traffic] went across the lake. He didn't go that way. He went through this bank of snow—RIGHT THROUGH the whole distance for about a quarter of a mile—and landed in front of the door of a house down at Crooked Lake, fell on the ground, STRETCHED OUT!

Well, it's a long story. But anyway, we followed him down there. Went through the bank and I'm sure it was just like that [gestures over his head].

He must have been like swimming through it. Well, all right, we started the same thing again. There was a pile of wood there. Did the same thing there. Rubbed his back, put it under his neck and lifted his head. Couldn't move. All of a sudden, UP HE WENT! WE HEARD A WINDOW GO UP. NO VOICE SPOKE OR ANYTHING from the house. UP HE GOES and goes back the same way. AND JUST PRIOR TO REACHING THE MAIN ROAD BACK FROM THE CROOKED LAKE [Road], WE FOUND HIM IN A DITCH IN THE ROAD. Blood out of his mouth and (Edith: No wonder!) his feet in the air and he went on his side and I don't know in the name of God, how he got out of there. But eventually he got out and walked right to the door again of the house. Tried to [get him up?], NOTHING, COULDN'T DO NOTHING. FROTH! He was just, he was just OUT. EYES—there was blood out of his eyes, out of his mouth, everything. So we went in. The fella that was driving the mail came down—I guess he was tired—he had come downstairs and he went out and when he seen the horse, he said, IN GAELIC—we went out with him—he said in Gaelic, "THE SON OF A BITCH that I met today." In GAELIC, now, it didn't sound so bad. *"Mac an diabhail, 'ille, a thadail rium-as an*

> *diugh!*"—"that met me today" [literally: "Son of the devil, lad, that visited me today!"].[27]
>
> IN HE WENT and he asked Mary, the wife of the house, he said, "Give me a little water," he said, "and put silver in it, will you, *Màiri*? He went out and he bent down alongside the horse's head and whatever he said or whatever he did, I don't know, but he put that bit of water on his head or-. The horse made ONE LEAP, GOT UP AND HE SHOOK ALL THE SNOW OFF HIMSELF, went to the barn. That was it. Walked right to the barn.[28]
>
> When I came home the next day [or] whenever it was, I told my mother about it and SHE LAUGHED. She didn't say anything about it but she laughed. I suppose she had heard all about these things. (RT95-12B, Aug. 30, 1995)

(In the discussion following the story, Soutor quoted the mailman as saying, "*Mac an diabhail a thacair rium-s' an diugh*," literally, "Son of the devil that met me today," which is closer to his own translation. The man, likely purposefully, did not say to whom he was referring, so it is unclear whether there is any significance to the horse's running to the house at Crooked Lake.)

During the same conversation, Soutor said of witches and witchcraft, "I never believed in it, only I had to believe in it when I seen the horse, that there was something..." (RT95-12B). Such disclaimers are typical of memorates. Robert R. Turner (1970) entitled a chapter of his thesis on Tennessee legends, "Witch Legends: 'I don't believe in no witches but that shore (sic) happened'" (343-400).[29] The use of such statements, which often dismiss the phenomena generally but accept a particular manifestation as real, indicates the complexity of human thinking. Lloyd and Mullen say of Lake Erie fishermen, their "narratives project not a single identity but multiple personal and social identities" (161). Individuals not only display different identities in varying social circumstances but are themselves composed of often conflicting identities or sub-personalities.[30] As a result,

individuals are capable of rejecting the popular supernatural beliefs of their own societies but still applying traditional supernatural interpretations to extraordinary experiences in their own lives. Others reject "superstition" categorically but believe the memorate of a parent or friend who is regarded as honest and having sound judgment.

Elmira (Beaver) MacLeod, a Mohawk woman with whom I conducted a series of interviews in 1981, explicitly recognized her own contradictory attitudes to supernatural belief. On a sweltering summer day, we were sitting in her high-rise apartment in Mississauga, a large city bordering Toronto. She had been relating personal experience narratives about witchcraft in her home community on Rice Lake and on other reserves throughout southern Ontario. When she finished her stories, she looked at me with amusement and said, "You know, when I'm here, I don't believe all that. But as soon as I get to the country, I believe it all again." Her comment illustrates the difficulties of dealing with issues of belief. In the Gabarus-Framboise region, as in most places, questions of the nature of reality are often examined and phenomena named through narratives rather than direct statements. Traditional views and the tales of respected tradition bearers are important in helping a person name and define his or her own unusual encounters. To an outsider, and perhaps to Soutor himself, there is no overt evidence of supernatural influence in the horse's bizarre behaviour. That the horse is believed to have been the victim of witchcraft becomes evident only when the mail carrier denounces the unnamed man—the victim's refusal to name the perpetrator of the deed is likely significant—and uses *uisge-airgaid* (silver water), a traditional remedy known to counteract the effects of *buidseachd* (witchcraft) and *an droch sùil* (the evil eye).

Dan Alex and Maggie seem able to incorporate certain supernatural beliefs comfortably into their worldviews. Both relate their narratives without reticence and do not attempt to detach themselves from their experience through rhetorical techniques (e.g., "I don't believe in such-and-such, but..."). They are practical people who cope well with the commonplace, yet seemingly do not find the existence of a world of spirits and omens threatening to their basic understanding of life.[31] Because of their attitudes and their wide repertoires of both first- and second-person memorates, their expertise is drawn on by neighbours who are less assured when confronted with out of the ordinary experiences.

Both tradition bearers show that they are selective in their paranormal beliefs. Maggie rejects witches and Dan Alex near-death experiences. However, they have no doubts of the veracity of other beliefs. Dan Alex related a friend's less dramatic personal experience narrative of a horse that got sick after passing a reputed witch and was also healed with silver and water. He told me emphatically, "And that's the truth, you know. I mean, it's not STORIES people were making up. It was the truth" (RT92-48A, August 18, 1992).

Having placed Dan Alex's narratives in the context of his community, we can now see that his repertoire, consisting mainly of narratives about work and supernatural experiences, encompasses two important themes in the Gabarus-Framboise community's storytelling traditions. Dan Alex, like many residents of the area, is a working person who enjoys sharing narratives focused on work. His inventory of memorates is thoroughly grounded in the community's belief traditions which encompass forerunners, the two sights, witches, and ghosts, some of which were touched on in

Chapters V and VII. He also expresses his Presbyterian beliefs both through his narratives on answered prayers and his comments on forerunners.

Dan Alex's stories may comprise a superlative repertoire in both my own view and that of many of his neighbours, yet they do not contain the whole essence of the community's storytelling. Dan Alex specializes in particular types of stories, especially supernatural and work-related personal experience narratives. However, he does not tell stories from other genres favoured by his peers, for example:

- His claims of having numerous supernatural experiences and his belief in the importance of an alternate reality in his life represent an extreme position. In contrast, Arthur Severance not only did not believe in such events but was not even interested in talking about them. As has been noted earlier, Gabarus-Framboise residents range in their religious attitudes from at least one atheist who describes himself as a "freethinker," through occasional and regular churchgoers who attend either of the region's two Protestant churches, to devout people like Dan Alex. Although Dan Alex is a Presbyterian elder, his testimonials telling of truck-driving problems being eased by divine intervention do not necessarily reflect the religious beliefs of his neighbours. Such narratives are not typical of his community.
- Although there are a few other small-scale entrepreneurs in the region—fishing-boat owners, for instance—Dan Alex's entrepreneurial narratives, in which he defies authorities, quits jobs, displays his business sense, and uses visionary guidance, are not typical of local work stories, which are usually about adventures and problem-solving on the job. Sea stories are virtually absent from his repertoire since fishing and sailing have not been important parts of his inland, farming life.

- Most importantly, the lack of humorous narratives in Dan Alex's repertoire—only two of eighty-six narratives are humorous—is not characteristic of local storytelling. Comic stories are a mainstay in the repertoires of Jimmy Philip, Lena, Roy and Flora MacLeod, Arthur Severance, Lloyd MacDonald, Soutor Strachan, and many others. Dan Alex usually expresses his sense of humour through witty remarks and teasing rather than through storytelling.

Clearly, no one person typifies this community, any more than a particular village provides an exemplary model of Cape Breton or a specific city acts as a microcosm of Canada. When one compares the repertoires of Dan Alex, the other four MacLeods, Maggie, Soutor, Arthur, and Lloyd, it becomes apparent that each storyteller has a separate social role and a unique collection of stories. The community's repertoire is not contained in or represented by any individual but is spread among many who retain and share portions, all telling stories in their own way. Even a man such as Dan Alex, who might be called a "tradition-oriented personality," to use Pentikäinen's term (1976:266), is not tradition bound. Rather, he forms his opinions and formulates his beliefs from a broad variety of influences including tradition, local folk beliefs, formal and folk religion, education, literature, television shows, and personal experience. Many neighbours regard him as an important tradition bearer because of his storytelling abilities, his knowledge of work practices and the Gaelic language, and his expertise on the "two sights." He has become one of the community's foremost tradition bearers partly because of his self-confidence and willingness to say what is on his mind. However, communal knowledge and oral traditions are carried by all. Local lore is shared not only by the

community's extroverts but quietly over a cup of tea by unassuming people such as Philip and Margaret MacDonald of Gabarus Lake or Jimmy Dan E. and Patsy MacLeod of Framboise; the latter couple did not wish to be recorded on tape. A folk community is made up of individuals, each influenced in some way by tradition but approaching and interpreting life in a unique manner.

To conclude this chapter, I will review my thesis to remind the reader of how we have arrived at this point. In Chapter I, I introduced my thesis topic, arguing that stories provide roots for the people of the Gabarus-Framboise community, connecting tellers and listeners even as they entertain. I also discussed my methodology which is based on extensive fieldwork and repertoire analysis of the community's oral narratives. In Chapter II, I examined a number of theoretical concerns, establishing the concept of a rural folk community as a delimited physical region whose residents know each other personally, communicate directly and informally, and share a great many aspects of both history and tradition. Furthermore, I showed that oral narratives in such a community cannot be understood by themselves but form parts of a "community novel" whose elements carry deeper messages regarding identity, relationships, and values to insiders. In Chapters III, I examined the social history of the Gabarus-Framboise region, demonstrating how the area's history has shaped contemporary culture. We saw also that the residents place great value on their past, a fact emphasized by their storytelling practices and content. In Chapter IV, I looked at the region's storytelling traditions, showing that elderly storytellers continue traditions learned in the strong oral culture in which they were raised. Not only do they act in established roles but they also communicate communal values to their neighbours. The successful storyteller, of course, tells stories

that evoke strong interest and, in most cases, a positive response from listeners.

In the next four chapters, I examined aspects of the community's oral narrative repertoire while focusing on seven elderly tradition bearers. In Chapter V, I provided a contextual account of an evening house visit, showing what type of stories were told and explaining how they were used as part of conversation, as entertainment, and as stimuli for reflection upon the past and present. The storytelling session involved complex and skilful verbal interaction among the participants. We saw that this type of conversational storytelling fits into a widespread narrating style although its particular content—the people, places, and events—was based on the experiences of community members, past and present. Once again, the concept of the community novel, in which stories are interconnected and have deeper significance to insiders, was evident. In Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, I explored the repertoires of three men—Arthur Severance, Lloyd MacDonald, and Dan Alex MacLeod—each of whom is regarded by other members of his community as an outstanding storyteller. (No women have similar reputations for reasons discussed in Chapter I—for example, male "referral chains," the more private nature of female storytelling, certain women's reluctance to be recorded, and a lack of self-identification as storytellers among the community's women.) These men have different stylistic approaches to their narrations and favour different types of narratives. We saw that local stories do not exist in fixed forms; even in the narrations of an individual, wording varies greatly although elements of a story are relatively stable. The repertoire and approach of each storyteller revealed a combination of traditional and individually favoured themes. In

their roles as storytellers, these men filled differing traditional roles while expressing individual values, tastes, and concerns.

Throughout the thesis, we have been accumulating a broad sampling of the community's narrative repertoire while noting both communal themes and similarities and differences in the repertoires of individual storytellers. Despite their shared history and folk traditions, the residents of the Gabarus-Framboise community have their differences, as do people anywhere, and narratives may serve as tool for debating such matters. We have seen that through storytelling and the surrounding discussion, ideas such as belief in the supernatural are contested as well as affirmed. In the following chapter, I will summarize what we have learned about the oral narrative repertoire and explain what it reveals about this folk community and its residents.

Notes

1. Richard Blaustein in a paper entitled "The Poor Man's Medicine Bag" referred to such a person, who collects his own society's folklore, as a native folklorist (delivered at Memorial University of Newfoundland, April 6, 1998).

2. For a definition of "supernatural," see Chapter V, note 15.

3. Leea Virtanen's study of supernatural experience in Finland (1977) suggests that there may be some significance to the fact that Gaelic-speaking Scots in the Gabarus-Framboise region have, since settlement, lived mainly on farms while the "English" lived in the villages. Virtanen says of the narratives she examined, "[t]he Finnish material is largely of rural origin" (40). Regarding differing types of supernatural experience narratives collected in Finland in the nineteenth century and in the 1970s, she explains:

> Some differences are artifacts of changed collection procedures, but others reflect the change in culture from the traditional agricultural milieu to the modern urban setting. It appears that experiences were more frequent in the past than now; that the usual forms of experience were formerly the hallucination, the vision, and the symbolic auditory sensation; that death was a more usual subject of experiences than it currently is; that men were more often percipients (sic) than they are today; and that neighbours were more often the agents of experiences. (154)

4. See MacLeod, D. A. "Dan MacLeod: 'I Moved Houses,'" CBM 35:15; "Dan Alex MacLeod: A Working Life," CBM 41:7-12; and D. A. MacLeod, 96-051, side A.

5. Paul Willis says that among working class people, "practice is more important than theory" and "[t]he shop floor abounds with apocryphal stories about the idiocy of purely theoretical knowledge" (194). However, similar stories are also popular among entrepreneurs and professionals (e.g., teachers, social workers) who are required to apply theory to practical situations.

6. Narratives quoted from Cape Breton's Magazine are presented in the style used by the magazine's editors.

7. Probably a Veteran's Act farm grant for World War II vets.

8. Spelled "MacDiarmaid" locally (although it is the same name).

9. He reiterated the same idea to me, "I used to know when the mine was going to start and how many people was killed" (RT92-22B, Aug. 6, 1992).

10. Motif Index D1654.5. Wagon refuses to move.

11. For more on the second sight and forerunners in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia generally, and Scotland, see: Dan Angus Beaton, "A Gaelic Tale..." (forerunner within wonder tale), 41-46; Bradbury, 35; Caplan, "A Céilidh..." and "Ghost Stories..."; Creighton,1949:21-9, 1957:1-26, 1968:5-11; Dunn, 47; Fitzgerald; Fraser, 32-51; A. H. MacLean, 65-66; J. P. MacLean, 33-41; C. I. N. MacLeod, 37-8; Annie MacLeod, 56; Neil MacNeil, 83; Joe Neil MacNeil, 208-14; MacPhail, 26, 28; Rambleau; M. F. Shaw, 8-10; Francis Thompson, 1976:54-79; and Townsend.

12. Hobbes, in Leviathan (1651), expressed an opinion that was not new in his time when he wrote, "From [an] ignorance of how to distinguish dreams from other strong Fancies, from Visions and sense, [that there arose] the greatest part of the Religion of the Gentiles in time past, that worshipped Satyrs, Fauns, Nymphs and the like" (12).

13. This is not to suggest that supernatural narratives must always be accepted at face value. There are, of course, fools, liars, and gullible people in the world, as well as alternate explanations for many weird experiences. Diane Goldstein (1991), in a study of how narrators present evidence in memorates, explained, "By directing my inquiry in terms of evidence I do not wish to suggest that this is in any way proof of the ontological reality of supernatural experience or that all supernatural experiences are true, but rather that the narratives are often well-reasoned and concerned with truth." (38). For further understanding of the ideas governing open-minded enquiry into supernatural experience narratives and beliefs, see Hufford's "Traditions of Disbelief" (1982a), his afterword in Talking Folklore 1, 3 (1987) and the responses by G. Bennett in TF 1, 3, Simpson in TF 1, 4 (1988), Goldstein in TF 6 (1989), Hufford TF 9 (1990) and Rowbottom TF 9. See also: G. Bennett 1987; D. Goldstein, 1983, 1989; and Hufford, 1983, 1985.

14. Some Scottish Protestant ministers also regarded second sight and other supernatural occurrences as evidence of their belief system (Davis, 1992: 213-14) although others were contemptuous of such "superstitions" (211-12).

15. MacLeod's book is an anachronistic monograph based on Victorian Celtic Romanticist notions, with non-critical references to survivals and racial stock in its analysis of Highland lore. This approach is not surprising when we consider that most of MacLeod's reference literature is from 1911 or earlier and the only book in his bibliography written after 1926 is Mary Fraser's Folklore of Nova Scotia (1932). The prime value of MacLeod's work is that he incorporates ideas gathered from a good bibliography and includes memorates told to him at first hand. The book is also of interest in that it illustrates how ideas rejected long ago within the academy—in this case, early anthropological and folklore theories—remain in print and continue to influence those not involved in the continual process of criticism with characterizes academia. (For a Cape Breton example of furniture moving, associated with a death, see Caplan, "A Céilidh...," 24.)

16. See, e.g.: Colombo, 1995; Creighton, 1968:12-17; Lambert, 1955; and Virtanen, 69-71. For other culturally specific interpretations of such phenomena based on fairy belief in Newfoundland, see Rieti, 1991.

17. An infamous shipwreck (see Chapter V).

18. Lloyd MacDonald also tells of hearing sounds before a coffin was built. For more Cape Breton examples, see Caplan, "A Céilidh...," 24 and "Ghost Stories...," story 9. Wayland Hand cites a North Carolinian explanation for a related phenomenon: "5047. A sudden and unaccountable sound in a carpenter's shop means that the carpenter will soon have to make a coffin. The movements and creaking of boards are caused by the spirit of the fated one, coming to select boards for his coffin."

19. For more on ghosts in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia generally, and Scotland, see: Bradbury, 35-36; Caplan, 1988:180-93 and "Ghost Stories..."; Creighton, 1949:30-45; 1957; 1968:8-11; Fraser, 57-62; MacGregor, 282-311; MacLellan, 117-39; Joe Neil MacNeil, 215-17; Neil MacNeil, 73-89; MacPhail, 25-28; Nic Leodhas, 1965; and Francis Thompson, 80-89.

20. Honko describes memorates as involving "supernatural experiences... which [the narrators] saw themselves or which some acquaintance experienced" (10). This usage is commonly accepted in belief scholarship. (See also Pentikäinen, 1973, for further refinement of belief narrative genres.)

21. It must again be emphasized that the experiences, despite their culturally approved interpretations, are not created by some mysterious cultural moulding. In Ottawa in the 1970s, I knew a French-Canadian woman from Quebec who had no background of forerunner traditions but

claimed to see visions associated with deaths. She related one instance of a car passing at a high speed while she was a passenger in another. She clearly visualized the car in a ditch and shouted, "They're going to crash!" Her fellow travellers tried to reassure her that the driver was not driving that dangerously, not realizing that she had experienced a vision. Further down the road, they saw the car crashed in a ditch. Her experiences would be classed as forerunners in Scottish Cape Breton and she would be said to have the second sight. However, her own family and immediate social background provided no frame of reference for her prophetic experiences. Not surprisingly, she found her visions profoundly disturbing and without positive value.

22. This widespread use of the word "see" is related to the old word, seer. I recently heard a Newfoundlander refer to Emile Benoit, the late fiddler and storyteller, as a seer (using the two-syllable pronunciation, see-er) because he had visions similar to those of Dan Alex.

23. Annie MacLean (1991) mentions fairy belief in this region (76). Joe Neil MacNeil of Big Pond told me that when he was a boy an older man showed him a horse with a braided mane that had, according to the old man, been ridden by fairies. For more on fairies in Cape Breton, see Marie MacLellan, 36-38; Dunn, 47-48; and M. C. Blue.

    We cannot assume that all of these supernatural figures—the Devil, fairies, witches, forerunners, ghosts, etc.—held equal sway in the community in former times. Perhaps fairy belief was always a marginal viewpoint. Certainly, the dominant religious culture has a strong influence on which supernatural beliefs are talked about the most. Martin Lovelace suggests that "each area may have a certain 'economy' with regard to supernatural figures. The rise of one is at the expense of another" (personal communication). Rieti's (1991) examination of fairy lore in Newfoundland contains numerous descriptions of "fairy" phenomena which would likely be interpreted in other regions as evidence of either ghosts, forerunners, poltergeists, or extraterrestrials.

24. The two "witches" about whom I heard most were a Stirling woman who never married and an eccentric widow in Gabarus. Both were regarded as having healing powers as well as the power to do harm. I also heard of men who had the evil eye, the power to do harm by looking with envy at something, and of male witch doctors who could heal animals. Men generally do not seem to have been associated with conscious witchcraft though the difference between witches and those with the evil eye is not always clear (see Soutor Strachan's story in this chapter). Motif Index D2071 Bewitching by means of a glance. Creighton (1986) says this is "a

universal belief, particularly if a person or animal is admired.... admiration from a witch is always feared" (67). She cites a dite from Lunenburg Co., N.S., "If a witch looked at an animal it would get sick" (1949:47, see also 53, 55, 57). For more on witches and the evil eye in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia generally, and Scotland, see: E. C. P Beaton, 1981 and Caplan, "A Céilidh...," 21-22; "Old Tales..." (Acadian traditions); Bennett, 127-29 (Scots in Newfoundland); Creighton 1949:46-57; 1968:18-72; Dunn, 47; Fauset, 77-88; Fraser, 63-8; MacGregor, 262-81; A. H. MacLean, 60-62; C. I. N. MacLeod, 14-15; J. P. MacLean, 13-16; Neil MacNeil, 82-3; McNeill, 144-56; MacPhail, 22-4, 32-34; and Francis Thompson, 1976:17-53.

25. See Motif Index D2083.1 Witches stealing or taking "the good" from milk. Also, D2083.1. Cows magically made dry. D2083.3. Milk transferred from another's cow by magic. See: Caplan, "A Céilidh...," 21-22; Creighton 1968: 28, 39, 44-5; Fraser, 66; MacGregor, 268, 279; C. I. N. MacLeod, 17; MacLellan, 101-13; McNeill, 145-46, 153; MacPhail, 32-4; and Francis Thompson, 36.

26. Dwelly (1901-11) provides an ancient basis for the belief in the vulnerability of cows on *Bealltuinn* or May Day when festivals were held to honour the sun god. However, it is doubtful whether twentieth-century residents of the Gabarus-Framboise region are aware of these old beliefs and practices.

> On the first of May was held a great Druid Festival in favour of the god Belus. On this day, fires were kindled on the mountain tops for the purpose of sacrifice; and between these fires the cattle were driven to protect them from contagion till next May-day. On this day, it was usual to extinguish all the hearth fires, in order that they should be re-kindled from this purifying flame.... (see *"Bealltuinn"* in Dwelly)

Regarding not borrowing or loaning on May Day, see Creighton, 1949:23, 47 (in her notes, she also mentions Irish and German traditions about not loaning things to witches).

27. Motif Index G265.6.3 Witch causes horse to behave unnaturally.

28. The use of silver and water is a well-known remedy for an animal that has been bewitched or fallen victim to the evil eye. Various people of Scottish descent, including Dan Alex and Maggie, mentioned silver and water as a cure, sometimes using testimonial narratives, c.f., A. H. MacLean, 61-62, and Neil MacNeil, 82-3 (healing horses with silver and water); McNeill, 153, 146 ("silvered water" to protect children, gold or silver and milk to protect milk supply); and Francis Thompson (gold,

silver, and water as cure). See also: Fraser, 67 (silver coins as a charm to protect children); Creighton, 1949:51 and 1968:39-42 (silver bullets); Motif Index D1385.5 Metal as a defence against spirits. In North Carolina, Hand numbers 5565-68, 5650, 5673, 5685-87, 5691, 5697 all involve the use of silver as protection from witches.

29. Much of this chapter deals with the bewitching of farm animals.

30. Different psychological schools stress the idea of the existence of a variety of identities within an individual. The concept of multiple identities has been developed in a psychological approach called Voice Dialogue which is influenced by Gestalt and Jungian psychology. According to this approach, throughout one's life, a person develops numerous sub-personalities which complement and contrast with each other. In a mentally healthy person, an aware ego keeps the sub-personalities in check so that they act with awareness of one another (unlike those with multiple personality disorder). This is described as our normal state of being, the degree of comfort or discomfort we experience depending on how aware we are of our opposing sub-personalities and whether or not we allow them a voice in our lives. See: Stone, 1985, and Stone and Winkleman, 1989, 1989a.

31. Various writers have commented that people who have supernatural experiences are neither physically nor mentally ill nor are they especially naive (e.g., D. Goldstein, 1991; Greely, 1975:7; and Hufford, 1982). C. I. N. MacLeod (1975) said of two forerunner memorates:

> The particular instances given are carefully selected at first hand, and not even remotely concerned with people who are neurotic, temperamental, excessively emotional, or in a low grade of mental or physical health; but on the contrary, with people who seem normal in every way, and, so far as they are aware, without any form of control over the circumstances. (37)



Plate 8.1 Dan Alex MacLeod with lawn ornament in his museum, *Taigh an Iongantais* (House of Wonders), Stirling (Sept. 1995).

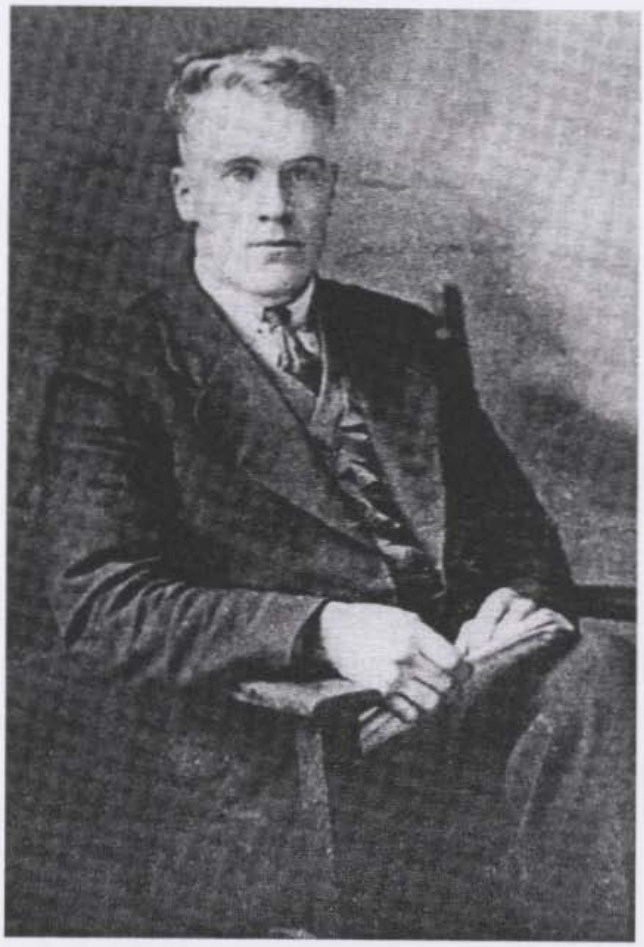


Plate 8.2 Dan Alex MacLeod as a young man (photo courtesy of Cape Breton's Magazine).



Plate 8.3 Dan Alex MacLeod's sawmill, Stirling. Gaelic translates as "Sawmill" (Aug. 1992).



Plate 8.4 Maggie MacQueen, North Framboise (Aug. 1992).



Plate 8.5 Soutor Strachan in his home, Framboise Intervale (Aug. 1995).

Chapter IX

Conclusion:

Storytelling in a Rural Folk Community

At the beginning of this study, I asked the following questions about oral narratives and storytelling in the Gabarus-Framboise community: What narratives are told and how can they be categorized? How do these stories speak to community members? Who are the storytellers and what are their social roles? Are narratives connected more with the community and its traditions or with the individuality of the tellers? What does the narrative repertoire tell us about tradition in this folk community? I have addressed these questions throughout this thesis and will present my conclusions in this final chapter. First, I will discuss the shortcomings of my theoretical approach.

9.1 Limitations of Repertoire Analysis

Analysis of the stories collected in the Gabarus-Framboise region shows that a community's oral narrative repertoire is a fluid entity. Each storyteller narrates only a portion of the greater repertoire and even the individual's narrative inventory is in a constant state of flux. The community's repertoire continually changes as individual stories appear and disappear. Although I

was able to interview many storytellers and record a large collection of stories on a variety of themes, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to know whether I gathered a typical sampling of the stories told locally. I have a good collection of sea stories, memorates, and humorous anecdotes but why only a few hunting stories in a community in which many men hunt? Why no narratives related to mining? And why no stories which, in the words of the folklorist Jennifer Livesay, "ridicule male egos" (1990:18)?

Many reasons exist to explain the absence in my collection of particular narrative genres that undoubtedly exist within the Gabarus-Framboise community. For instance, my own interests and experiences influenced the type of stories that were told to me. I asked about supernatural stories and so I heard them. However, I was unaware of the importance of mining in the area until my interviewing was nearly complete, so I did not request mining stories. No one offered—or perhaps even thought of offering—their occupational narratives about mining which, unlike sea stories, may be normally reserved for esoteric groups, that is, the miners themselves (perhaps mining stories are like war stories meant to be shared with comrades who have lived through the danger and earned the right to hear them). Furthermore, members of the community probably had their own interpretations of my role and what it was that I was seeking. Not only are folklorists usually stereotyped as being interested in "old stuff" but I probably encouraged such a view by asking about "old times," a subject that often evokes stories, when beginning many interviews. Community members directed me primarily toward elderly people. Moreover, they may not have thought of relating such contemporary genres such as hunting tales to someone who was perceived as being interested in stories of the past. Since

the community "grapevine" works rapidly and efficiently, people who I already interviewed may have prepared their friends to relate the types of narratives that I supposedly wanted.

Furthermore, my gender excluded me from situations in which women gather to tell stories not normally shared with men. An attitude of irreverence toward men's self-importance certainly exists in the region. When I asked Annie (Munroe) MacLean of Gabarus Lake if she remembered hearing about strong men, she wryly replied, "Some thought they were strong men," much to the amusement of her sister-in-law Christene (MacLeod) MacLean (RT95-14B, August 31, 1995). Nonetheless, I rarely heard narratives that reflected such a sentiment.

Other ethnographers working in the same community would likely hear some of the same stories that I recorded, as did Jamie Moreira and Ron Caplan when they interviewed Dan Alex MacLeod (see Chapter VII). However, residents would also tell them different stories, the choices being influenced by the interviewer's personality, gender, interests, approach, and relationship with both the community and its individual storytellers. As stated in Chapter II, it is impossible to collect a storyteller's complete narrative repertoire, except in those rare instances when an individual who is not a raconteur has consciously learned a few "party pieces." One can neither collect a person's inactive repertoire nor even speculate about its size and content. Perhaps a community's repertoire is so vast that a folklorist can never be assured of gathering even an accurate generic sampling of a region's narrative repertoire without many years of fieldwork among its residents. Even then, some stories might be considered unsuitable for a scholar, even as

some (e.g., family stories and gender-specific humour) are not shared with all groups within the community.

9.2 Thematic Patterns in the Community's Oral Narrative Repertoire

Despite the limitations inherent in applying repertoire analysis to a community, I was able to collect more than five hundred stories which represent a broad sampling of many of the region's popular oral narrative genres. As was explained in Chapter I, local storytelling without concise beginnings and endings and with one narrative overlapping another, defies attempts at precise classification and categorization. While recognizing that some important genres may not be represented in my collection, I have categorized the community's oral narratives according to the following thematic patterns:

- The vast majority of the narratives (over four-fifths) are **local**, that is, they take place in the Gabarus-Framboise region or its immediate environs; of those that do not most still involve either the narrator or another area resident.
- Most stories are set in **the old days**, or "them days," before the end of the Second World War (1945); a much smaller number (about one-fifth) are about **community and family history** ("history" meaning settlement and happenings of long ago).
- Over half contain the theme of **something is not what it seems** (discussed in Chapter V).
- **Humour** is an element in between one-third and one-half of the narratives. Although some of the humorous stories are lengthy, the short **humorous**

anecdote is a mainstay of local storytelling. The most popular subjects of humorous narratives are local characters and funny remarks. Other themes include tall tales, pranks, and, less commonly, origins of nicknames.

- About a third of the stories are about personal experiences. Many other stories are second- or third-hand tellings of personal experience narratives.
- The next most popular theme is work; sub-themes included making a living, work techniques, solving problems, showing skills or knowledge, and entrepreneurship.
- A great many stories (one-quarter or more) have to do with the sea: sailing, fishing, shipwrecks, rum-running, deaths, rescues, and dangerous situations. Most sea stories told by those who are not sailors or fishermen are about local shipwrecks or drownings of community residents, situations in which life at sea directly affects land-dwellers. Seamen tell both personal experience narratives and stories about others.
- Death is another common element in the stories of the Gabarus-Framboise region. Nearly a quarter involve deaths. These narratives often focus on disasters, untimely deaths, or the supernatural.
- About a fifth of the stories deal with the supernatural. By far the most popular subject in this category is forerunners—other stories of prophetic dreams are closely related. Less common topics include ghosts (or the return of the dead), the evil eye, haunted houses, witches and witchcraft, healing charms, the power of prayer, simultaneous experiences (perceiving something happening in a distant place), and treasure (though not all treasure stories contain supernatural elements). Interestingly, almost all the supernatural stories—with the exception of one involving strange lights over a site where boys were later drowned—took place on land. As

might be expected in a community which has many supernatural narratives, there is a much smaller (less than one twentieth of the total number of narratives) but nonetheless substantial tradition of stories involving plays on the supernatural—for example, tales of debunking or pranks involving supposed ghosts.

- About an eighth of the stories involve disasters in which a number of people were killed or great damage was done. Most of these involved shipwrecks during storms at sea.
- Another eighth are about situations of danger in which a person has a close call with the elements, the law, or a supernatural force.
- The same proportion are about illegal activities, usually rum-running or other practices related to drinking during Prohibition. A few stories are about gambling or pranks involving minor assaults or vandalism. Most of the former activities are tolerated by a large segment of the community. However, a small number of narratives concern robbery and murder, both of which go far beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour.
- Related to the last category are narratives (about one-twelfth) about reckless behaviour, virtually always involving men. Stories of recklessness, relatively benign law-breaking, and the less common stories of strong men and young men fighting suggest that risk-taking and displays of physical strength, and toughness among males, especially young men, are not only expected but, to some degree, encouraged in this society (see Chapter V).
- About one-fifteenth of the stories deal with deviance from local values. These stories include humorous anecdotes about local characters, and tales about serious crimes, chronic alcohol abuse, familial dysfunction, and disrespect to the elderly.

- Farming and farm life is a fairly common theme, included in slightly under one-twentieth of the narratives.
- Personal themes, primarily evident in the repertoires of a few particular storytellers, include day-to-day hardships, defying authority, entrepreneurship, lost people, and the second sight.
- Other minor themes are strong or hardy old people (often these stories are about Captain Donald Ferguson), family emergencies, travel experiences, encounters with famous people, and hunting.
- A man and woman related lengthy life stories involving many of the above themes but dominated by the concepts of work and making a living.
- Residents told few stories with either anonymous or unknown characters; the exceptions were usually brief jokes.

9.3 Storytelling and Community

My analysis of oral narratives, storytelling traditions, and the roles of storytellers in the Gabarus-Framboise community led to the following conclusions regarding the relationship between storytelling and this folk community, which will be discussed in the rest of this chapter.

1. Storytelling provides entertainment for community residents.
2. Storytelling is conversational.
3. Storytelling not only reflects and promotes interconnectedness among the community's residents but also connects them with their physical environment.
4. Particular stories and genres are associated with individual storytellers.

1. Storytelling provides entertainment for community residents.

Perhaps we folklorists sometimes miss the obvious in our attempts to understand what stories say about the culture that produces them. One truly important thing about storytelling is that it is entertainment. William R. Bascom, in his classic essay "Four Functions of Folklore" (1954), recognized "amusement" as a prime function of folklore but was quick to suggest that folklorists look for deeper meanings. Although Bascom said that amusement was "important," his discussion of this function consisted of three sentences which were followed by four paragraphs dealing with psychological interpretations of folklore (290-92). However, since folklorists are trained to attempt to understand what people are "really" telling us, we must listen to what is being said again and again. People from the Gabarus-Framboise region regularly used variations of the word entertain when talking about storytelling in their younger days.

Lloyd MacDonald: "...that was the only entertainment we had because there was no radio, no television, nothing then, telling stories or—." (RT92-36B, August 13, 1992)

Arthur Severance: "Among the Scottish people, there was usually someone who was a gifted storyteller. He was an entertainer in the area back in the days before the "idiot box", television" (RT92-7A, July 24, 1992); "Well, in the days when I grew up, you made your own entertainment" (RT92-46A, August 17, 1992); and "the stories were told simply for entertainment, that's all" (RT95-6A, August 26, 1995).

Charlie Thurgood: "It was an evening's entertainment really, it was the TV and radio of the time" and "It was certainly entertaining to a little fella around there to hear those fellas talking about their stories" (RT92-51B, September 2, 1992).

Dan Alex MacLeod: (Ranald: What kinds of stories did people tell at ceilidhs?) "Oh, about something that happened—it might have been a year ago—or some family that had moved into the place and some of their history or something like that. Or maybe somebody went and

> shot a caribou—there were no deer here then, there was caribou here, lots of them. Tell, once they were on a hunt or something like that. It's simply entertainment" (RT95-24A, September 2, 1995).

When the word "entertainment" was not used, it was often implied by speakers, as when Flora MacLeod told Jimmy Philip MacLeod, "Oh, I remember going over to visit just to hear your Uncle Dan tell stories" (RT92-4B, July 22, 1992).

The older people in the Gabarus-Framboise region grew up in settings where people regularly made their own entertainment. Ceilidhs and house parties were nightly occurrences during the winter. Young people held spontaneous dances on wooden bridges during the summer. Fund-raising dances, picnics, and pie socials took place at regular intervals. Most people danced, sang, or told stories, and many played musical instruments. Families and friends played cards and board games. Parents entertained children with shadow puppets made by manipulating hands in the light of kerosene lamps. Youths skated and played baseball or hockey. Young people walked in groups to attend church services miles from home. A person from Gabarus visiting a friend in Fourchu hiked between the villages, stopping for a meal and an exchange of news and stories at any house along the way. Much work—berry picking, haying, potato digging, mending nets, drying fish—was a group activity (see Plates 9.1 and 9.2). The hard or tedious labour involved in milling cloth, cutting wood, quilting, and building barns was not only turned into a social activity but rewarded with a party when the job was completed.

Making one's own entertainment demands that participants be involved to an extent that is seldom possible with purchased entertainment. Though the idea of listening to a storyteller may seem at first to be as passive

an activity as watching television, it is not. Even the more interactive experiences of attending concerts and stage shows demand far less audience participation than does storytelling in an intimate setting. Listening to a story involves taking the teller's words and creating a flow of mental images. When telling to a small group, the teller looks his or her listeners in the eye and adjusts the performance according to their reactions. Listeners respond by sending positive or negative messages to the storyteller through their words and expressions. Furthermore, the listener may eventually take a turn as storyteller.

Self-made entertainment usually brings participants totally into the present. When one is absorbed in listening to a story, dancing a reel, playing hockey, or singing a Gaelic song, the present becomes all-encompassing. (This assumes that these activities, while they may be subject to local aesthetics and standards, are being done primarily for entertainment so that participants are not overly concerned with the judgment and criticism of coaches, instructors, or other authority figures.) These work and play activities focus people on the immediate situation. Worries about debts, a poor fishing season, a child who is doing badly in school, or rumours of a mine closing are temporarily forgotten by a person who is dancing to the lively rhythm of a Cape Breton fiddle. Nonetheless, such entertainment is not an escape from reality but an aspect of reality. In fact, it is something very close to reality at its best.

2. Storytelling is conversational.

Mike MacKinnon (Plate 9.3), the Framboise storekeeper, summarized two important points about local storytelling in his reply to my question, "Have you heard many stories from local people?"

> ...I think you would have been talking to Dan Alex and I think that the ones [i.e., stories] that I would've heard that I enjoyed the most would be from Dan Alex. FANTASTIC MAN, just a fantastic man! And Dan Alex has lived a lot of years in this area and no matter what you're talking about, it reminds him of something. And you'll say, "God, look, there's tracks over there. Someone's off the road." "I remember the time that we had..." and then he gets so interesting that you'll forget what you're doing and everything else. And he goes on in great detail and quite often the stories intertwine with something else in a story he's told you before. And you get to know the people and where they live and so forth, so although you've never been there and the homes and the farms are probably long since gone, you know what he's talking about in this story because it was in another story. And he doesn't tell it as a story. He's just talking to you. (RT95-32A, August 12, 1992)

As Mike observed in regard to Dan Alex, in a rural folk community, storytelling is generally conversational and everything—people and places—is interconnected.

In most cases, storytelling and other entertainment is held in informal and egalitarian settings. Despite variation in income and education among the area's residents, differences in social or economic status are difficult to discern in the Gabarus-Framboise community. Dialects no longer act as important markers of social status, despite differences between the speech of English-speaking villagers and country people whose native tongue is Gaelic (perhaps because of the loss of youths, the main protagonists in village-country rivalries, in the area). The region's inhabitants dress casually except when attending church or other formal activities such as weddings and funerals. Informality is such that even teenagers and young adults address their elders by their first names. A performer then is a friend and neighbour even if the person's superior artistic abilities are recognized and respected. Storytellers, musicians, and other folk artists lack mystique since they are

known to all in a variety of social roles. Storytelling itself involves friendly communication among familiars rather than unequal relationships between "stars" and "fans," as was clearly demonstrated in the account of the house visit with Jimmy and Lena MacLeod (Chapter V). Perhaps star status only exists in such a community when a performer through his or her own efforts or those of interested outsiders gains a broader audience, thereby creating a new role that must be acknowledged locally.

Conversational storytelling requires considerable skill and, as mentioned in the earlier discussion of storytelling as entertainment, involves the active participation of the audience, many of whose members will later take their turns as narrators. Listening, as we have seen in Chapter V, is an intense activity which often includes well-timed verbal communication with the teller. Listeners make editorial comments, ask for points of clarification, and encourage storytellers by voicing remarks at appropriate times without breaking the flow of the story. Only when the narrator has lost them, do audience members interrupt to get the story back on track. Roy and Flora MacLeod, you will remember, were able to relate a story together, each telling separate parts. These interactive skills have been noted in other rural North American folk communities (see Read MacDonald, 1996; Taft, 1983:45-82) but are also aspects of informal and conversational storytelling everywhere. According to Linda Dégh, even when Hungarian peasants are relating lengthy Märchen in comparatively formal settings, audiences participate verbally. The esteemed storyteller Zsuzsanna Palkó often interacted with her listeners, making asides to the audience in the course of telling her stories (Dégh, 1995: xxiii).

The Gabarus-Framboise community has some cultural restrictions

regarding performance. The young must give way to the old in storytelling sessions and men often dominate mixed-gender groups, patterns which Bauman (1972) observed in another Nova Scotia folk community, three decades earlier (333). The archetypal image of a society in which youths sit in a semi-circle eagerly listening to sages and wise women is appealing, especially to aging adults who see their own growing youngsters spending more time with peers and less with their elders.[1] However, such a society, if it ever existed, is not to be found in the Gabarus-Framboise community. Despite the fact that the young generally display a respectful attitude to their elders, this community is not one in which young people consistently seek out the old in order to listen to their stories. Children have numerous opportunities to listen to older people tell, yet, as they grow older and become more mobile and independent, most prefer the company of their peers—as do young people everywhere. Ruth Reid explained that, in her youth, Gabarus's young people often withdrew to another room when storytelling took place (see Chapter IV). There the young could talk with each other without censure. As well, flirting and joking happened away from the watchful eyes of elders. Youths like Joe Neil MacNeil of Big Pond, who preferred the company of elderly storytellers to his peers, were exceptional even in earlier times (Chapter IV). In my experience recording stories in this region, I observed that husbands or wives often joined their spouses while I taped but children and youths did not, even when they were nearby and could have done so unobtrusively. However, the young do listen to and enjoy the stories of the old even if they do not normally seek them out. Soutor and Edith Strachan's grandchildren listened attentively to Soutor's stories when I joined the family for dinner. Young people can see by example

that they will eventually get their turn to be the community's storytellers if they are so inclined.

Many women are fine storytellers and those who feel passionately enough about storytelling and are willing to contend with a male-dominated arena hold their own in mixed groups. Flora MacLeod, for instance, who has many stories and obviously enjoys telling them, seems comfortable with the give and take of an animated kitchen-table session when even some of the community's men would be content to take a more passive role. Sheila MacCormick, who moved to Framboise Intervale from Sydney, is another energetic storyteller who easily shares the forum with her husband "J. C." who is one of the youngest men with a reputation as an entertaining narrator. (He was in his late forties when I met him during my first fieldtrip.) Furthermore, both women and young people also have their own storytelling forums in which they can exercise their skills away from the older men if they so choose. Among women, these forums include quilting bees, preparations for church and community dinners, and gatherings of friends or relatives for berry-picking or canning. Although men and women spend a great deal of time together, they sometimes separate into male and female groups to hold separate conversations at both public and private events. Another venue for women's storytelling is their homes when, often in the absence of men, they entertain their own children or visitors who drop in.

Many local storytellers are, as Mike MacKinnon said of Dan Alex MacLeod, "just talking to you" when they relate their narratives. However, some storytellers are certainly aware of their roles as performers. Arthur Severance and Lloyd MacDonald exhibited some self-consciousness about their storytelling. Furthermore, tall-tale tellers of earlier generations were

undoubtedly attentive to the fact that they were entertaining audiences when they swapped stories at general stores. Nonetheless, their stories generally emerged from conversation, although the tales might have been skilfully situated in that conversation by the narrators.

3. Storytelling not only reflects and promotes interconnectedness among the community's residents but also connects them with their physical environment.

In the Gabarus-Framboise community, the prime venues for storytelling are gatherings of peers, friends, and relatives. This fact is as important to understanding storytelling in rural folk communities as is knowledge of the stories and the storytellers themselves. The expressions "my people" or "our people" are used commonly by rural Maritimers to describe one's relatives and neighbours. To those who live along the Gabarus-Framboise coast, the stories told locally are not only about our people but also for our people. For the area's residents, narratives help shape who they are, as well as nurturing their sense of connectedness. As Mike MacKinnon implied in regard to Dan Alex's storytelling everything—people and places—is intertwined.

Mike said of Dan Alex's stories, "you know what he's talking about in this story because it was in another story." His observation extends well beyond Dan Alex's stories. The degree of interconnectedness in a rural folk community is barely imaginable to urbanites. Country people often share relatives, friends, and history so that the same characters, places, and important events emerge repeatedly in their narratives. The main characters in a community's "novel" are known to all and appear repeatedly in

anecdotes. The name of Hector MacCormick evokes a smile even from those who barely remember him. As I listened to my tapes repeatedly, I got some sense of what it must be like to grow up in the Gabarus-Framboise area, seeing the same people regularly, and hearing stories about neighbours, ancestors, and people who are connected with one's friends and relatives.

Though I only sampled the community's narrative repertoire, I was struck by the numerous links between residents that were evident in their stories. When someone mentioned how people used to see lights where the MacLeod boys drowned, I realized that one of these boys must be Jimmy Philip and Buddy's brother. When someone else told of Willie Severance dying mysteriously off Guyon Island, I recognized Willie to be Arthur's older brother. Although I have never seen Guyon Island itself, I know it as an important setting in the region's history. The location of a lighthouse a few kilometres from Winging Point, Gabarus, the island is associated with the lighthouse keepers Willie Severance and Billy MacDonald and with Mary Tammer Winton, wife of one lighthouse keeper and a well-known eccentric who lived in Gull Cove for years after others had abandoned the community. Not only is Guyon Island associated with drownings and mysterious deaths but, because of its important lighthouse, it also figures in many shipwreck stories. The island is as important an element in the community's narratives as are some well-known characters. For those born and raised in the Gabarus-Framboise area, the links between people and places are much more complex and extensive than I have been able to discern. Indeed, elements in the community's stories often connect the narratives directly to the listeners.[2]

People who live in the region know stories about everyone around them. Even those who leave the area daily to go to work or attend high

school, or who work away for periods, return to familiar surroundings and people. In a short story called "Civilized Friends" (1995), the American writer Bailey White used the concept of narrative to show the contrast between the familiar world of her small town in Georgia and the unknown world everywhere else. While travelling, she met a man who had lost three fingers.

> In my own town I know the story of every missing body part: an ear in an auto accident, a middle finger in a miscalculation at a table saw, a thumb in a freak accident involving a white horse and a Chrysler coupe. It is one of the joys of distance to know that I will never know what happened to the three fingers of that man in Chinle, Arizona. (5-6)

As White implies, the sense of knowing everyone's stories and having them know yours, can sometimes be oppressive rather than comforting. Many rural malcontents and nonconformists feel liberated by the anonymity—for newcomers, at least—of the city.

For the people living along this stretch of Cape Breton coast, the past is always close to the present. Physical reminders are everywhere and prompt stories of former times. Residents are thoroughly grounded in their community, feeling a sense of affinity with their "people" and their surroundings. Narratives extend the familiarity which comes from seeing the same people and the same physical environment continually.

4. Particular stories and genres are associated with individual storytellers.

Although the Gabarus-Framboise community promotes and nurtures storytelling, individual talents and interests play a vital role in determining which people become storytellers. Most narrators pass on some stories that they learned by listening to and observing other storytellers during their younger years, yet there are great differences in individual relationships to

storytelling. Some people enjoy listening but not telling. Others are unable to retain and recall many narratives. A few remember stories but never learn to tell them effectively. Of those who do learn the art, most prefer a limited number of narrative genres. Arthur Severance, though he heard many supernatural stories, did not like them and so did not pass them on. Dan Alex MacLeod does tell memorates, yet has few sea stories. The community itself seems to have generic preferences. Wonder tales disappeared long ago for reasons about which we can only speculate (see Chapter IV). Tall tales are no longer told as first-person accounts. Fishing stories are common in the public forum but mining stories less so, despite the fact that many men worked in mines, both in Stirling and far away. However, humorous stories about local characters still qualify as popular entertainment.

The role of storyteller falls primarily upon the elderly. Patrick Mullen (1992) explained that folklorists find that "active tradition-bearers...are often the oldest people in the community (2)." Considering the skill involved in conversational storytelling, it is not surprising that elderly tradition bearers are highly regarded. Storytelling is an art, learned and developed over a lifetime, so it is often aged people who are outstanding storytellers. Furthermore, being a storyteller is a social role generally associated with old folks. Many people in rural folk communities regard connections with the past as vital aspects of their region's storytelling tradition, so valued storytellers are often those who are closer to "the past" and have experienced at first or second hand what is "long ago" to others. Some younger people may be excellent narrators but still do not regard themselves as tradition bearers except in unusual circumstances (for example, when an individual is trying consciously to preserve or revive a disappearing folk art form). More

often, young rural residents either devalue their own storytelling or feel that it would be presumptuous to try to adopt a role reserved for elders. Henry Glassie (1982) observed that in Ballymenone, Ireland, young men quietly listen to the old. Only when an older generation dies off does a new generation of old men become Ballymenone's storytellers (63). In the Gabarus-Framboise community, some elderly people—for example, Clifton Bagnell and Dan Alex MacLeod—are reluctant to claim the role of elderly tradition bearer. Dan Alex, at the age of eighty-eight, advised me, "most of the old people is gone from here. Dead, you know" (RT92-21A). Due to the absence of "old people," I had to make do with people in their eighties and nineties.

Because of the association of storytelling with the elderly, skilled and knowledgeable narrators are continually becoming incapacitated or dying. Still, others take their places, transmitting some stories of the former generation and adding others of their own. Even storytellers such as Lloyd MacDonald, who have broad repertoires, do not inherit an elder's repertoire intact but rather develop their own, according to what particular stories intrigue or amuse them. An oral collection of family stories might disappear completely if a potential storyteller—for example, a single person or a partner in a childless couple—has little contact with distant nephews and nieces who would comprise the only logical audience. Therefore, a community's repertoire is modified according to who lives and who dies, who moves and who stays, who talks and who listens, and what experience is shared by a significant portion of tellers and listeners.

9.4 In Conclusion

The oral narrative repertoire of the Gabarus-Framboise region is unique, not because the narrative genres within it cannot be found elsewhere but because its repertoire as a whole reflects this particular community's past and present. Stories of family and regional history, adventures on land or sea, supernatural experiences, local characters, entrepreneurs, work experiences, and the humour in everyday life can be found everywhere. Furthermore, things being other than what they seem, a popular topic locally, is common to other areas too. Migrating tales heard in eastern Cape Breton can be found in distant lands. However, Gabarus-Framboise residents hearing the stories told by their local storytellers realize these stories are about us. They take place in familiar settings and involve people who are connected with the listeners in myriad ways. Rum-running happened at Belfry Beach and Capelin Cove, places where where local people have all walked. Shipwrecks, rescue attempts, and salvaging (both legal and illegal) involved local people and ships whose names are heard again and again—the *Iceland II*, the *Marshall Frank*, the *John Harvey*, the *Mikado*, the *Willard*, the *African* or *Afghan Prince*, and the *Charles Valentine*. Stories of forerunners and ghosts concern familiar people and not some casual friend's distant aunt. Local stories reinforce connections with the past and with the immediate environment. They play a major role in developing and maintaining a sense that a resident of the Gabarus-Framboise coast belongs to a people and a place.

Rural Cape Breton is not the opposite of Toronto, Montreal, New York, or Boston. In fact, the culture of small communities like Gabarus-Framboise

has a great deal in common with these large cities, many of whose residents are themselves not many generations removed from the country. Aspects of storytelling in rural Cape Breton can be found in urban centres. Conversational storytelling is heard in bars, cafeterias, and doughnut shops. Families relate narratives of their history and their notable characters at holiday dinners. People with lengthy roots in a city may have numerous stories associated with sites around them. Urban friends share memorates about inexplicable experiences. In some urban locations such as the "Scotch church" (Needham Presbyterian) in suburban Boston, Cape Bretoners and Highland Scots even gather to talk and sing in Gaelic.

What distinguishes storytelling in a rural folk community from urban storytelling is the extent of shared history and experience in a rural community's stories. A great many urban stories—jokes and legends, for instance—are either anonymous or about people not known to the listener. Other genres (such as occupational narratives) may be limited to an exclusive group whose members share points of reference (co-workers, families, classmates, political cohorts, church congregations, etc.). Although rural stories often exclude outsiders, a great many narratives can still be shared by all who "belong to" a particular place with its inherent social network. For instance, in a fishing community, many occupational narratives related to fishing are understandable even to those residents who do not fish. In a small community, one knows stories not only about about virtually everyone around but about their ancestors, friends, and relatives as well. This is impossible in urban areas, simply because there are too many people.

Despite the interconnectedness of residents of the Gabarus-Framboise community and the importance of traditional storytelling to them,

communal entertainment in southeastern Cape Breton has become a lesser part of daily life than it was in the days before the Second World War. Still, residents continue to create their own entertainment. Fund-raising dinners, strawberry socials, milling frolics, and seniors' gatherings are parts of the yearly cycle. Patsy MacLeod teaches quilting to younger women, quietly sharing local history and personal experience narratives as they work. Her son Rodger and his friend Jimmie MacQueen labour at preparing Rodger's fishing boat for the annual races on the Mira River. John Neil and Christene MacLean welcome friends and relatives to Saturday night fiddling and piano sessions in their livingroom.[3] Most importantly, visiting is still a leading pastime throughout the region. Televisions are quickly turned off, fiddles are brought out with little persuasion, and the arts of conversation and storytelling flourish. Residents of this and many other rural folk communities have considerable opportunity for hearty laughter despite any grim portrayals by contemporary novelists (see Chapter II). If there is a lesson to be learned from the people of the Gabarus-Framboise region, it concerns the value of hospitality, laughter, and homemade entertainment in our lives. Whatever problems these people have—and the difficulties of living in a community in which people are aging while the economy is declining are many—their lives are made rich by their willingness to turn off the television, put on the kettle, and share a few stories whenever someone arrives at the door.

Notes

1. This viewpoint is espoused by the poet Robert Bly in his popular book Iron John (1990), a Jungian-based study of the lives of contemporary western males. Bly argues for the transformation of our society into one in which older men directly initiate young men into manhood. However, Bly says of himself as a young man, "I attacked every older man in the literary community who was within arrow range, and enjoyed seeing the arrows pass through his body, arrows impelled by the tense energy bottled in my psyche" (23). The image of young men honouring their elders seems to have taken root in his imagination as he himself grew old.

2. Many folklorists have explored the connections between storytelling and regional identity. See, for example, Allen and Schelereth (eds.), 1990; Burrison, 1989; Dorson, 1952; Montell, 1970, 1983; and Randolph, 1951.

3. For a brief biography of John Neil MacLean, focusing on his role as a fiddler, see Allister MacGillivray, 1981:138-39. John Neil's fiddling is included on the record The Music of Cape Breton, Volume 2: Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle, produced by John Shaw et al.



Plate 9.1 Women berry picking (photo from Thurgood family collection).
(l to r) Mary "Belfry" MacCormick, Dolena Thurgood, Mrs. Alex (Flora?) Ferguson, Mary McCormack. All these women are all related by kinship or marriage.



Plate 9.2 Haying crew at Kenny Strachan's farm, Framboise Intervale, 1930s (Photo courtesy of Patsy MacLeod).
Person on load: unknown
Standing: Marry Maggie (Strachan) MacCormick, Phemia Strachan, Eunice (Ferguson) Strachan, Hughie Ferguson, Kenny John Ferguson



Plate 9.3 Dan Alex MacLeod and Michael MacKinnon working in the office of Dan Alex's sawmill (Aug. 1995).

Bibliography

Key to Short Forms

AB Am Bràighe
AE Acta Ethnographica
ARV ARV: Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore
CFc Canadian Folklore canadien
CFMJ Canadian Folk Music Journal
CBM Cape Breton's Magazine (not dated, first issue printed in 1972, fiftieth in 1992)
C&T Culture & Tradition
FF Folklore Forum (however, FF Communications = Folklore Fellows Communications)
IFC inside front cover (re: articles in Cape Breton's Magazine)
JAF Journal of American Folklore
JFI Journal of the Folklore Institute
JFR Journal of Folklore Research
NYF New York Folklore
PTL PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature
SF Studia Fennica
SFQ Southern Folklore Quarterly
TF Talking Folklore
WF Western Folklore

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Appendix 1

Past Storytellers of the Gabarus-Framboise Region

The following list contains the names of people who died before 1990, and who were referred to as "storytellers," "having stories," or as people "who told stories," by contemporary residents of the Gabarus-Framboise region. Also included, when known, are the names of their communities, the dates when they lived, and the narrative genres which were their specialties. Many thanks to Rhodena Clark, Lloyd MacDonald, Dan Alex MacLeod, Mary Ann MacLeod, and Bruce Smith for proofreading this list, correcting mistakes, and adding information. And special thanks to Alex and Annie MacLeod who visited both neighbours and cemeteries to gather information. Errors are, of course, my responsibility.

Name	Community & Dates	Narrative genres
Albert Bagnell	Gabarus Hill 1867-1941	treasure, ghost stories
Devil Bill Bagnell	Gabarus, North Shore 1800s-approx. 1930s	?
Maud (Thurgood) Bagnell	Malquish, Gabarus 1890-1971	children's stories, childhood in England
Henry Campbell	Lower L'Ardoise (mature man in 1930s)	hunting, fishing, treasure
Archie Ferguson	Malquish 1800s-approx. 1940	ghost stories

Captain Donald Ferguson	Gabarus Lake, Fourchu (lived to 107 or 108, died approx. 1930s)	sailing
Captain John Grant	Gabarus 1851-1928	sea stories, personal experiences
John Alex MacAskill	Stirling 1901-1963	(Gaelic singer)
Malcolm Dan MacAskill	Gabarus Lake 1892-1955	?
Hector MacCormick	Belfry, Framboise Intervale 1906-1986	humorous stories about people
Charles William MacDonald	Fourchu 1874-1966	sailing, humorous stories
Dan Alex the Bard MacDonald	Framboise 1885-1972	humorous stories (composer of Gaelic songs)
Henry Seaward MacDonald	Fourchu 1883-1941	sailing
James F. (Jim) MacDonald	Fourchu 1876-1941	old times
John E. MacDonald	Gabarus Lake	stories of life in U.S.A. (composer of Gaelic songs)
John R. MacDonald	North Framboise	sailing
Lauchie MacDonald	Gabarus Lake	ghost stories, treasure
Myrtle (Clark) MacDonald	Gabarus, Fourchu 1900-1981	children's stories

Ranald MacDonald (known as Big Ranald to family)	North Framboise 1800s-approx. 1950s	humorous stories
Ranald Murdoch MacDonald (known as Ronald in Gabarus, Black Ranald)	Malquish, Gabarus, Morrison Road (Sydney) 1890s-1980s	personal experiences, humorous stories, children's stories
Sarah (Matheson) MacDonald	Gabarus Lake 1887-1981	treasure, children's stories, old times
Willy Joseph MacDonald	Fourchu?	personal experiences, living in New York, ghosts
Dave MacGillivary	Gabarus, Fourchu (WW I veteran)	sailing, war
Sam MacGillivary	Fourchu	?
Alex Allan MacIntyre	Belfry	stories about people, humorous
Dan MacIntyre	Canoe Lake 1800s (known by reputation only)	?
Dan N. MacIntyre	Gabarus Lake 1864-1950	personal experience, humorous, old times, (composer of Gaelic songs)
Neil Archie MacIntyre	Gabarus Lake, U.S.A. 1894-1959	tall tales
Danny Willy MacKay	Malquish 1892-1950	forerunners
Norman MacKay	Malquish, Fourchu approx. 1900-1980	humorous stories
William Henry MacKinnon	Fourchu	sailing

Charlie Cooper MacLeod	Framboise (mature man in 1920s)	tall tales
John Cooper MacLeod	Fourchu (mature man in 1920s)	tall tales
Kenny Dan MacLeod	Framboise, Fourchu 1904-1986	ghost stories, treasure
Malcolm Cooper MacLeod	Framboise, Fourchu (mature man in 1920s)	tall tales
Norman Cooper MacLeod	Framboise, Fourchu (mature man in 1920s)	tall tales
Western Dan MacLeod	Gabarus Lake (mature man in 1920s)	tall tales
Angus MacQueen (husband of Maggie)	North Framboise	?
Ethel (Harris) Morrison (widow of Billie Dowling)	Gabarus	ghost stories
Kenny Morrison	North Framboise 1872-1964	local history
John Rafuse	Fourchu, Chester 1851-1934	sailing, tall tales
Priscilla (Bagnell) Reid	Gabarus d. 1940s	ghost stories
Fred Reid	Gabarus 1888-1988	old times
Eddie Severance	Fourchu approx. 1900-died young	lumberwoods[1]

[1] Many Maritimers went to "the lumberwoods" to work in winter. Storytelling was common not only in the Canadian and American camps where these men went to work (see, e.g., Ives, 1977:18) but in the lumber camps of Europe, for example, Finland (Pentikäinen, 1978:267; Vento, 1989) and Hungary (Dégh, 1969:74; Faragó, 570-76; Ortutay, 244).

Little Henry Severance (Arthur's father)	Fourchu 1800s-?	hunting, fishing
Ikey Sherwood	Gabarus 1908-1984	ghost stories (some about Guyon Island)
Issac Townsend	Gabarus 1887-1947	ghost stories, war stories, tall tales
Albert (Bert) Thurgood	Gabarus, Arichat 1880-1950	humorous stories
Fred Thurgood	Gabarus, Sydney 1884-1963	children's ghost ("jump") stories
Mary Ann (MacDonald)Thurgood	Malquish, Gabarus, Arichat, Calgary 1886-1984	personal experiences, old times
Mary Tammer (Townsend) Winton	Gabarus Cape, Gabarus approx. 1860 - 1940	ghost stories

Total: 51 storytellers named;
7 women, 44 men

Appendix 2

Population Changes in The Gabarus-Framboise Region 1871-1991

These population statistics are gathered from Canadian census reports. However, they should not be considered completely accurate since census district boundaries change from one enumeration to the next. This region crosses county lines and electoral districts and does not fit neatly into govermental statistical reviews. The purpose of these figures is to show trends in population growth and decline. They indicate clearly that there has been steady outmigration since the turn of the century.

The population of each village named also includes the surrounding area. "Gabarus" statistics normally include Gabarus Lake though in post-1951 censuses, Gabarus Lake is listed separately. Fourchu is included under "Framboise" but in 1881 both communities are listed under the heading "Fourchu" (I have included the 1881 figure under "Framboise," as did the government in a 1941 census review of populations.) The 1991 census listed a number of small communities in the Framboise area apart from "Framboise." Normally, the statistics below focus on Gabarus and Framboise but other communities are included when named on census reports.

Year	Population					
	Gabarus	Gabarus L.	Framboise	Fram. Intervale	N. Framboise	N. Fourchu
1871	1,017		538			
1881	1,256		680			
1891	1,139		656			
1911	1,116		595			
1921	979		612			
1931	911		471			
1941	738		460			
1951	679		397			
1956	270	109	75			
1961	252	100	53			
1966	225	97	42			
1971	199	68	60			
1991	110	72	44	14	11	60

Fergusson (1967) says that the population of Stirling was two hundred in 1956, the year the mine closed (650). Today it is likely under twenty. A listing of residents of the village of Fourchu (including North Fourchu but not the surrounding area) in 1985 names seventy-two people (MacGillivary et al., 82).

Appendix 3

Nicknames in the Gabarus-Framboise Region

Nicknames are common to both rural and Gaelic society, partly because a limited number of shared surnames in a small community can easily lead to confusion of identity. However, nicknaming practices follow very old traditions and do not simply reflect name shortages. All the nicknames in the Gabarus-Framboise region follow the same patterns that led to the formation of surnames in the British Isles. Almost all local nicknames, like British surnames generally, fit into four groups (Cottle, 1967:9-25; Dorward, iii-xvii): 1) those based on the first name of a parent or ancestor, 2) those based on localities or places, 3) those recording a person's occupation or status, and 4) those descriptive of "face, figure, temper, morals, clothes, and the rest" (Cottle, 9). A fifth group, not mentioned in the surname dictionaries, is names based on a husband's first name. Below are examples of each type with commentaries.

1) Parent or ancestor's name. People are often called after their fathers. Two James or Jimmy MacLeods from Framboise and Belfry are called Jimmy Dan E. MacLeod (Dan E.'s son) and Jimmy Philip MacLeod (Philip's son). A person is sometimes called after a mother when the father dies young or is not well known in the community; thus the widow Maggie MacCormick's daughter is Mary Maggie. Men too may be called after their mothers. Although I was not aware of instances of this practice in the Gabarus-Framboise region, Cape Breton does have its Johnny Sarahs and Angus Annies. Among Gaelic speakers, names can sometimes accumulate

so that one is called after both parent and grandparent. Furthermore, when a person's direct ancestry is not well known, the name of a parent may be replaced with that of a local relative or other significant person. Many people in the Framboise area knew my great-uncle Ranald Murdoch MacDonald (Murdoch's son) but not my father and grandparents, so I became Ranald Ranald Murdoch or, going back another generation, Ranald Ranald Murdoch Ranald.

2) Locality or place. Sarah MacCormick of Belfry is Sarah Belfry. A family in North Framboise were known as *Borarach* because their ancestors were from *Boraraigh* (Boreray), a small island off North Uist.
3) Occupation or Status. John Cooper MacLeod of Framboise was, in fact, a cooper. His nickname was passed on to his sons, Charlie Cooper, John Cooper, Malcolm Cooper, and Norman Cooper. Dan Alex MacLeod, who operated a sawmill, is *Dan Ailig Am Muillear*, Dan Alex the Miller, while the late farmer and song maker Dan Alex MacDonald was *Dan Ailig Am Bàrd*, Dan Alex the Bard (a direct translation of the Gaelic *bàrd* without the romantic connotations of the English word).
4) Descriptive. These names often have to do with physical characteristics. Little John Archie MacDonald was a very small man while Black Ranald MacDonald, was black-haired and dark-eyed. Other names may have to do with character (Devil Bill Bagnell, not a model citizen), habits (the Foggy Devil, a fisherman who takes his boat out on foggy days when others do not), or specific memorable incidents (Pigbite was bitten by a pig, and Maggie Go To Boston went to Boston on a whim in the 1920s when such trips were usually planned far in advance.)

5) Women are also called by their husband's names. Mary MacDonald of Gabarus Lake is Mary Donald and Sarah Belfry MacCormick is also known as Sarah Abe.

A number of factors complicate the situation surrounding the use of nicknames. First, a nickname may, as in the case of the Cooper MacLeods above, be passed on to future generations. Devil Bill's grandchildren are referred to as John Devil Bill or Mary Devil Bill. Second, residents often speak of others as though the nickname were their last name, e.g., Malcolm Cooper. This practice shows how many surnames originated, yet is confusing to outsiders. Third, among Gaelic-speakers, double names are popular. When I speak of John Neil MacLean, I am using his legal name. He is not the son of Neil. Fourth, some nicknames may not be used in a person's presence or may, in fact, be insulting. I learned to use caution in my use of local nicknames after asking an elderly woman about the origins of a nickname for her used by a generation long gone. She was greatly amused by the name and knew at once why it had come about. However, she had never before heard the name and I realized that I could easily have hurt or insulted her. According to those who remember them, Christie and Annie *Borarach* took offence at their nickname, because they were born in Canada like everyone else. None of their neighbours considered *Borarach* to be derogatory. However, some used the name in a teasing way, simply because of the reaction it provoked.

The fifth and major complicating factor is that this is a bilingual community in which people have nicknames in both English and Gaelic. The Gaels seem to have a particular fondness for nicknames. When my grandmother would translate names into Gaelic, she would call me *Raghnall*

Beag (Little Ranald) and her brother *Raghnall Mór* (Big Ranald), although she never called us by these nicknames when speaking English. In the past, brothers or sisters sometimes had a common first name but with an added nickname, like the brothers Big Angus and Young Angus MacDonald. In fact, Gaelic-speaking people may give a person a number of nicknames, used in different circumstances. I have heard people refer to my uncle Ranald MacDonald as Ranald, Ronald (both are translations of *Raghnall*), Big Ranald, Black Ranald, Rannie (a diminutive), Ranald Murdoch or *Raghnall Mhurchaidh* (after his father), Ranald Murdoch Ranald or *Raghnall Mhurchaidh Raghnaill* (after his father and grandfather), and Ranald the Horsetrader (because he liked to trade horses). The untranslated names also have Gaelic equivalents. Further complicating matters, in Gaelic *mac* (son) and *nic* (daughter) may be used as part of surnames or to show a relationship with a parent or ancestor so that Angus, the son of Hector (*Eachan*) MacDonald, may be referred to as Angus mac Eachan and Angus MacDonald (*Aonghas MacDomhnaill* or *Aonghas Domhnall*). His sister Jean would be called Jean nic Eachan (*Sìne nic Eachan*) or Jean nic Donald (*Sìne nic Domhnaill* or *Sìne Domhnall*), and, using the English practice, Jean MacDonald. (Bill Lawson's column "*Sinnsearachd*/ Genealogy" in Am Bràighe is a good source of information on Scottish surnames in Cape Breton.)

Appendix 4

Explanation of Boating Accident

This is a transcript of Katherine Grier's explanation of the boating accident which claimed the life of Murdoch MacDonald and his brother-in-law (see Chapter II, first section). Katherine sailed as a teenager and was therefore able to put Arthur Severance's description into terms which make sense to a landlubber. Katherine's detailed description and her speculations on the cause of the accident confirm a point made by James Moreira in his study of sailors' ballads, that is, that a brief comment—even the mere mention of a place name or a location on board ship—can convey considerable information to those whose experience can "flesh in the details of the story" (Moreira, 1989:34; also 1990). Severance's story creates more vivid pictures for Katherine than for a person like myself who has little sailing experience.

Ranald: So, I just wanted you to ask you to explain about this boating accident as you understand it.

Katherine: Well, from what he says, it conjures up a picture. He says they're a couple of miles offshore, maybe three miles offshore, which isn't far really. And they weren't anchored. They had the mainsail up and the sheet tied. And that would have been to hold the boat with the bow facing into the wind a little bit and letting it drift in a steady, predictable line, as they were fishing, and it would have freed them up. The sheet is the rope that you pull the sail in with. So when they say "the sheet is tied," they mean that the sail is in a fixed position. And they would have been counting on a light breeze, no change in the wind, if they were going to tie that sheet down and keep the sail fixed.

Ordinarily, when you're sailing, you don't tie the sheet down, you don't "cleat the sheet" unless you're in a position to get it uncleated really fast. And nowadays, they have these—they're called jam cleats and they've got little teeth and you just sort of

whup it with your foot and you can get the rope out of the cleat. But in those days they probably would have had a piece that's got two arms sticking out and you wrap the rope in a figure eight around it. So, once it's cleated, once you've got the sheet fast, it takes a little doing to get it uncleated. So, with that sheet, what the sheet allows you to do is pull the sail in or let the sail out. And the more you pull the sail in, the tighter, the flatter, you make the sail and the more force there is when the wind hits it. It's like a flat, hard surface. So, if a sudden gust of wind hits that sail and it's pulled in fairly hard, it's just going to take the boat over. The wind will push on the sail and the whole boat will tip. Now, if you let the sail out, if the sheet is uncleated, what you're doing is creating a belly in the sail and it's called "spilling the wind." You actually get to the point where the sail is just flapping there because you've let the wind out of the sail. And that's what they probably wanted to do.

Anyway, the situation that they were in was they had the mainsail up and they had the sail cleated, fastened. And all of a sudden, they were hit by an offshore squall. Now, if it had been coming from out in the open sea, they would have seen it coming.

Ranald: What is a squall?

Katherine: A squall is a sudden gust of wind. You usually see it—We call them "cat's paws," you can see these little ripples on the surface of the water. And you usually have a fair bit of warning. Actually two-and-a-half miles offshore, I would have thought you'd have some warning but I guess if they were fishing maybe they were busy—. It was apparently a lovely day. Maybe they were so caught up in what they were doing, they didn't notice. Anyway, if it was coming from out in the open water, they would have had plenty of time, they probably would have seen clouds or something to give them some warning of a sudden squall coming. But at any rate, they didn't manage apparently to notice that this was coming. It might have been fluky too, you know, unpredictable—an unpredictable direction or something like that, coming at them off the land. Often that's one of the things that happens. If it's coming in off open water, there's nothing to disrupt the wind. This way, if it's coming offshore, it's had to go over hills and through trees and all that so it could have been a fluky wind.

Whatever, the wind hits the boat, the sail is cleated so that they can't let it out. And from what he says, it sounds like it would

have just pushed the boat right over. And he says the boat was open, which means there's no deck and it would have filled with water. And on top of that, it was "a ballasted boat." Now ballast means weight. It's weighted down in some way.... And the point of having ballast is that it lets the boat be very steady in the water [and helps keep it on course].

So, if you have a wooden boat and it's not ballasted and it goes over, the wood is buoyant and it floats. It flips over and there's an air pocket underneath and it floats and you hang onto the boat....

But with this boat, it was wood. But it WAS ballasted and the ballast was probably lead or some other heavy something.... And all I can assume is that the weight of the ballast was more than the buoyancy of the wood so it went down. You know, filled with water. There was nothing to give it any extra—no air tanks of any kind to give it any extra buoyancy and it just sank....

So, as far as I can see, they were caught out. They were doing something that they normally did under a situation that was pretty safe and they got caught by an unexpected squall for one reason or another. It must have been pretty unexpected because they were all experienced fishermen. And once it went over, there they were with nothing but the few things that did float. Not a very happy situation. (RT93-4, June 17, 1993)

Appendix 5

Arthur Severance's Narrative about Donald Ferguson Repairing the Bobchains

Arthur: Among the Scottish people, there was usually someone who was a gifted storyteller. He was an entertainer in the area back in the days long before radio or the "idiot box," (laughs) the television. Those fellas provided entertainment at ceilidhs, you know, family gatherings in the evening. But I often wished that I'd had a (chuckles)—tape recorders weren't even thought of then, when I was growing up, but I used to hear stories then and they didn't stay with me, you know—except maybe an odd one that old Donald Ferguson would tell. There were a lot of those, I don't remember the details except for one. There was one of old Donald's stories that I (laughs) remember after a fashion.

He was before the mast, you know. He wasn't an officer. This was in the old square-rigger days, you see, of sailing. And I don't know, some port, it'd be a South American port that they were bound for. And I'm not too sure what their cargo was, it was probably coal. But after they discharged their load, some places down there they used to load guano, it was bird, (Ranald: Bird manure.) bird manure. And they'd load that. They might go across't and discharge that over in Europe. Pick up a different cargo there.

Ranald: What did they use it for?

Arthur: Fertilizer. And there were some European ports where there was still quite a bit of it discharged, you know. I don't think the chemical fertilizers were used very much then.

Anyway, they were heading down to this South American port, they got into a terrific storm and snapped the bobchains on the bowsprit. Now, you know what those are, eh?

Ranald: Not really, no.

Arthur: Now, the bobchain was a chain that came from the end of the bowsprit and another one intermediate and it came down to the stem, head to the stem, NEAR THE WATERLINE.

Ranald: Were they to strengthen the—? (Arthur: The scoops[?])

Arthur: Well, you'd have your head-stays, now, like your jib-stays and so on from the bowsprit. They'd be out to the end of your bowsprit and then intermediate and then in at the stem head, eh? And those stays would be going aloft, up to the topmast, up some of them, for the jibs, you see. There'd be three jibs now. I don't really know the, as I said, the details of some of it, but your jibs, there were at least three. Now, one was called a flying-jib and then the jumbo with a big jib. Now, I think the jumbo would be on the stay coming to the stem head. But you see those stays coming from four of those were—where your jibs were—followed up when they hoisted, your rings or eclipse rolled up on those stays and they would have to have from the bowsprit, would have to have something to give it added strength, you see, for to stand the strain. And this is where the bobchains come in.

So whatever happened, he said, well, one link parted in the bobchain and they couldn't use their jibs and they were just, ah, well, what would you call it? They were head to the wind, just drifting there, facing the wind, riding out the storm, until the storm subsided. Well then, they were miles offshore—how were they going to get these bobstays back?

Old Donald was telling it, you know. Now, the captain called the first mate, had to get bobchains or something to take their place because they'd have to use the jibs for to sail. He was trying different ways. They'd hook the bobchain, they got it up and were trying to get the bobchain fastened. They had some spare chain, of course, they disconnected, put this, got this spare chain but they couldn't get the tension that was required.

So, he was trying different schemes and ways to get it and he wasn't making any satisfactory progress. Old Donald's sitting there. (Changes voice to imitate characters.) "I went to the captain and I said 'Begging your pardon, sir, but I believe I could do that job.' 'Can you?'

'Yeah, I think so, sir.' 'How would you do it?' 'Well, you'll have to take a cable from the end of your bowsprit' (changes to normal voice) or from the—not the end of it—'from the stem, from the stem-head, and take a pulley at the end of your bowsprit and you bring that in,' he said 'to the windlass. Take a turn on the windlass,' he said, 'and you heave on that and you'll spring your bowsprit down,' he said. 'And you'll have to do the same thing,' he said, 'with an undercable.' Said, 'Get your bobchain fastened on down at the water line,' he said, 'at your stem head. And then take this other cable,' he said, 'and you'll have to use a tackle,' he said, 'from the mast.' And they were

bringing that up, he said to the outer end of the bowsprit, [Knock at door.] to a pulley there.
Come in! [Brief interruption as a teenage girl comes in looking for a friend who isn't there.]

[End of Side A. I turn the tape over and Arthur continues his story exactly where he left off.]

Arthur: So, anyway, they'd take the measurement of what the bobchain should be and this cable would have to be fastened back a little bit short so that the cable would go through the pulley coming from the tackle, coming through the spar and the pulley at the end of the bowsprit, and they'd take that to the windlass. The other one would have to be checked, that it was springing the bowsprit down. That would have to be checked and disconnected from the windlass, but it'd have to be checked at the end of the bowsprit, you see, to hold it. And, old Donald says, then you take that to the windlass and that'll bring your bobchain up, he said, as tight as you can bring it, and then you'll have a few links from the end, for to fasten. Now, he said, that's going to make a little slack, when the strain is taken off the end of the bowsprit that slack will be pretty well taken up.

(Goes into character voices) "Well," old Donald says to the first mate, "Mr. Baldwin," he says, "Here you are, first officer, and a man before the mast is telling you how to do your work." (laughter) "Well, you go ahead, Donald!" Oh my, " 'Yes, sir,' says I. ' Mr. Baldwin,' says I, 'can you reeve the tackle?'" (laughs)

So, it went on from there and that's how the job was done. (laughs) Ah, there was more to the story but I [don't remember]. A rig like that in those days, boy, it was something [indicating tape recorder]. For to record the story from old Donald himself, you know, it'd be priceless. But that was really the end of the story when Donald asked the first mate if he could reeve the tackle. (laughs) He would take orders from Donald to get the job done. (laughs)

Anyway, I guess they completed the voyage and they got the bobchain on. (RT92-7, July 24, 1992)

Appendix 6

A Second Telling of Arthur Severance's Narrative about a Storm off Glace Bay

Ranald: Did your father have any adventures at sea?

Arthur: Yeah. —— Yes, I suppose, in a way. Of course, he wasn't SAILING.

Ranald: He was a fisherman, right?

Arthur: He was a fisherman. Oh, he FISHED FOR YEARS before he had an engine. Yeah. I was just a youngster when he got the first engine. Boy, those little (chuckles) one-lung-ers. (chuckles) Five and six horsepower. It's amazing what they do though. There was no SPEED to them, that was for sure. Yeah. Oh, I was with him a couple of times when we, when we got caught in—. We didn't have any sails on her. It was a Cape boat, CAPE ISLANDER. The engine was the only means of locomotion.

Ranald: Just hold one second [while I turn the tape over].

[end of RT92-15, side A]

Arthur: Well, this was September, probably around 1925 or '26 or around then. And we were down off of Glace Bay. So, there was a fella from Glace Bay, that we knew. He asked us, well, he wanted to go out with us. "Yeah", anyway, "Okay." We sort of took him and-. There were three or four big rum-runners about fifteen mile off. You had to be outside of a line that run from headland to headland. And they were laying off to an anchor. Smaller boats with high power would visit them, take a load, scoot in at some point on the shore, discharge it. But anyway, we run off there and was a Burns fella from Fourchu was fishing with us, just my father and John Burns and myself. And this fella from Glace Bay was out with us that day.

So anyway, we got out handy one of these rum-runners and the fella said, "Henry," he said, "we ought'a go aboard and get a bottle." So, HENRY AGREED, IT WAS A GOOD IDEA. That was my father. So, [we] were handy, put the dory overboard and he got the dory and rode up to the rum runner. Fine

BEAUTIFUL day, BEAUTIFUL morning, DULL. Oh, hardly an air of wind.

So John Burns and I were in the boat. Well, we were just drifting around and we had some SALT CLAMS. Oh, I went and got one of the cod-lines and baited up with the clams and—something to pass the time—and, Jesus, we started catching codfish. JOHN got rigged up. And we were just drifting [and] boy, we got away. Jesus, we drifted quite a piece from the rum-runner when I noticed that we better get back handy. So we run back to about where she was and Father and this fella came handy, came aboard the boat. And Father said, "You fellas are catching a lot of fish." "Yes," I said, "We were just into a nice spot of fish, what I left out there." And I said, "We should run out, run back in that direction." And he too would try it. "SURE," he said, "that's a smart thing to do." He'd had (chuckles) a rivet or two and so did Jimmie Bannister. So we went out there, anyway. We struck this nice pod of fish and Father said, " Let's throw out the grapnel," he said, "and anchor, 'cause we're onto a body of fish." "Okay."

So we did that anyway and fine. After a little, I had just tied the dory on the stern and I went aboard the dory with two lines, one over each side. And when one line was going back to bottom, I was pulling the other one. CODFISH! OH, MAN, nice fishing. My father hollered, "Look," he said," you better heave your line in," he said, "and pull alongside. Come aboard," he said. Well, I didn't pay any attention to that, just threw her out. (laughs) Next thing, boy, when he said-. When the holler come the next time, I knew there was something up. (laughs)

So, my God, I only just about got back aboard, boy, and you could see it coming. Yeah. YOU COULD SEE IT FOR ABOUT A MILE AND A HALF. And it looked to have a face on it about that high and all surf, foam. JEES, MAN, WHEN THAT STRUCK! She wheeled around as she went to leeward and she was moving about just as fast as the engine'd (laughs) drive her except for they had the grapnel left to the bottom. And the cable was out like that, right ahead of her, on the water. We were in about thirty fathom of water where we were fishing. Now-. Boy!

Well, Jimmie Bannister—I don't think Jimmie had ever been out on, on the ocean, only maybe a couple of times and not very far off. My God, it's no wonder JIMMIE WAS REALLY SCARED. Well now, you couldn't blame him. We all were A LITTLE BIT MORE THAN CONCERNED. Now, the next thing we saw, all of these rum-runners were running before it. I guess they put a

barrel on the cable and a big keg and run the cable out, likely, with the keg on it. Got her turned around and they were running before it, bare poles.

Ranald: Are you saying they dumped the rum with the—?

Arthur: NO, NO. They just dumped the cable. (Ranald: Yeah, okay.) Left the cable there where they were swinging on. I guess they paid out more cable then put the, it would be a BIG KEG, oh, as a buoy. I asked father, I said, "What'll we do?" I said, "Will we try to make Glace Bay or [Port] Morien?" Morien, it'd be a shorter run from where we were. "Ah," he said, "I don't know but the only thing," he said, "that I do know, it hit like a squall, you know." And RAIN AND HAIL it had and it was flat and then the lop. It was HEAVY, you know. "The only thing, I do know," he said, "it might possibly have hit like a squall and it might ease up. Now," he said, "we'll just stay, leave the anchor out for a little," he said. And we were drifting going to leeward. But then the hail and the rain stopped. BOY, YOU TALK ABOUT A LOP COMING THEN.

Anyway, we hauled the cable, the anchor, in and we started. I remember, the boat had the wheel on the starboard side, had the active part of the forecastle. We had living room in her, you know, for'ard. And my father said, "Look," he said, "you just get down there. Hunker down there in front of the engine," he said, "and keep your hand on the throttle," he said, "When I give you a sign," he said, "SLOW HER DOWN." He said, "Don't slow her down too quick." He said, "If you go slowing her down too quick," he said, "You know there, you might slow her too much and just STOP HER, see." Well, we had a great big tarpaulin in the boat and he got John Henry for to double that tarpaulin over it and put it over—the engine was in, well, you called it an engine house, it was just a big box up there where the engine was in, and put the tarpaulin over that.

MY GOD, MAN, THE WATER WAS FLYING OVER US ALL THE TIME, hardly any staying aboard, it was blowing right past. And anyway when he'd slow her down, then she'd just barely bob. Just enough to keep her head to it. And then he'd give me the go-sign and-. (laughs) Funny, I don't know just why but those seas would come in threes. It's the way they had a pattern that they usually seemed to follow. When the third one was by, you'd have a little spell when you wouldn't have as heavy a sea and you could rev her up and—.

Ranald: When you say a "sea," you mean a great big wave, do you?

Arthur: Yeah, breaking waves too, yeah.

Well, we went out there in the morning, WE WERE AN HOUR AND A QUARTER. I remember when we went out. WE WERE FOUR HOURS AND A HALF COMING BACK. We come into Glace Bay. There was a couple of boats were lost. There was one rum-runner didn't run before it. His cargo was pretty nearly all out and he decided he was going to go into North Sydney. Didn't make it. FOUNDERED. Well, she wasn't the BIGGEST ONE. She was about 90 tons, 90-ton schooner. She foundered and she was pretty nearly—well, probably she was in Lingan Bay when she sunk. Yeah. AND ALL HANDS LOST.

Well that was the (chuckles) worst wind that I ever experienced while upon the water in a fishing boat, you know.

Ranald: Where did you start from that morning?

Arthur: Glace Bay.

Ranald: Glace Bay.

Arthur: Yeah. Yeah, we was just about the end OF SWORDFISHING, just about the end of it. And I guess it WAS the end of it, that year. After that gale, there wasn't a swordfish handier Glace Bay, I suppose, than a couple of thousand miles (laughs). (RT95-15, August 31, 1995)

Appendix 7

A Second Telling of Lloyd MacDonald's Narratives about Neil Campbell and the Devil

Lloyd: There was an old fella lived here, Neil Campbell from Grand Mira. He used to work over here for Hooper a lot. And he was an awful nervous-type man. So this fella came, a salesman came to the stores and Hoopers always used to put them up, you know, they'd keep the salesmen there. He had a big, black horse. He put it up in the barn and, and anyhow, Hooper told Neil to look after the horse. This fella could throw his voice, you know. Neil'd never heard tell of anything like that. So he was in, working around the barn and the horse. All of a sudden, the horse said, "Neil, Neil, hurry up and give me my oats." Neil looked around. He didn't know. He didn't believe what he heard. So by and by, the horse told him again, asked him when he was going to give him his oats. By God, Neil took out of the barn and he went down and he told Hooper. He said, "The God devil," he said, "is in that horse up there, asking for his oats. I'm not going near that." He wouldn't go in the barn at all.

So anyhow, a couple of weeks after that, Saturday night he was going home to Grand Mira and he was a great friend of my great-grandfather's and he stopped there to have a cup of tea before he went in. He tied the horse and-. Then, they all used to haul wood out there for the boilers. They were using cordwood, you know, for the boilers then for heating the water in the lobster factories. So all the other fellas had been out, nine or ten of them, horses out from Grand Mira with a load of cordwood for Hoopers. And Neil was working there and he was going home Saturday night and he had a bag of cornmeal on and some stuff he was taking home and, of course, he stopped to my grandfather's when he went there—my great-grandfather's it was, old Colie's—and he had a good chat with him and the horse was tied outside. So he started for home about nine o'clock in the night, nice fine night. So when he got into Goose Lake here, he was going down at Goose Lake and, by golly, he could hear a horse coming behind him. And he looked behind and here was this big white horse, pretty near up to his box of his sleigh, coming by and he gave his the whip and the faster his went, the faster the other one come. So he got scared so he slit the bag of cornmeal open and he pulled the bag over his head

and he drove her till he got home. And he just jumped out of the sleigh and he run into the house and he fell on the floor and he told his sons, he said the devil was chasing him.

So they went outside to see what—. Sure enough, here [was] this old grey horse in the yard, by the barn, by his home. And what had happened but MacMullens were going in from here and they had an old grey horse and he took the colic when they got in on the Goose Lake and they thought he was going to die. They took the harnesses off him and left, you know, went with another, somebody else was going in, took their sleigh in tow with the other, left their horse there dead on the ice, thought he was dead and the horse got better. Followed Neil along and scared the devil out of him. Oh, my gosh! (RT95-15, August 31, 1992)

Appendix 8

A Second Telling of Dan Alex MacLeod's Narrative of his Vision on the Lake

[Dan Alex had been talking to Jamie Moreira about his uncle peddling produce in Sydney.]

Jamie: Did you ever go with him on one of his trips?

Dan Alex: Yes. When I was ten years old, I went on the first trip with him.

Jamie: Could you describe the trip for me?

Dan Alex: When I was growing up, I used to see things, you know, double-sighted or something. And I was skating on the lake here one night alone—I was around ten years old or so—and all this hill was lit up with lights, long lights thrown up and low lights down. I took off for home and I told my grandfather. "Oh," he said, "that's only the forerunner of-, there'll be a town here sometime." So when we got up to Dutch Brook, I could see Sydney lights, you know. It was still dark. I was telling my uncle that's what I saw when I was skating. And then the mines started here and there was all kinds of lights here but it wasn't what I saw. They were saying, "That's what you saw." No, that's not what I saw. Didn't happen yet but it will. (From Jamie Moreira's Tape 96-051, August 8, 1996)

Appendix 9

A Second Telling of Dan Alex MacLeod's Narrative of Allan MacDonald's Forerunner

Dan Alex: Well, when I was growing up, I could see pretty near everything, so could my first cousin, Roy MacLeod. If somebody was coming here, looking for spoons or something to go to a wake—you know, all the wakes were in the houses then—you could see them on the road. THEY WOULDN'T BE THERE. That Ranald MacDonald's brother, Allan, oh, I imagine three weeks [before he died]—I was born over across the lake here—I was sitting on the steps on an evening like this and the road was coming up where the old house was at the second farm here and the barn was over between the road and the house, the big barn. So I seen Norman Alex MacLeod coming up with his leg over the—, in the little wagon and the horse. I had seen them. I thought he was coming visiting. So he wasn't coming, he wasn't coming. When he went behind-. When you see a thing like that, when you take your eye off it, you don't see it anymore. SO I WENT OVER TO THE BARN, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF HIM. So I figured it was a forerunner. I don't know how long after, maybe a month or three weeks or something, I saw him coming again. That time he came. Allen had died. And my mother used to go with Allen. He was coming out to tell her. Yeah. (RT92-21B, August 6, 1992)

Appendix 10

Some Forerunner Narratives from Maggie MacQueen

Ranald: Have you heard anything about strange noises or lights?

Maggie: Oooh, I can see anything. (laughs) And I can come to the door [to answer a knock when no one is there] and the next thing, you'll hear somebody [is] dead or something, you know.

Ranald: [Not realizing that she is talking about herself.] Do you know of that happening?

Maggie: OH, YES. Over home, there were two fellas (mashing?) here. My mother was in bed for over forty years. She couldn't stand and walk. Well, she never did stand and walk after that. She had rheumatic fever in the States and got over the rheumatic fever and her heart was bad. And she used to take epileptic fits and that. And my husband used to go walking over to see me. He couldn't be bothered [hitching] the mare and the wagon to come to see me.

Ranald: This is before you were married?

Maggie: Yes, before we were married. And he came [and] we had the dairy. We went and we kept the dairy locked and somebody pulled the stable,[1] they couldn't wait or lost the key or something. And he heard this noise! And my brother built the porch with two doors, a door at each end of it. And anyway, he [her husband] says, "I'm going to go in and see if I see anybody." You know, they were breaking in and taking things.[2] And so, when he came in, I'm lying under the porch door,[3] my brother says [to my husband], "Where were you?" "Out looking, I heard a noise," he said. And you know what we heard? We heard when my mother died, they took everything out of the window.

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1 Meaning unclear. Perhaps the person pulled the stable door open or forced an entry from the stable.

2 This statement does not support the idealized view that older people sometimes give of earlier times.

3 Presumably, by the door on a couch or day bed.

And I guess they brought the casket in the window. And they put her in the casket. When I got home from Glace Bay, her remains was in the casket.

Ranald: Why did they take the things out the window?

Maggie: Well, that's what they did. There was a window there and they opened the window.[4] And she said to us [when they told her about the noise soon after it was heard], "Oh, there might have been some noise," she said. She didn't see anything or hear anything at all. [She would have been bed-ridden in the house at the time.]

Oh, yes, you'll hear those things!

Ranald: Have you heard things like that other times?

Maggie: Well now, the dishes was here in the pantry and my cousin was over there, Charlie MacLeod, visiting. That's where my aunt was [pointing out the places where they sat]. The oldest of the fourteen in the family. And his wife wasn't very well. And anyway, his wife died. She had cancer. And then he wasn't very well. My sister bought that farm from my cousin and his brother and my husband was over doing carpentry work there and he said they went this day to look at the potatoes that they had over the fence. There was a big flood came in the river over there and, GOOD LAND, they [gave to?] the postmistress over here. Their grandmother was the postmistress here but she gave it to them—.

[End of RT92-15B, August 4, 1992. Pause while I insert new tape.]

Maggie: And anyway, I came home and I told Grandma here about it. He [cousin Charlie] was here a week or two before it then and he went with the boys down to see the pig and he went out where I was milking. I was after milking and that but he was dizzy, you know. So, anyway, he had his dinner, Grandma had a dinner ready and they were looking for him. They came up from down the shore, they came down looking for him. "Well," I said, "I'll go over where I dreamt that he was, only I don't want to find him drowned." I said, "He's over in the river over there." They were going to put barbed-wire across, down here, across there.

4 It was sometimes easiest to remove a window when taking a coffin or corpse out of an old house with narrow doors and stairways.

Ranald: Why were they going to do that?

Maggie: Well, so it would catch his remains, the river flowing down. My cousin was up from Sydney, Uncle Donald's son and his wife, and come in and he was bringing in water and things and he told her that his [the drowned man's] wife's name was Helen. She was Helen too, Helen Samson, she was. She noticed that he was kind of nervous when we were there. Well, anyway, I dreamt that Morrison's truck came and that it was at the hill there and that I was talking to his cousin from the Pier [i.e., Whitney Pier] and she said, "He's down there," she said, "in the river." Well anyway, they got looking and I forget now who found him in the river. You know he could have fell over the fence and the tide was so high, he got drowned.

My brother was telling me—they had a garage there—and he said that he went home with one of his sisters one night and they saw this white thing coming up across the field there. OH YES, YOU'LL SEE ALL THOSE THINGS ALL RIGHT! But you don't get a bit scared. You don't say a word and you just seen it then. You don't get a bit scared or anything.

We were coming home from Stirling after the mine closed, John Norman and I, and they used to blow the whistle when they went off shift and blow the whistle when they were going on shift. And when we were coming down to the bridge near Morrisons' there, near Charlie's there, MacLeods', "Listen," I said. "Hear the mine whistle's blowing. That mine is going to start pretty soon." Well, they're going around prospecting all over the place, you know. Were you ever working in that mine? (Ranald: No, no.) There was a fella, he was blasted, and he was a violin player and he went down and he must have stood on the heap or something and he got choked. Well, they didn't know if he would be Protestant or Catholic so they buried him in Grand Mira [R.C. village]. And his sister came along and he was a Protestant. So they left him buried there. WELL, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE ANYWAY, AFTER ALL. ISN'T THAT RIGHT?

Ranald: Yeah. So you were saying they heard the whistle?

Maggie: Yes, yes.

Ranald: That was before the mine was built, was it?

Maggie: OH, NO, NO. AFTER THE MINE CLOSED. And at the time when we were coming home—.

Ranald: Did it—oh, I'm sorry—did it open up again?

Maggie: OH, YES. IT OPENED.

Ranald: Okay. And you were starting to say?

Maggie: Yeah. Dan Alex MacLeod's mother died. She had heart trouble. And Donald and I was walking in dark night. We didn't have the flashlight or anything. We were coming here. At Willie Morrison's there, EVERYTHING'S BRIGHTENED RIGHT UP. I SAID, "THE MOON MUST BE OUT." Well, anyway, we came home—If you were out walking with me and you jogged my hand or anything, you wouldn't see anything but if you were walking close to me, you'd see[5]—And anyway, Catherine [inaudible, Gaelic nickname?] died, so we left to go to the wake. So Donald and I started walking over to Stirling to the wake and Murdoch Morrison came along with the truck just where we saw the light and, well, THAT'S WHAT WE SAW.[6] You know, it doesn't scare you a bit.

Ranald: Do you have names for that?

Maggie: Oh, the Second Sight or something, yeah. (RT92-15B & 16A, August 4, 1992)

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5 Dan Alex MacLeod: "...if [I] touch your clothes and I'm seeing something, you'll see it" (RT95-24B, August 18, 1992). Rieti in her study of fairy lore in Newfoundland (1991), says, "Sometimes strange sights can be made 'contagious' by touch: 'If you see something and someone else doesn't, you just touch the other person and he'll see it too,' explained a Colliers woman who communicated her vision of a fairy woman to her husband this way..." (155).

6 They saw the truck lights lighting up the night at the spot where they had seen light in the night previously.

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