

AN ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDY OF FISHER-MERCHANT  
RELATIONSHIPS IN BURIN, NEWFOUNDLAND

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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AN ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDY OF FISHER-MERCHANT  
RELATIONSHIPS IN BURIN, NEWFOUNDLAND

by

BRIAN G. WILLIAMS

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate  
Studies in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

1994

St. John's

Newfoundland



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to describe the multiplex fisher-merchant relationships as they were experienced in the Burin, Newfoundland, area during the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. My aim is to demonstrate, using Burin as a basis for examination, that contemporary local opinion and scholarly generalizations, while often fundamentally correct, have oversimplified and ignored the diversity of actual practices that occurred in the conduct of fisher-merchant relationships around Newfoundland's coasts. The information on which this thesis is based is derived primarily from informant recollections, and is supplemented by private, public, and archival information sources.

As a means of enabling the reader to envision the context in which this paper is set, the thesis first presents an overview of the history and geography of the Burin area. It is followed by descriptions from several writers of the general functioning of the credit system in Newfoundland during the study period. This background information is supplemented by informant descriptions of the inshore and banks fisheries, and the work routines that were required on shore.

Biographies of two important fish merchant firms, typical of the Burin area, are then presented, to illuminate the analysis of fisher-merchant relationships that follows in the ensuing chapters. This analysis concentrates on three local

and scholarly perspectives of the pre-Confederation period in Burin history that appear inaccurate or simply in need of qualification: that merchants and fishers were socially quite distant groups, with few social bonds; that cash and cash transactions were non-existent or rare in this era; and that the merchant class in Newfoundland was supposedly doing little more than exploiting the fishing class, with no hint of concern for the welfare of those who caught, landed, and processed the fish they traded in.

A discussion of three different economic periods during the twentieth century closes the analytical section of this paper, and focuses on the similarities and disparities in the effects of these periods on the merchant and fisher classes.

This thesis is dedicated to my father,  
who shared in its production through  
his guidance and knowledge

## PREFACE

This thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Burin, Newfoundland, and nearby areas from May 1992 until January 1994. This research was financially supported in part by the School of Graduate Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. This thesis was completed under the supervision of Dr. Raoul Andersen.

My choice of topic is based upon my own experiences growing up in the Burin area. I discovered while I was young that Burin's history is long and quite interesting, and recently, when the local Senior Citizen's Club expressed their desire that I research and develop a new, updated History of Burin, a book which they had published in 1977, I decided to act on my interests and pursue the related topic of fisher-merchant relationships in the Burin area. While this study does not attempt to cover all of Burin's history and importance, it is a contribution to a new understanding of these often inadequately understood relationships.

It is my hope that what follows is an accurate account of information that I have obtained from my informants and literature (published, unpublished, and archival sources) and that my attempt to interpret this information is sound. The ultimate responsibility for any errors or misinterpretations in this study is mine.

I give great thanks and appreciation to everyone who has helped me with this task, individuals who gave so freely of their time and energy. They invited an interviewer, sometimes unfamiliar to them, into their homes, to discuss very important aspects of their lives. I would especially like to thank Dr. Andersen, for his patience and knowledge in reading my many earlier drafts. Thanks also to the staff of the Burin Peninsula Integrated School Board Office, especially Carol Ann Lake and Norma Evans for preparing my transparencies, and Robert Arklie Sr for help in obtaining maps; to Patrick Tyler at the Division of Continuing Studies at Memorial for help in obtaining maps; to Marilyn Furlong at the Anthropology office at Memorial for her aid in many matters; to Evelyn Grondin at Burin Heritage House and Ena M. Edwards of St. Lawrence, for having clarified obscure matters; and to Lois Rideout for her help in so many ways. My thanks also go to all those people who graciously loaned me their photographs, even taking them down off the wall and out of their frames.

Most importantly though, thanks to my parents, Ernest and Elizabeth Williams, and my fiancée, Kim Rideout. Without their assistance, this project would have been very difficult to accomplish at all. Their enduring help throughout the development of this thesis cannot be appreciated enough.



## Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Preface.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Photographs.....	ix
List of Kinship Charts.....	x
<u>Chapter I</u> .....	<u>1</u>
Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	6
<u>Chapter II</u> .....	<u>13</u>
A Brief Historical and Geographical Overview of the Burin Area.....	13
The Credit System.....	22
The Inshore Fishery.....	24
"You Didn't Know Nothing But Hard Work": The Banks Fishery.....	27
"Hardest Kind of Work!": Curing and Drying the Fish On Shore.....	37
<u>Chapter III</u> .....	<u>46</u>
Mini-History I: The Merchant Firm of <u>John     and William Paul</u> .....	47
Mini-History II: The Merchant Firm of <u>LeFeuvre Brothers</u> .....	64
<u>Chapter IV</u> Mini-History Analysis: Were Merchant and Fishing Classes Distinct?.....	<u>94</u>
Formal Education.....	98

## Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Marriage Patterns.....	108
Occupational Possibilities.....	115
Other Considerations.....	121
Class Analysis Conclusions.....	124
 <u>Chapter V</u>	
Merchants and Fishers: A Discussion of Arguments.....	126
The Local Economy and Cash: Another Method of Transaction.....	126
Keeping People at the Bottom?: Exceptions to Sider's Argument.....	146
 <u>Chapter VI</u>	
Bad Times, Good Times, and Changing Times.....	155
The Joint Effects of the 1929 Tidal Wave and the Depression.....	155
The Effects of World War II and the Fishery Products Plant.....	161
End of One Era, Beginning of Another: The Effects of Confederation.....	167
 <u>Chapter VII</u>	
Summary and Conclusions.....	172
Appendix.....	179
List of a Typical Interview's General Questions.....	184
Glossary of Terms.....	187
A Note on the Authorship of the <u>History of Burin</u> (1977).....	190
Sources Cited.....	191

### Figures

- Figure I: Map of the Burin Peninsula
- Figure II: Map indicating general land holdings and premises of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill during the period 1840s-1906
- Figure III: Map indicating general land holdings and premises of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove during the period 1898-1930s
- Figure IV: Map indicating the location of prominent fish merchants in Burin in study time frame
- Figure V: Map indicating general land holdings and premises of Hollett's and G.A. Bartlett Ltd in Burin North during the period 1910s-1950s

### Photographs

- Photograph I: Photograph and transparency indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill, 1945
- Photograph II: Photograph and transparency indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill, ca. 1900-1920
- Photograph III: Photograph and transparency indicating the general land holdings and premises of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove, 1929
- Photograph IV: Photograph and transparency indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove, ca. 1906-1907
- Photograph V: Photograph and transparency indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of W. and T. Hollett Ltd in Burin North, ca. 1905-1919

### Photographs

- Photograph VI: Photograph and transparency indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of W.H. Hollett and Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd, known as "Hollett's back dock", ca. 1946
- Photograph VII: Photograph and transparency indicating Bulls Cove, Paul's Hill, and Burin North, 1982
- Photograph VIII: Photograph indicating the site of the former business of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill as it looks today
- Photograph IX: Photograph indicating the site of the former business of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill as it looks today
- Photograph X: Photograph indicating the site of the former business of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove as it looks today

### Kinship Charts

- Kinship Chart I: Chart of the Paul family of Paul's Hill, during their operation of a fish merchant business, 1840s-1906
- Kinship Chart II: Chart of the LeFeuvre family of Bulls Cove, during their operation of a fish merchant business, 1898-1930s
- Kinship Chart III: Chart of the Hollett family of Burin North, during their operation of a fish merchant business, ca. 1914-1961

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Since the rediscovery of Newfoundland by Europeans in the late fifteenth century, Newfoundland waters have been regarded as some of the finest fishing grounds in the world. The Grand Banks off the southeast coast are perhaps the most important of these. As well, the inshore waters have been fished by Europeans and, later, resident Newfoundlanders alike. Closest to the Grand Banks, fishing villages and communities on the Burin Peninsula prospered and grew from especially the eighteenth century, and developed into the modern towns and communities that are present today.

This thesis attempts to describe fisher-merchant relationships, one of the central organizing components of Newfoundland's pre-Confederation (pre-1949) fishery, as it developed in the town of Burin and is recalled by contemporary residents of the area. The central findings from this effort qualify, or present exceptions to, several linked perceptions widely accepted and suggested in literature and local opinion regarding these relationships in Newfoundland. I believe that these perceptions tend to be oversimplified and overgeneralized portrayals of fisher-merchant relationships in Newfoundland, and often neglect regional variations.

The first conception is a general attitude that is most evident in local opinion. It is that fish merchants constituted a class of people fundamentally different from fishers,

with few or no similarities or social bonds between them.

In Burin, the attitude held by many persons who have not personally been associated with the credit system of the pre-Confederation era seems to be that merchant families were far removed from the social life of the rest of the community. For example, it is commonly held that merchant families were educated separately from fisher families - an expression recently heard, and one that seems typical of current attitude, was that "fishermen had no education, but merchants all got the best". As well, many people today seem to believe that members of each class married only within their class (class endogamy). An opinion I elicited on this topic from a group of young people during my fieldwork was that "everybody stuck together in those times, you had to watch out for yourself". It seems to be also widely believed that many occupations were exclusive to the fishing class or the merchant class, but none were shared by both. We shall discover in the following chapters that although these "two classes" were indeed disparate in a number of ways, they also shared many similar traits which served to lessen their social distance from each other. We shall also determine that a two-class system only crudely describes Burin in this era.

A second perspective to be considered concerns methods of exchange for goods and payment for labour in the economy and fishery of Newfoundland. This perspective holds that cash and cash transactions were either non-existent or rare in pre-

Confederation Newfoundland, and that wage work was highly unusual. In a statement made in 1933, Lord Amulree suggests that these did not occur in the Newfoundland fishery up to that time. "Money did not change hands... there were families in Newfoundland who had never seen money in their lives" (Lord Amulree, 1933, as quoted by George Perlin, 1974: 117). Another writer, G.M. Story, has written that "Not until the Second World War... did... cash incomes arrive in Newfoundland" (Story, 1974: 19). It is my aim to show that while the credit/truck system was still the dominant method of exchange during the pre-Confederation era in the Burin area, by the 1910s (and especially by the 1920s) cash and cash transactions were steadily becoming a more integral and important part of the local economy, more so than such writers acknowledge was occurring for the remainder of Newfoundland. The stereotypic notion seems to be that fishers were rewarded for their work simply through an extension of credit and supplies from their supplying fish merchant.

A third argument revolves around another public view, a notion that the merchant class in pre-Confederation Newfoundland exploited fishers to the extent of keeping them poor and powerless at every opportunity, and that they displayed little or no concern for members of the fishing class. This view is also expressed in the scholarly literature, most notably Sider (1986). He states that through the credit system, the merchants sought:

"how to keep the people at the bottom continually within the existing system... (it) permitted the merchant to capture much of the profits in good years and push off onto the fisher families much of the losses of bad years." (Sider, 1986: 86)

On the whole, this view is not incorrect, as we shall discover. However, my intention is not to disprove this view, but rather to present a number of exceptions that occurred within the Burin context, which qualify and better define it. As Antler (1981: 12) noted, "This thesis does not seek to portray heroes or villains". My argument is simply that many of the summary portrayals of fisher-merchant relationships that are found in the scholarly literature and public understanding do not fit well with my understanding of the Burin area.

My views are given credence by the work of Michael Gaffney, who studied Ramea, on the south coast, during the same study period:

"That the variety of Newfoundland culture as found along the South Coast is somehow different in comparison to that of other areas of the province, has been hinted at but not fully described or explained by ethnographers in the course of their development of other themes". (Gaffney, 1977: 2)

The following discussion concentrates on the period from the 1890s to the 1950s. The small amount of archival and private material that is available regarding the pre-1890s period enables only selective attention to this period.



Hence, this thesis is not concerned with an analysis of how fisher-merchant relationships developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but rather what this relationship was like, how it was maintained well into the mid-twentieth century, and how it disappeared after Confederation with Canada in 1949. Likewise, we are less concerned with the credit system than with the fisher-merchant relationships it sustained. The credit system has been described by other writers, and it is given brief reiteration in Chapter II. As well, a brief geographical and historical overview is presented so that the reader will have a clearer picture of the environmental and social realities that have shaped the area studied in this thesis. For the same purpose, a description of the inshore and offshore fisheries, and work onshore, follows.

Chapter III presents the histories of two prominent Burin area merchant businesses: the firms of John and William Paul, who operated on Paul's Hill from the 1840s to 1906, and LeFeuvre Brothers of Bulls Cove who operated from 1898 to the mid-1930s. These are presented to help depict, or put flesh and blood on, the three perspectives I have outlined in this chapter. These two mini-histories are discussed with respect to fishers and other merchant firms in Chapter IV.

In Chapter V, the fisher-merchant relationships are examined with respect to scholarly interpretations from such writers as Gerald Sider and G.M. Story, in which I temper

their assertions with information on the Burin area. Chapter VI considers three periods of instability, prosperity, and change, and their effects on the fisher and merchant classes and their relationships: the Tidal Wave of 1929 and the Great Depression; World War II; and Confederation with Canada. Lastly, Chapter VII presents a summary and conclusion.

### Methodology

Information for this study was derived chiefly from interviews. A total of twenty-five persons were interviewed (see Sources Cited section), covering a wide range of ages (sixty-one to ninety-three) and social backgrounds, including former and current fishers, former merchants, retired and current workers in other occupations, and male (nineteen) and female (six; one of whom was one of my primary informants). Many were interviewed on several occasions. Informant sources are noted in the text explicitly or in bracketed names, e.g., (Len Brushett). Those interviewed had lived in the town of Burin and surrounding areas during the study period. The majority had been involved in the pre-Confederation credit system, in either the role of merchant/merchant's family or that of fisher/fisher family. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the author. While relevant archival material was scarce, some private material, including letters and merchant's ledgers, was made available from a number of my informants. With the informant interviews, the

primary emphasis was on either direct individual experiences, or stories and information relayed to them by close kin (i.e. father, mother, uncle).

Native anthropology presents a different set of circumstances for the ethnographer than does outsider anthropology. Stella Mascarenhas-Keyes (1987) believes that native anthropologists must consider different values and attitudes than do non-native anthropologists (Outsiders). Like myself, Mascarenhas-Keyes studied her own culture:

"The Outsider is usually incorporated into native society by acquiring a temporary fictive kinship position... However,... I was already a permanent component of a web of kinship and associational relationships... (T)he dialogue with natives does not terminate with fieldwork for the native anthropologist, as it does for most Outsiders". (Mascarenhas-Keyes, 1987: 183-4, 193)

Marilyn Strathern (1987), another ethnographer studying her own culture, writes that:

"(A)nthropologists on familiar terrain will achieve a greater understanding than elsewhere, because they do not have to surmount linguistic and cultural barriers... (T)he amount of information to be gained by an insider augments what people know about themselves, or what can be learned about the total society in aggregate". (Strathern, 1987: 17)

Both these statements were quite true in my case. Like Mascarenhas-Keyes and Strathern, I felt that conducting fieldwork in my own culture offered a number of advantages over fieldwork elsewhere. Most importantly, my kinship relations aided

me in the contact of informants: they allowed me to quickly build a large and reliable informant network. Though neither my parents nor I were ever fishers, all of my grandparents were members of fishing families. As well, my family has known several members of prominent merchant families as friends for many years. Since I was well-known to these people, I expected to have few difficulties in setting up an informant network. However, I did not expect my informant network to become as large as it eventually did, with more than two dozen individuals. As I spoke with my first few informants, whom I had selected because I had known them to be practically local "history books", word was often relayed to others who they believed would have relevant information for me. In almost all cases this was indeed correct. In short, being native to the area, and having close relationships to both fisher- and merchant-classes, were major factors in "breaking the ice", as I often needed little or no introduction to my informants.

However, native ethnographers may encounter disadvantages that may not surface for other ethnographers. There is always the possibility that a person studying his own home region may be biased, reflecting his own concerns and ideas rather than those of his informants. This problem has been in focus since the beginning, and I have strived to present both sides of the fisher-merchant relationships as given to me by my informants, and by using direct quotes from the interviews to illuminate

my arguments. Likewise, while permitting my informants to give their recollections and views, it was important to listen critically to them, without considering their recollections and views as gospel.

Before I went into the field, I anticipated several other problems, as would be encountered in many field situations. Initially, I was unsure about how to conduct the interviews, but I decided that tape-recording them would be better for both myself and my informants. A tape-recorder allowed my undivided attention to our discussions, which were often quite lengthy. Informants were told at the beginning of each interview that they could decline to have our conversation recorded; no person declined. I also told them that they had no obligation to answer any question(s) with which they were uncomfortable. They were free to give or withhold information as they chose.

I also expected that people I would interview would find my questions intrusive, and might decline to speak to me altogether. I realized that some people I had selected to interview might simply be uncomfortable with such an idea. Instead, only one person declined to be interviewed, refusing to participate after he had initially agreed. I also expected that some of my questions would touch on sensitive topics for the informant, such as those inquiring into matters concerning his/her personal dealings with the fish merchant (especially debts/credits), but informants answered these queries without

seeming discomfort or manipulation. If I suspected that they were altering information, I would not know until other informants refuted it. In each ensuing interview, I went over the information given I suspected was possibly incorrect, with the current informant, in such a manner that did not disclose its specific source. By my saying, "I heard that this happened..." for example, my current informant was able to offer an opinion, or build a conversation, around this dubious information. This rarely happened concerning a topic of some importance, but more often when the information was minor, such as an incorrect date, time, or place.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, I had also anticipated that my many conversations with locals who had been fishers or members of fishing families might make arranging interviews with those who had been merchants or members of merchant families difficult, and vice versa. However, this fear was unfounded. Having been exposed, since I was young, to public stereotypes (Chapter IV) about the relations between fishers and merchants, I expected considerable social distance between the groups. Instead, many members of both groups not only were friends (on several occasions, when I arrived to conduct an interview, one was visiting the other), but many married couples had come from both fishing and merchant families. I also discovered, as we shall see, that what I expected to be "two groups" (merchants; fishers) were actually less distinct; public attitude, again, coloured my

expectations. So, while I entered the field with some preconceived notions, they were whittled away with each conversation, as I began to see the fisher-merchant relationships through the eyes of those who had experienced them, and not my own. However, there is the possibility that nostalgia has coloured these oral histories, over the course of the fifty to eighty years that my informants personally recall, and it may have altered the events from how they actually occurred. I cannot know this for sure.

Interviews were conducted informally, more in a relaxed, conversation-type method than a strict question-answer session. I prepared a number of open-ended questions for each interview, using these as a basis for conversation (see Appendix). These questions were intended to be very general, so that they would lead the informant to discuss his or her own views and experiences. I set no pre-determined number of topics to be discussed, and I simply let the conversation flow more or less freely. By loosely guiding the flow of topics, I felt better able to elicit more personal and detailed responses. This then led to other questions and topics, which the informant often brought up himself or herself. For example, one question posed at the beginning of each interview was "How did you start in the fishery?" A question as open-ended as this led to a variety of responses.

Most informants answered with a long, detailed, and very interesting discussion of how they helped their parents at

first while young, on land and at sea, and eventually started on their own. Others answered with a discussion, not of themselves, but of their parents, or of the community in general. As my informants remembered, they often "became caught up" in what they were recollecting, and one even said that he felt as if he were experiencing it all again, while he was remembering. Each informant, whether male or female, fisher or merchant, provided their story in their own personal manner. The point is that each discussion was often very different from the others, even though the topic was the same. A more rigid schedule of specific questions concerning a topic might restrict where the interview led, and therefore would have resulted in less detailed and less personal information.

Unlike the majority of similar studies, the names used herein are the real names of all the persons interviewed. This was done with their prior permission, and was often at their request. Oral consent, instead of written consent, had been given by all informants for the use of their information.

The next chapter provides a brief geographical and historical overview of the Burin area, and a general outline of the credit system is presented as it was practised throughout Newfoundland, according to several prominent writers. Later in the discussion, this description is further qualified and better defined with regards to its operation in the Burin context. An informant description of the inshore and offshore fisheries, and the ensuing work onshore, then follows.



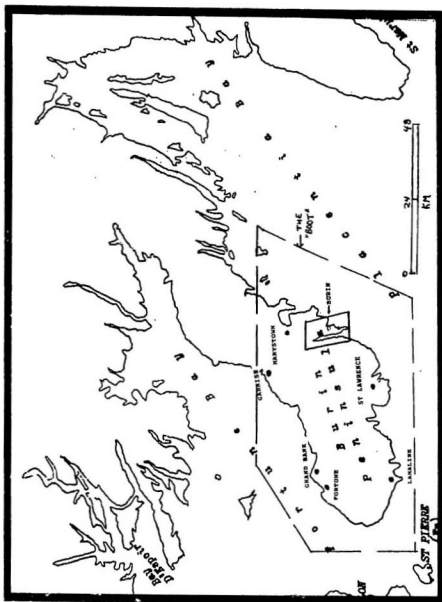
## Chapter II

This chapter provides a platform from which the main description and analysis of the thesis develops, and begins with a brief discussion of the history and geography of the Burin area. This first section is presented in order to provide the reader with an historical and geographical background of the area, so that the reader may better form a picture of the environment in which the discussions take place. Then an overview of the credit system as it was conducted in Newfoundland during the study period is introduced, as a prelude to the analysis of this economic system's operation in the Burin context.

The history and operation of the two most important types of fisheries for the Burin area is then outlined, along with the work that was required onshore with the landed catch. This description is presented to further provide a background for the discussions of the fisher-merchant relationships that follow in ensuing chapters.

### A Brief Historical and Geographical Overview of the Burin Area

The Burin Peninsula extends 160 kilometres south-westerly from the south coast of Newfoundland, out into the cold North Atlantic Ocean. The lower half of the Peninsula is referred to locally as "the boot" (see next page), and contains some forty communities, all of which have depended to varying degrees upon the cod fishery for the past three centuries. The



**Figure I** - Map of the Burin Peninsula. Study area is indicated by the solid line. Map courtesy of Robert Arklie Sr, Burin Peninsula Integrated School Board Office, Burin. No date.

area is in close proximity to some of the world's richest fishing grounds; the Grand Banks lie south-easterly off "the boot", and the St. Pierre Bank lies south-westerly. As well, the harbours on much of the south coast of Newfoundland are virtually ice-free year round, meaning that vessels are not restricted to fishing only during the warm months.

The town of Burin is located in a mountainous area on the east side of the Peninsula, surrounded closely by many other towns in a dense pattern, unlike the other communities on "the boot", which tend to be much farther apart. Burin is composed of many small settlements, many of which date back to the early eighteenth century. Before 1950, when one used the term "Burin", one was referring only to Burin North. In that year, however, Burin North, Burin Bay, and Ship Cove incorporated under the name "Town of Burin", with a population of about 800. In the 1960s and 1970s, it expanded to include Collins Cove, Kirby's Cove, Path End, Bulls Cove, Black Duck Cove, Long Cove, Little Salmonier, Burin Bay Arm, and Salt Pond (History of Burin, 1977: 252-3). Today, the town of Burin boasts a population of nearly 4000, which is steadily increasing. Although the cod stocks in the waters traditionally fished by Burin fishers have been declining in the past few years, and a moratorium has been temporarily placed on fishing in some areas off Newfoundland, the Burin-Marystown area is experiencing growth in the service sector. As well, renewed interest by government and business in oil exploration

has proved beneficial to the area, with the Cow Head oil rig servicing facility and Marystown shipyard, both located nearby in Marystown, expected to operate on an extended basis.

Historically, the European presence in the area began soon after the discovery of Newfoundland. European fishers, mainly the French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English, were visiting the Burin area seasonally as early as the sixteenth century. There is no evidence they took up residence here at the time; rather, they returned home each fall, having cured their fish during the summer in the many coves and harbours (Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, Volume 1, 1967: 293). As well,

"... a French presence (was reported) on the Peninsula, which they called the Coast of Chapeau Rouge, in 1640. In that year there were french fishing stations at Oderin, Burin, St. Lawrence, Fortune, Grand Bank, and other Peninsula areas... It is evident that the Biscayan (Basques) fishermen visited such areas as Martiris (Mortier), Buria Chumea (Little Burin), (and) Buria Audia (Great Burin)... over the decades." (Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, Volume 1, 1967: 293)

The English and French navies waged conflicts around Burin for many years, as early as 1675 (Decks Awash, 1990, no. 6: 3). Local legend has it that Burin was captured and recaptured by the French and by the English over and over again, while fighting for the sole right to exploit the lucrative fishing grounds. Finally in England's permanent possession after 1713, the area was frequently raided by

French and American privateers during the American Revolution. They entered the harbours and destroyed a great deal of valuable property (History of Burin, 1977: 66). Raids continued for years afterwards, so much so that "the harbour was fortified with cannons and rock walls with soldiers stationed there 1800-05... (W)arships were there later than 1820" (Decks Awash, 1990, no. 6: 4). The French occupation is evidenced by the proliferation of French place names on the Peninsula. Many of these have been given English pronunciations or spellings, such as Jean de Baie (pronounced 'John de Bay'), Lamaline (originally 'La Maligne'), and Mortier (pronounced 'Morteer'). A high hill in Ship Cove was used as a base by Captain James Cook in the late eighteenth century to oversee maneuvers against the French (History of Burin, 1977: 68). Atop this hill one can see the entire coastline of the area and much of the Atlantic Ocean, and it bears the name of Cook's Lookout.

In his study of Brigus, Conception Bay, Robert Munro Lewis describes the Labrador fishery as it operated over the last two centuries. Although Brigus concentrated on the Labrador fishery, it has some similarities with the Burin fishery during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

"There were two types of merchants with whom the planters and fishing servants dealt with. These were outport merchants (originally mostly firms from the West Country of England) or those merchants operating at St. John's. Most firms based in the outports... operated by supplying planters directly and, in the

case of the West Country firms, were often run by agents appointed by the English owners (Ryan, 1971: 81-83). The West Country firms were steadily being replaced by Newfoundland firms after 1815. These merchants were essentially buyers of fish through supplying fishers and attempting to make sure that all of the catch would be delivered to them by manipulating prices for fish and/or supplies." (Lewis, 1988: 77-8)

In Burin, the earliest merchants on record were indeed agents from the West Country merchants. The Poole firm, Spurrier and Company, was the largest, and probably also the first, to set up business in Burin. The earliest record of permanent English settlement in the area was 1718, when they established a ship building firm in Ship Cove, from whence it takes its name. It was here that Spurrier and Company located after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) forced the French to leave their previously held areas (Beamish, 1976: 14). This was an ideal site, since Ship Cove is a deep, well-sheltered harbour with steep mountainous sides. Not only was it good for weathering storms, but it was perhaps more importantly an area difficult to attack.

The firm grew quickly, but decades later met its end when the inexperienced Christopher Spurrier gained control in 1809. In concert with this, the Newfoundland fishery experienced a depression in 1815-17 (Beamish, 1976: 13), and Spurrier and Company headed into a decade long decline. In 1829 came ominous reports of a bad fishing season, followed by the news in July 1830 that they had collapsed with over 26,000 pounds

of debts (Beamish, 1976: 22).

During the eighteenth century, Burin had surpassed Placentia as the largest economic centre in Placentia Bay (Decks Awash, 1990, no. 6: 4). In the early nineteenth century, progress quickened even further:

"In 1832, it became the capital of an electoral district which was created at the foot of the promontory between Placentia and Fortune Bays, and in 1841 its shipping was four times as much as that of Placentia. In 1832, Burin's population of 500 was represented in the House of Assembly..." (History of Burin, 1977: 13)

Like many other Newfoundland communities, Burin (henceforth, "Burin" will be used to designate the aggregate of these areas: Burin North, Ship Cove, Bulls Cove, Kirby's Cove, Burin Bay, Collins Cove, and Path End) and the surrounding towns largely built their economic and social life on a single resource, the fishery. Len Brushett (age 83), a former fisher, notes that it was primarily a cod fishery, although small quantities of other species, such as flounder and mackerel, were taken. Other activities, such as gardening and raising animals, were important means of subsistence and obtaining extra income. It is local opinion that the Burin area fared better than many other areas throughout the nineteenth century, and the town of Burin in particular:

"Burin... was fortunate in being able to develop a large, lucrative bank fishery as well as a supply centre and port from which salt cod produced by our fishermen could be

moved to foreign markets... This, augmented with the bait trade with St. Pierre, prevented Burin from experiencing the severe depression so common in the early years." (History of Burin, 1977: 12)

By the mid-nineteenth century, a number of merchant firms operated in Burin. Perhaps the most prominent was the firm of Richard Falle and Company, established in 1830 on Point George, across the harbour from Bulls Cove. This location soon became known instead as "the Jersey Room" \* (asterisks indicate that a definition is given for the word in the Glossary of Terms in the Appendix), since brothers Eli and Richard Falle were from the Jersey Islands in England. They operated an extensive mercantile business, which weathered their deaths in 1840, as both were lost at sea enroute to Jersey, where they had been going to spend the winter. Richard's nephew, Joshua Falle, took control of the firm, and managed it until he returned to England in 1854, passing the position to his cousin, Francis Berteau. Berteau continued until 1879, when he was appointed Magistrate for Twillingate (History of Burin, 1977: 52).

Control remained in the hands of a Jersey native, however. William Payne, the firm's former bookkeeper, ran the business until 1893, when he too left to pursue a political career, having been elected as the Burin district's representative to the Newfoundland House of Assembly (History of Burin, 1977: 52). In 1894, the infamous Bank Crash occurred in St. John's (Keough, 1976: 41; see also O'Brien, 1982 for examples



of how other Newfoundland merchant firms were affected; and Sider, 1986: 142), and for a few years afterwards, the premises went through a number of owners. Gordon LeFeuvre (age 89), a member of a former merchant family, recalls his father having told him that after a short period of time, probably during 1895, the idle premises were sold to a Mr. Robinson. He operated possibly the first artificial fish drying plant\* in Newfoundland under a company name long forgotten (Andersen, 1988, placed the date of the first artificial fish dryer on the Burin Peninsula as 1947, in Fortune). Robinson also opened a general store, and unlike many other fish merchant firms of this period (see Hiller, 1990: 87), fish was both purchased for cash and exchanged for goods on credit (History of Burin, 1977: 53). This venture soon failed, and Gordon LeFeuvre believes that probably by 1896 the premises were left vacant again.

Charles LeFeuvre (age 82), another member of the LeFeuvre merchant family, says that a St. John's firm, A.M. Harvey and Company Limited, later bought the premises, intending to buy fish locally for export, but that like Robinson's, this attempt also failed quickly. In 1897, the stock (i.e. dry-goods and foodstuff) from the firm's general store was purchased by Frank LeFeuvre, who set up a business that was soon to become an important part of the Burin economy. It is discussed in detail below in Chapter III.

The twentieth century has been a period of vast change,

not only in the cod fishery but also in social and political terms. This period is part of the primary context of this study, and specific aspects of the fishery are discussed later in this chapter.

### The Credit System

Since the planter fishery of the eighteenth century evolved into the resident fishery of the nineteenth century, the Newfoundland fishing economy has often been characterized by a system of exchange based upon the "credit system". This system as it functioned throughout most of the period 1890s to early 1950s is examined in later chapters with respect to its role in the Burin area. It will suffice here to outline its main features as understood by various writers (see also Antler, 1975: 39-40; and Macdonald, 1990: 114-15).

The historian James Hiller has given us a useful, candid definition:

"The credit system meant that a fisherman... took up supplies in the spring from a... merchant, to whom he had an obligation to sell the fish (he) produced... The supplier set the price of supplies and the price of fish purchased. If the (fisherman) had a credit balance on the books at the end of the season, this would typically be taken up in goods, with perhaps some additional credit to tide him over the winter. If there was a debit, the merchant might, even so, advance winter supply if the fisherman was thought to be honest and reliable." (Hiller, 1990: 87)

Thomas Nemec writes that this system arose during the

eighteenth century, partly due to the seasonal cycle of the Newfoundland fishery:

"Planters came increasingly under merchant control. This phenomenon was exacerbated by the inability of many planters (fishers) to cover the year's expenses solely on the basis of the proceeds from the summer cod fishery. At the root of the problem was the almost complete lack of any gainful winter employment which might significantly augment subsistence production. Consequently, the proceeds from a man's summer voyage were often expended in providing just for his 'winter fitout' of food and necessary supplies... (Thus) most planters needed at least occasional financial assistance. As a result of the perennial credit requirements of many planters... a 'dealer' (credit) system arose." (Nemec, 1980: 42-3)

Lord Amulree, in 1933, provided some very strong opinions on the system, which he felt was detrimental to the economy of Newfoundland:

"The merchants... employed a number of fishermen to catch fish for them. These fishermen did not receive wages but were provided by the merchants, in return for their services during the fishing season, with sufficient foodstuffs and other necessities to maintain themselves and their families in tolerable comfort throughout the year... It was the practice of each merchant to support his own fishermen in bad times as well as good. Money did not change hands; indeed, it could have been said with truth, only a few years ago, that there were families in Newfoundland who had never seen money in their lives." (Lord Amulree, 1933, as quoted by George Perlin, 1974: 117)

Andersen (1988), studying banks fishers, writes that while fishers received goods on credit from the merchant all year long, it was generally only in the late fall or early

winter that a fisher knew how much money he had made, or owed, for the previous fishing season:

"Accounts were usually 'settled up' before Christmas in a private meeting between each individual fisherman and the merchant. Charges to the man's account, as to the supplies advanced to his family during his voyage, extra costs he incurred during the voyage (e.g., for boots and clothing), and winter supplies obtained upon leaving for home, were usually deducted from his voyage earnings." (Andersen, 1988: 88)

The credit system is further discussed in the following chapters, with special attention to its ramifications for the Burin area.

#### The Inshore Fishery

The inshore fishery began with the earliest settlers in Newfoundland. As the seasonal migratory fishery\* from Europe declined and people began to reside on the island permanently, they usually only had access to small boats, built locally and often by themselves. The fishery became more varied in its methods as it developed through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. According to my informants, on the Burin Peninsula it progressed to include small boats (see Andersen, 1990: 168-9) such as dories, trap boats, larger boats called "skiffs" (which could hold more fish and travel farther off shore), and still larger sail powered vessels known as jack-boats.

By the late 1800s and early 1900s, the inshore fishery

involved the use of dories, skiffs, jackboats, and along with trap boats, the cod trap\*. Len Brushett and Harold R. Mitchell (age 93), a former fisher, report that most jackboats carried one to three dories, with two men per dory. With the skipper (usually the boat's owner), the typical small jackboat carried three to seven or eight men. All relied primarily on the bultow (or line trawl) and handlines, and occasionally small seines for bait. These jackboats weighed from five to ten tons, while the largest jackboats in the area by the 1940s (carrying four dories) weighed as much as twenty tons. My informants also explain that since jackboats were generally smaller than banking schooners, they could not normally travel out to the more distant banks, where banking vessels remained for a month or more. Rather, jackboats usually fished closer to shore, at a distance of only several kilometres. With the advent of the internal combustion engine in the 1930s and 1940s, though, they could travel farther out to sea if they could not fill their holds near shore, note Harold and Len.

One fisher recalls his first experience inshore fishing in one of these vessels:

"I was some seasick! Sick as a dog! I told the skipper when I went aboard how sick I'd get. 'Don't make no difference', he said, 'if you can't do your work I'll land ya the first place we comes in and give ya the money to come home.' So we landed at this certain place, and I said 'What about it?' He said 'You're alright. You're giving me the fish as fast as I can split 'em. That's good enough!'" (Len Brushett)

The History of Burin (1977: 30) reports that when fish were scarce, however, and the weather was expected to be suitable, these jackboats were able to travel as far as Cape Pine (near Trepassey; about 110 kilometres by sea), across Placentia Bay. Upon reaching Cape Pine or Cape St. Mary's, they were able to stay for as long as four nights, since they had rough sleeping accommodations, and usually anchored in coves to spend the night for shelter from the elements. Harold R. Mitchell also mentions that, to the west, jackboats fished near Rose Blanche, even during the winter months, since this area of the south coast tended to be more ice-free than Placentia Bay.

Cod traps proved very effective at catching large amounts of fish in relatively little time, my informants say. Fifty to sixty quintals (112 lbs/50 kg per quintal) were not unusual for one haul\*. There would be two hauls a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and three hauls on really nice days, recalls Gordon LeFeuvre. Like the banks fishery, the season for the cod traps was early spring until late fall.

These traps, being expensive, were generally owned by a merchant, although a group of three or four fishers could share in the cost of buying one for themselves, remembered Len Brushett and Art Manning (age 80), a former vessel captain. This contrasts somewhat with what Faris (1972) found in Cat Harbour. There, cod traps were often owned by individual men as well as merchants, and it was possible that a man might

even own two or three traps. However, Gaffney (1977) writes that it was more common on the south coast for a number of men to share in the ownership of a trap, since it was simply too expensive for any one person. According to Lewis, a cod trap was "between three and four hundred dollars and stayed that way from its invention through the Second World War" (Lewis, 1988: 166).

As the traps were quite large, and very heavy when full, five to seven men in a skiff were required to set the traps for the season and then to haul them up to empty daily. Dories were often towed behind the skiffs as extra capacity for the catch. Once set, these traps were usually left in the water for the whole fishing season (History of Burin, 1977: 27-8).

The inshore fishery in Burin waters was complemented by the banks fishery, which offered those fishers involved the possibility of even higher catches, which could mean a higher income. This fishery is discussed below.

#### "You Didn't Know Nothing But Hard Work": The Banks Fishery

This statement by Len Brushett regarding the offshore fishery, commonly referred to as the "banks fishery", describes the strenuous nature of this important income source. This fishery was carried out from dory-equipped schooners on such fishing grounds as the St. Pierre Bank, Banquero Bank (known locally as Quero Bank), and the Grand

Banks, and has been pursued by fishers in Newfoundland waters since the late nineteenth century (see Andersen, 1990: 168; Andersen, 1980: 4; and Sinclair, 1987: 23). By 1900, the banks fishery was well established, and had become a prime income source for Burin Peninsula area fishers:

"Newfoundland's banking schooner fishery operated primarily from south coast ports, especially in Fortune Bay and on the Burin Peninsula, from about 1880 to 1955, when the last salt-fish banker made its final journey to the banks." (Andersen, 1988: 83)

The introduction of the schooner in the late nineteenth century made the advancement onto the banks viable (the smaller jackboats were not sufficiently seaworthy to weather the storms that abounded on the banks, especially the Grand Banks). Over the years, from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s and 1950s, the size and fishing capacity of schooners increased, and the internal combustion engine was increasingly relied upon by the 1930s. They carried from four to nine or ten dories at first, then later up to twelve dories (see Gaffney, 1977: 7). For example, the business of LeFeuvre Brothers of Bulls Cove (discussed in detail in Chapter III) owned several schooners, the largest of which was the ten dory "Mina Swim", lost in 1917, at ninety-three tons (Names File). Johnny Lundrigan (age 76), a former offshore fisher, relates that the firm of Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd. in the 1940s owned several schooners, the largest of which was the "Keith V. Colin". This schooner, with just two more dories than the



"Mina Swim", weighed 160 tons. The largest fishing schooner in Newfoundland, Lundrigan believes, was reported to have been the "Alberto Wareham", of Harbour Buffett, at 200 tons. Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd.'s smallest schooner was the "Joan Ella Mae", at sixty tons, while LeFeuvre Brothers' smallest schooner was a mere fourteen tons (Names File).

Andersen (1988) writes that banking schooners tended to be owned by merchant businesses, although on rare occasions a prosperous fishing skipper may have been able to obtain his own small vessel:

"Unlike practices reported for schooner firms in the same period at such Nova Scotian ports as Lunenburg, where shares in bankers were sold and held locally, ordinary fishermen in the Newfoundland ports appear to have had little opportunity to participate in schooner ownership." (Andersen, 1988: 85)

Andersen believes that the general inability of fishers to procure banking schooners was probably due in large part to the vessel's great cost, since most fishers could not accumulate enough capital to purchase such a vessel. The possible resistance to such ownership from the merchant firms that had the lion's share of the fleet also probably inhibited fisher ability to buy these vessels (see also Andersen, 1980: 7-8).

Samuel J. Hodder (age 83), and Walter Brown Hodder (age 78), both former fishers, recall the banks fishery as having been labour- rather than capital-intensive. They say that two men fished out of each of the vessel's dories, and with the

skipper, ketchie (sometimes called kedgie), and cook, a ten dory schooner would have twenty-three men on board (see Andersen, 1980: 9). During the 1930s, when engines began to be more commonly installed, an engineer became part of the crew as well. On the banks, each of these men had their "fair share of work to do", Walter remembers, and their duties involved long hours.

Sailing to the fishing grounds, the men had little work to do other than to actually sail the vessel, states Bert Kirby (age 93), a former banks fisher. He remembers that the trip to the Grand Banks under sail took two to four days (depending on the weather). Johnny Lundrigan says that generally two men together took a two hour rotating watch (shift) at the wheel, the course having been set by the skipper. Once there, the men began four or five weeks of intense labour (see also Andersen, 1980: 9) that normally ended only when the hold of the schooner was full, or the bait was used up, according to Bert Kirby and Sam Hodder (age 88), a former fisher.

"You'd be generally gone a month. Well, probably five weeks. That would be the longest. Then you'd come home again, take out the fish, have two or three days home to yourself, and then you'd be gone again for another five weeks or so." (Walter Brown Hodder)

"'Twas a wonderful experience on the bankers. They had the mainsail, and the foresail, and the jib and jumbo, and then they had a topmast on her, see, and they hoisted the topmast staysail from the deck and they could get off fourteen or fifteen miles an hour... On the best days, we could cover 200 miles in twenty-four hours, and she'd be banked down, lop-

sided, with the side of the cabin goin' in the water." (Len Brushett)

The ketchie was a deckhand, often a young boy no more than thirteen or fourteen years old, who was on board to help everyone. Sam J. Hodder states that the ketchie's main duty was to catch the painters\* that were thrown up to the deck from the dories and tie them onto the schooner so the dorymen would be able to fork their fish out of the dories onto the deck; hence perhaps his title of ketchie ("catch-ee"). Besides general maintenance of the deck (piling rope, for example), Hodder relates that the ketchie would also help the cook, such as bringing sacks of potatoes and cleaning pots and pans. When a doryman was sick, the ketchie often filled in for him if the skipper felt he was able to do it. An advantage of the position as ketchie, says Hodder, was that he was able to cut out the tongue's of the discarded cod's heads and put them in a barrel under salt, which was often quite full by the time the trip was over. On shore, these would be sold, a kind of local delicacy, and he would be able to keep all the profit.

However, as Richard Power (age 75), a former fisher, explains, the real work on bankers was not done by the cook, the ketchie, or the skipper, but by the dorymen. Once the schooner was anchored on the Grand Banks, in thirty-five to forty fathoms\* of water, each pair of men in the dories would be dropped off the side to row on a drawn course (chosen by

the captain), for their respective berths\* (see Andersen, 1988: 89-90). Sam J. Hodder says this was usually done before breakfast and before daylight.

"We used to have four tubs of gear in a dory, with eight lines\* in a tub. Thirty-two lines is nice bit of baitin' up in the morning, perhaps a cold morning. Each of you had to bait up your two tubs of gear. You couldn't do it with gloves on very well, but in the summertime you wouldn't need no gloves." (Len Brushett)

Having "set" their lines, the men returned to the schooner for breakfast, which the cook had ready and waiting, Len says. After breakfast, the men returned to their dories and rowed to their lines, and hauled them in, often full of fish.

"The lines would freeze up in March and April when they came out of the water with the fish on them. The lines would be as big around as that sometimes (he motions to show a diameter of ten to twelve centimetres) with ice on them. And great big ice candles down from your hands, and down from your eyebrows! Frosty days. But see, what used to keep us warm was haulin' the lines. You were workin' so hard, your blood had to keep hot. Your hands would be warm inside your nippers\*, they were warm because you were haulin' so hard. The one who would get cold was the one who wasn't haulin', but was in the back of the dory coilin' the rope as you hauled it in. He was just sat down. He had to watch himself... I had one young fellow with me one time, and I said one day 'Don't you let yourself freeze back there!' And he said 'No Sam, I'm not gonna.'... It was a real frosty day. And the next mornin' when he got up, he had great big blisters on his hands, where they froze. Had to come in and carry him to the hospital." (Sam J. Hodder)

Upon filling their dories, the men rowed back to the anchored schooner and pulled up alongside. Richard Power recounts that the ketchie caught the painters, and the men, using two-pronged pitch forks, pitched the fish onto the deck of the vessel. Then they rowed back to the lines, and hauled them in again, as the dory could only hold part of a good catch from the lines. The men had to make two or three trips to the schooner from each set. When all the fish were finally aboard the schooner from the morning's set, each dory crew made another set in the afternoon after having rebaited all the lines again onboard the vessel. Power says this meant that eight tubs of gear would have to be baited every day, with eight lines (and as many as eleven on some vessels) per tub. So the men again repeated the time consuming process, which ensured that they would not be finished before dark. Sam J. Hodder notes that brief breaks for dinner and supper were taken as the men arrived back with their dory loads throughout the day.

Having arisen long before dawn, Sam explains, the men were not able to retire to their bunks when the catch from the final set was aboard the boat. "Their day was only half over", Sam says, with all the fish still on deck. The fish had to be headed, gutted, split, and have the soundbone removed. All hands, including the skipper and ketchie (and often the cook), worked late into the night, often after midnight, cutting and splitting at their tables on the open

deck. As fish were finished, they were thrown into the hold, where several men were working constantly to layer the fish with salt. Ernest Williams (age 63) recalls his father, a fisher, saying that with no refrigeration, salt was the only means whereby the fish would remain unspoiled for the duration of the four or five weeks at sea.

When all this was done, my informants say, and the deck was washed down, the crew could return to their bunks for a few brief hours of sleep. If fish were really plentiful, however, the men were worked nonstop until the fishing location was exhausted or the vessel's hold was filled. Although this meant that the vessel was filled sooner and could return to port earlier, it also meant that the men were worked as long as two or three days without sleep:

"When I was banking you were out setting at two o'clock in the morning. No such thing as going to bed when you were getting a lot of fish. Lots of nights we never turned in a'tall. Work all day then all night then all day, like that... You'd just have the fish dressed\* by daylight, and then it was time to go again... They had to give you some sleep the second night anyway. An hour, that's all... Lots of times then you wouldn't even take off your oil clothes. Just haul the pants down over your knees. Perhaps you wouldn't make it to the bunk, just lie down on a bench if someone else wasn't there first."  
(Michael Doody)

When the hold was full, or the bait exhausted, the vessel sailed towards home port again. On the way, the work load on the men lessened. Sam J. Hodder reports that enroute they

untangled lines and mended gear; little else was required of them except their two hour watches. Upon docking at the wharf, they had to unload the schooner and then outfit her for the next trip, which took one or two days. That meant taking on bait, salt, and provisions, and replacing any deteriorated gear. Then the crew was able to return to their homes for a couple days. As soon as the weather allowed, Sam recounts, the word was put out locally that the boat was leaving the next day (for men in communities a couple of miles or more away, men were dispatched to inform them), and they sailed to the banks again. This continued until October, and even into November if the weather held out (see Andersen, 1988: 86).

"When I was young, you were what they called 'shipped'. That means you signed on (hired on) with a merchant firm and you were shipped for the summer. There was no leavin', you had to stay. Before we left at all we'd do the outfittin' of the vessel. You had to paint the boat... and you'd get everything together for the trip. Get the water aboard, get the dories, your trawl tubs, and everything else. And we used three tubs in a dory, eight lines each. And around the last of March, or first of April, you'd be ready to go. Go up to Fortune Bay, to Harbour Preton where you'd take on bait (herring) in a hurry. Then we'd go to the St. Pierre Bank. That was called the spring fishery. Then we'd go into St. Pierre and sell any halibut we caught and from that the skipper would give us a share of the money. Then we'd come home and unload the boat, and that would be all taken down to the merchant's premises. They had people there that would make\* the fish. Then we'd make another trip, get our bait, then return to the St. Pierre Bank. Then we'd come home again." (Walter Brown Hodder)

Ernest Williams recalls that in June the banking season was interrupted briefly by the "caplin scull". For two or three weeks, huge stocks of these tiny silvery fish migrate to the inshore waters, where they swim close to the surface and are easily caught in large amounts in nets. Many roll up onto the beaches, where the dead ones are scooped up in buckets. These make excellent fertilizer on local gardens. Those netted from the vessel's dories were used as bait for the upcoming trips to the Grand Banks, and were preserved with ice. The caplin were often so plentiful that a schooner's bait requirements could be filled in a single day, although in some years, Ernest says, the caplin catch would be poor and would take longer.

In the twentieth century, at least, for my informants, the dorymen of the merchant's vessels were paid solely by means of shares (for more detailed explanations, see Andersen, 1988: 87-88, 100; Andersen, 1980: 15; and Faris, 1972: 108-9). The catches from all dories were pooled together, out of which the crew members were paid an equal share of 50 per cent of the landed value of the catch, Walter Hodder and Len Brushett recall. The vessel owner/merchant received the other 50 per cent (see Andersen, 1980: 10 for a typical example). As we shall see in Chapter V, this pay was usually taken up in goods from the merchant's stock, but the crew occasionally received part cash payments.



"Hardest Kind of Work!": Curing and Drying the Fish On Shore

This sentiment of Jim Riggs (age 77), a former merchant employee, succinctly describes the shore labour involved in the fishery, and that, while not as dangerous as banks fishing, it was often as strenuous and demanding. After the catch was unloaded from the holds of the merchant's vessels, the fish had to be "made" (cured and dried) before it was sent to market. This curing and drying of the salted split cod was done through one or both of two methods, according to Hannah Cheeseman (age 82), who made fish herself for many summers. It could be made at the merchant's premises by his hired employees, or contracted out to individuals or families who would make it on their own flakes.

Cheeseman recalls that merchants bought a lot of cured and dried fish from people who worked on their own, in their own jackboats, skiffs, and dories. But Gordon LeFeuvre says most fish that the merchant dealt with was caught in his own vessels, and it was made on his premises. Making fish was "extremely hard work and very time-consuming", according to Jim Riggs. Once the fish was unloaded from the schooner, he recounts, it had to be washed, as it had been packed in salt for a number of weeks at sea. The ground floor of one of the merchant's buildings was often used exclusively for washing the fish, reports Marion Hollett (age 71), a member of a former merchant's family, and inside were large wooden vats filled with fresh water into which salt fish was placed. Here

it was cleaned and desalinated with a light scrub brush. Washing the salt off several thousand quintals of fish from each vessel required the labour of several men, who worked from dawn to nightfall, six days a week throughout the fishing season (March/April to November). Jim Riggs remembers that the water in the vats became too salty after a while (depending on how well salted the fish had been), and it was routinely dumped and refilled several times a day.

Jim recollects that as the fish was washed, he loaded it onto hand barrows\* (wheel barrows were not used, since they could not ascend or descend many of the planks and steep paths that often joined one flake\* or fish store to another), then brought it outdoors to be dried (see Sider, 1986: 44). The fish was carried out to the flakes where it was dumped into piles, from which other employees (men, women, and children) took armfuls and spread it out in the sun to dry. Jim and Hannah recall that every couple of hours all the fish had to be turned over, and the people on the flakes had to be careful that the fish did not dry too much on one side, since it would become flaky or sunburnt. This lowered the economic and food value of the fish drastically.

Jim relates that, at night, the fish was stacked into small piles known as "faggots". The next morning it was spread again. After a couple of days of good weather, the fish became dry enough so that it could be stacked in large piles known as "bulks", then covered with "duck" (canvas) or

taken into the fish store during the night. In the morning it was taken out and spread again. Using larger piles meant too that there was more room on the flakes for the more freshly washed fish that was constantly being brought out to be dried. He says that it was a continual process that began around day-break and ended only at dusk:

"When I worked to Bartlett's (in Burin North) we used to go to work at six o'clock in the morning, because it was fine for spreading the fish. See, you'd try to get it spread before too much sun came out and it got too hot to work... So after the fish was washed, we went in and loaded it on the hand barrow. One man on each end of it. Then we lugged that outdoors and down over the steps to the flake for the people to spread it. Bartlett's had two big flakes, one was by the fish store and the other was up on the side of Parson's Point. We used to have to lug it up there. That was some heavy. A draft, 224 pounds. That was two quintals. You'd lug it up all day long. Even in the hottest kind of weather. Your hands would be blistered from the hand barrow, and your feet would be blistered. Holdin' onto an old wooden hand barrow in the hot sun, pourin' right down on you, and those big old boots on your feet. My son, some hard work b'y! For ten cents an hour!... It was almost like slavery! But I didn't mind it a'tall. I was strong when I was a young fella like that. Work for ten to twelve, sometimes fifteen hours... You'd lug it out in the morning, then lug it up to the flakes, then lug it back up the steps to the store for the night. It was all lug, lug, lug." (Jim Riggs)

Work began before breakfast, Jim remembers. It was customary for the men to carry out the fish and spread it with the others who worked on the flake, most of them women, for an hour and a half or so. Then many of them congregated in a

small shack on the premises to eat the individual breakfasts they had brought from home. Spreading then continued until dinner time, which was usually from twelve to one o'clock. The work day ended around six o'clock most days, but often ran much later, especially when the vessels were being loaded. During this time, he says, it was not unusual to finish later than midnight. Once the fish was deemed fully dry, it was carried into the merchant's fish stores where it was stacked until enough was dry to make a shipment to market.

Jim explains that if the salt split cod was sent to individuals and families to be made, it was because the merchant firm could not handle all the fish their vessels landed. My informants all remember the merchants sending a number of men to various communities with skiff loads of salt split cod, and unloading them on the stages and flakes, where the people there would take over. Firms like Bartlett's in Burin North sent fish to communities like Shalloway, Step A Side, and Great Burin on Burin Island. Once cured and dried, they recall, the merchants sent their men out again to get the fish. The people who made the fish most often "took up" the amount that they earned, out of the merchant's stock, but occasionally a part of their earnings were received in cash (see Chapter V). Jim says that they were paid about thirty-five to forty cents per made quintal during the 1930s.

"Irene Brushett told me the other day that she made a hundred quintals of fish for someone one summer by herself. I believe she made it

for Bartlett's. She received \$35 for that hundred quintals. A hundred quintals is more than 11,000 pounds of fish." (Ernest Williams)

"I used to make fish for Bartlett's, me and my sister-in-law. We used to get forty cents a quintal after a while... They used to bring it down to us, and we'd make it. Then they'd come down and pick it up. My dear, there's some work to making fish!" (Hannah Cheeseman)

Michael Doody (age 79), a former fisher, states that men rarely made the fish in these circumstances where the merchant paid someone to make it. Most of the men were already at sea catching the fish, he says, so in order to receive a little more family income, their wives, with help from their young children, had to do it all:

"She had to see that the fish was dried and cleaned, and made right. And they often had to cut the hay, rear the children, and bake and cook. The women did more work than the men did sure! ...The only time the men would be able to help them was if it was a blowy day and too bad to go to sea." (Michael Doody)

However, in the case where the merchant had it made on his own premises, men often did make the fish. They were working for the merchant anyway, and they did what he deemed had to be done. Making fish was not seen as "women's work". Regarding Michael Doody's statement that women often had to do more work than men, Nadel-Klein and Davis (1988) have noted, as we have seen, that:

"women play a number of vital roles in the... processes by which fish become sources of protein and human income... Women are essen-

tial to the fishing economy in innumerable ways, including, but hardly restricted to the formation of fishing families." (Nadel-Klein and Davis, 1988: 19)

When the fish was made by the fisher's family, either for sale to the merchant or contracted out to him, women tended to be the core of the shore crew. However, in Burin, when the fish was made for the merchant on his own premises, men instead made up most of the crew. Len Brushett says that men and boys more often made up the greatest percentage of employees than did women and girls.

Len relates that once the fish was dried and ready to ship, it had to be culled (graded) before it could be loaded onto the boats (see also Szwed, 1966: 50). Fish that was bought already made from individuals who caught and made it themselves was culled before purchase according to its quality of cure, and payment was made on that basis, Len maintains. According to Walter Brown Hodder (and clarified by Rules and Regulations Made Under the Codfish Exportation Act, 1920: 27-8; see also Sider, 1986: 87), there were five grades of fish, the highest being "Prime" (Charles Lefevre notes that this grade of fish was also referred to as "Spanish"). Fish that were graded Prime were deemed to be of the best quality, with no sunburn or flakiness, and at least 45 centimetres in length when made. "Merchantable" fish were still good quality, but were "not as fine as Prime", Walter says, and had to be more than 25 centimetres in length. A little lower down the scale

was "Madeira". These fish were those that could not be graded Merchantable, but were considered in fair condition without sunburn or flakiness. Lower still, "West India" (or "West Indie") fish were of poorer quality, being sunburnt, flaky, and rough in appearance. Fish that were so poor as to be discarded altogether were known as "cullage fish", according to Len Brushett.

In current writing, it is often suspected that since the culler was an employee of the merchant, fishers were suspicious about bias (Sinclair, 1987: 7) and that the culler was "in a position to adjust standards to suit his employer" (Hiller, 1990: 93):

"...On the whole there have been many instances in which the men were unfairly treated by the culler who was wholly in the pay of the purchaser of the fish... The culler will feel more friendly to the man who is paying him his wage than to a man he doesn't know at all... It is apparent that the thought uppermost in the mind of the culler is that he should not antagonize the man on whom he is depending." (Gordon Bradley, 1933, quoted by Hiller, 1990: 93)

This opinion may have been shared in the Burin area as well. However, local cullers were not formally trained; my informants remember them as mostly being local fishers who they considered to be honest, and, more importantly, respected individuals in the community. In the Burin area, maintains Charles LeFeuvre, they were hired by the merchant since the merchant knew that these men, respected among their peers,

would attract other fishers, hopefully better ensuring not only more fish, but also higher quality fish. For the fishers, the cullers (whom most everyone knew) represented them. They felt that a respected member of the community would cull their fish fairly, as opposed to a non-local or untrusted person, as Esther Williams (age 81), a member of a former fisher family, and Len Brushett assert. As such, the culler walked a thin line. He was caught between loyalties: on the one hand, he had to be fair to the merchant, from whom he received his wages, and on the other, to the fishers, whom he had to live among. A local culler who seemed to be favouring the fishers, my informants feel, would not have lasted very long at his position. Likewise, a culler who was deemed to be favouring the merchant would have been regarded with disdain in his community. It is safe to say that local cullers probably knew nearly everyone in the area whose fish he culled, and he may not have been as biased toward the merchant as Bradley and later writers might think. Regardless, on some occasions, a culler might not be from the immediate area. My informants say that it was these non-local men that were less trusted by the local fishers, and believe that they were more likely to favour the merchant in the grading of fish. However, instances when cullers were not local men were relatively infrequent, according to Len and Esther.

In this chapter, along with historical and geographical



overviews of the area and a brief description of the credit system, we have seen that the inshore and banks fisheries were labour- and time-intensive. The counterpart to fishing, and the next step in the process of procuring a living from the sea, was the work that was required on shore, which was no less strenuous. Much of the community was involved in the process of making the fish in some way, either at sea or on land.

In the next chapter, mini-histories of two large Burin merchant firms are presented. The purpose of such historical descriptions in this thesis is not only to illuminate the three perspectives I have outlined in the Introduction and will analyze in the following chapters, but they also serve as oral history of two merchant firms. As such, Mini-History I takes us as far back as oral tradition might carry us. It reveals useful details about the social origins of a typical merchant firm, and gives some insight into trade and work relationships with locals. Mini-History II is oriented somewhat differently, as it attempts to more broadly describe operational matters around the fishery, in its several forms.

### Chapter III

This chapter presents biographies of two of the area's most prominent merchant firms, and their relations with fishers, employees, and the community in general. These firms, John and William Paul, and LeFeuvre Brothers, were two of Burin's largest, and were quite similar to the other large firms that were operating in the Burin area during the study period. All these large firms, in my informants' accounts, seem to have had much in common in the way of business practices, organization, and social relationships. The two examples given here were chosen because they seem to have been most representative of the large merchant firms operating in Burin.

Merchant businesses ranged from small drygoods shops to such large scale operations as these presented here. My informants point out that some businesses did not accept fish as payment for goods, and thus they did not consider these to qualify as "merchants", meaning fish merchants. All of these, however, were small drygoods shops that operated on a "cash-only" basis (see Chapter V). In Chapter IV the firms that are described in this chapter will be examined with respect to other Burin merchants and the fishing class in the area.

Most of the information presented in this chapter is derived from informant interviews, as archival and private material on these merchant firms and practices is scarce. Thus my findings largely rest on what local people remember.

Mini-History I: The Merchant Firm of John and William Paul

The son of a prominent English businessman, John Paul arrived in Burin from Weymouth in the 1840s, and set up a merchant business bearing his name. Little is known about his life in England, except that he had come from an "upper class merchant family", states Marion Hollett.

The site on which John chose to develop his business was perched on a steep point of land, backed by high hills, and some distance away from the long established town of Burin North. His land holdings were soon referred to as Paul's Hill, and despite the relative distance of his property from the major business and population areas of Burin, his business quickly developed into a major establishment, and he was known as a shrewd businessman (History of Burin, 1977: 43). In 1874, according to Marion Hollett, he realized that the business had grown enough to require extra management, so he sent to Weymouth for his two nephews. His brother's son, William Paul, and his sister's son, Sidney Hussey, had both attended "university", Marion remembers her grandfather (William) saying (possibly a business or accounting school), and as graduates at age fifteen both accepted John's request. They then journeyed to Newfoundland to become apprentices, and later partners, in the firm of John Paul.

As well as acting as a supplying and outfitting agent for fishers, the business actively pursued the inshore and off-shore fisheries, especially the banks fishery. John built

some of his own vessels (History of Burin, 1977: 43), which could be a problematic task:

"The story is told that at one time he had a schooner built in the New Grove, a region of large trees distant three miles beyond the Fresh Pond. In the spring the schooner was hauled out by men and horses. All went well until they were crossing a small pond a short distance from Lewin's Cove. The ice was weak here and the schooner broke through. Immediately a man was sent to inform Mr. Paul of the mishap. He promptly sent in a keg of rum, and soon the men had the schooner out of the pond, and floating in the water at Lewin's Cove." (History of Burin, 1977: 43)

Marion relates that after his Burin business began to prosper, John set up a branch in St. Pierre, and later another in St. John's. He never married, and for an unknown reason, he passed ownership of the Burin establishment to William and Sidney, at which point he went to St. John's. Eventually he retired, and returned to England. None of my informants know the fate of the St. Pierre and St. John's branches. Under the new owners, the name was changed to William Paul and Company, but soon Sidney gave William the opportunity to buy him out. Marion says that Sidney had been offered a position as light-house keeper on a point known as Dodding Head, on Burin Island. The term "Company" was dropped from the official name, but it was known locally by all my informants simply as "Billy Paul's Room\*".

Billy continued to operate the business much as John had done. He owned two or three banking schooners, and it is

probable that he also owned a coaster\* (a vessel that transports fish to market and engages in coastal trading), according to Marion and Len Brushett. The names of Billy's vessels are now all long forgotten.

Marion explains that the seasonal routine at the business was fairly typical of that of the other merchant firms on the Burin Peninsula. The schooners were outfitted in March and April, before they left to sail to the banks. Spending a month or so at sea, they returned only when they needed bait, or had acquired a full hold of split and salted cod. In June, the caplin scull kept everyone busy, and long hours were worked for the two or three weeks that the caplin rolled in. Then the schooners left for the banks again, and the season ended only in October or November (see Andersen, 1988: 86-7). The winter activities at Billy's business were relaxed compared to those of the fishing season, comprising little more than operation of the general store, maintenance and repair of the premises and gear, and ship-building and repair if necessary. Marion reports that the vessels were usually tied up during the winter, with the probable exception of the coaster. The return of spring brought renewed life to Paul's Hill.

One foreman of the room during the early years of this century was Richard Allen, a man known for working through the worst kind of weather, and making his men work right along with him, recalls Len Brushett.

"Dickie Allen was the boss on the flake. My grandfather worked there too, and the men were always bent over spreading and turning the fish to cure them. And my grandfather straightened up one day and said 'Oh, me back!' And Dickie said to him 'Ah, Jim, b'y, if you got a bad back, go up to Guinan, and he'll make you one!' Paddy Guinan was the old tinsmith up in Burin. Now that was something to say wasn't it? You wouldn't get no pity for your back!... There was no talk of mugs up (breaks) in the morning then. In the winter-time, it'd be frosty too in the mornings. Your socks would be froze in your rubbers! Feet froze off ya, and he'd say 'No mugs up today b'ys!' Some difference today isn't it?... He would have got a lot more work done if he had said 'You go up in the shack now, ten o'clock, and get a mug up for yourself for ten or fifteen minutes and get warmed up.'" (Len Brushett)

In St. John's the arrival of vessels was signalled with the raising of merchant's flags up on Signal Hill. At Paul's Hill, Billy too had his method of proclaiming the arrival of his vessels. According to Marion Hollett, he had obtained (or found) a cannon that had been discarded by either the French or the English from one of their many battles in the area. This he had fired each time one of his schooners was seen approaching the harbour, so that his hired men would all leave their various nearby communities to come to work to unload them. He had it placed up near the road, where it was on rather high ground, so that its sound could be heard a long distance. Marion was raised by Billy and his wife (her grandparents), and she remembers that this was also near the house. The often unannounced cannon blast, frequently early in the morning, was startling to Billy's children, and his

wife convinced him to cease this practice, Marion recalls her mother as saying. The cannon was then donated to the local Society of United Fishermen, whose hall was situated on the high hill above Billy's house, known as Fishermen's Hill. Here the cannon was used for nothing more than ceremonial purposes, and its blasts became infrequent.

By the 1890s, the business owned a large amount of waterfront (see Figure II, and Photographs I and II), which covered close to 650 metres. It was only interrupted by the property of William Brushett, who had arrived from England about the same time as John Paul, according to Len Brushett, and who owned a small section of land (Area 3 in Figure II). The Paul's family home was located by the property line nearest Burin North, and was large, even for a Burin merchant family. It was a three-storey, four bedroom building, and Marion recalls that a large third floor attic served as quarters for the employees, such as the housekeeper and bookkeeper. Billy and Sidney Hussey resided in these quarters before they took over the business from their uncle, John, since they too originally were employees. Above this area was a smaller attic that Marion refers to as the "top loft", where various unused household items would be stored.

Marion describes the other various buildings that occupied the Paul's property, which included a retail shop, a two-storey salt store, a three-storey fish store, a cookhouse, an oil store, a number of flakes, and a small candy store that

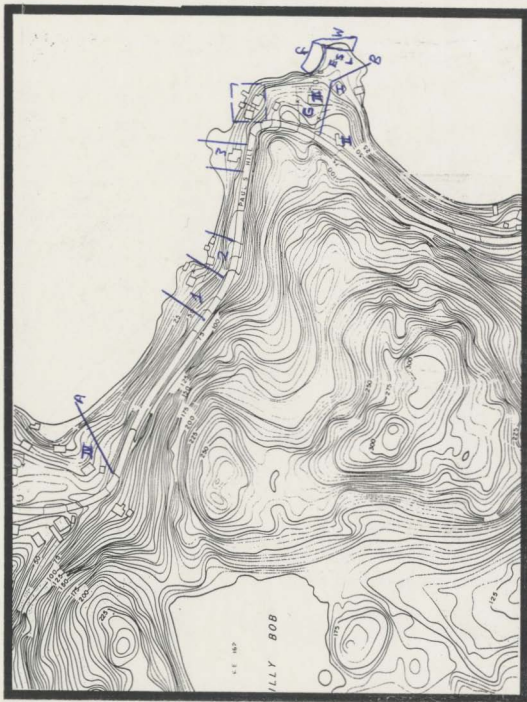


Figure II - Please refer to next page.

Department of Municipal Affairs  
"Burin, Newfoundland", 1966



LEGEND  
Figure II

Map indicating general land holdings and premises of Billy Paul (originally operated by John Paul) on Paul's Hill during the period 1840s-1906. This land was occupied through the early 1970s by his family. Some buildings, shown or not, were built or torn down during this period.

Point A to Point B comprised the full extent of the original land holdings of John Paul as early as the 1840s, with the possible exception of Area 3. This area was owned by William Brushett, who arrived in Burin about the same time as John Paul. Both seem to have settled simultaneously on Paul's Hill. Point A to Point B covers approximately 600-650 metres of shoreline.

I - Richard Bungay's house, with his fish store below.

II - a neighbour's house.

III - Billy Paul's house.

IV - Property of Bill Keynes, with his house and fish store.

G - Mrs. Paul's flower garden.

F - the business' flake.

W - the business' wharf and stage.

E - the site of Mrs. Paul's vegetable garden.

L - the site of the business' cookhouse.

S - the site of the business' two-storey salt store.

The dotted lines indicate the general area of the oil store, general shop, and Synagogue (candy store).

Area 1 was sold to a Mr. Farrell, sometime between 1906 and 1920.

Area 2 was sold to a Mr. Baker, sometime during the same period.

Other buildings are owned by other people.

The shoreline between Area 3 and Point A was probably covered by flakes.

With major roadwork in 1969, all the shoreline from Point A to Area 2 was buried completely.

From Department of Municipal Affairs. "Burin, Newfoundland. Sheet Number One". Scale 200 ft to 1 inch (24m = 1 cm), 1966.

All descriptions courtesy of Marion Hollett and Ernest Williams.



Photograph I

Please refer to next page

LEGEND  
Photograph I

Photograph indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill, 1945. Although his business closed in 1906, little had changed at the date of this photograph. Photograph was taken from Path End.

1- Billy Paul's three-storey fish store. On the first floor, salt cod was washed in large wooden tubs. Once dried on the flakes, the cod was stored on the upper two floors. On the left, one can barely see the edge of his salt store, beyond the fish store.

2- Billy Paul's house.

3- Society of United Fishermen's Lodge.

4- dirt road to Burin North, towards the left. Towards the right, it leads to Path End and Bulls Cove.

5- a typical jackboat. This one is the "Fisherman's Friend", owned by Charlie Brushett.

Middle point of land in background is site of Fishery Products fish plant.

Photograph courtesy of Billy Brushett. All descriptions courtesy of Marion Hollett, Billy Brushett, Len Brushett, and Ernest Williams.



Photograph II

Please refer to next page

LEGEND  
Photograph II

Photograph indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill, ca. 1900-20. Photograph taken pointing in the direction of Path End.

- 1- Billy Paul's house.
- 2- In the distance, Frank LeFeuvre's house in Bulls Cove.
- 3- Richard Bungay's house, fish store, and stage.
- 4- Billy Paul's cookhouse, salt store, and stage.
- 5- dirt road to Path End away from the reader. Towards the reader, it leads to Burin North.

Photograph courtesy of Burin Heritage House. All descriptions courtesy of Marion Hollett.

was known locally as "the synagogue". This little building was originally a store in which Billy Paul kept fishing gear, but it was converted to a candy store in the mid-1890s at the wishes of his twelve-year-old son, Reginald, says Marion. Reginald operated the store, under the supervision of his father.

She also recalls that although the Paul's kept neither sheep nor cows, as did many residents of Burin, they did own one horse, which was used by George Ross to deliver mail to such communities as Garnish. Billy rarely used this horse, so it was stabled on George's property. The Paul's bought a couple of geese each year, one being fattened up for Christmas dinner and the other for New Year's dinner. Marion notes that Billy's wife, Maria Veil Simms of Harbour Breton (who had been the first telegraph operator in Burin before they were married about 1887), was an avid gardener, and planted a flower garden near the house. As well, she kept a large vegetable garden down near the water, in which she grew a variety of produce that was unusual, even exotic, for Burin gardens:

"She went to England one time, and while there she went aboard a ship from Australia with her brother. It was full of wheat, and she just put a handful in her coat pocket. And she brought it home. When she started the garden in the spring, I heard her say 'I think I'll put that in, see if 'twill grow.' And certainly it grew up over her head. And it ripened too! I can see it now, waving in the wind. And she grew tomatoes, green peas, strawberries, cucumber, potatoes, and carrot.

Never any turnip or cabbage... And she had a lot of blackcurrant trees along the side, and a damson tree... In her flower garden she had gooseberries, two lilac trees, two apple trees, and a damson tree, as well as flowers of all kinds." (Marion Hollett)

The shop, painted with red ochre, was a general merchandise store, which sold "everything from a needle to an anchor", Marion states, including drygoods, footwear, and medicines. Alongside it was the oil store, in which Billy kept not just oil and kerosene for the business and the vessels, but also produce for the shop and for the house. The salt cod was washed on the first floor of the three-storey fish store, and then, after it was cured, the dried cod was stored on the upper two floors. The cookhouse was built as an eating area for the employees who worked in the various buildings and on the flakes, where they could get their meals. Len Brushett recalls this little building was a source of much social activity during mealtimes, even into the 1930s:

"They had the biggest kind of fire going in that shack during the winter. Dinnertime you'd get a big warm up, with the coal fire in... You'd have an hour for your dinner. Carry a lunch from home. Uncle Joe Riggs used to have a bun of bread about that thick (twenty or twenty-five centimetres) and he'd have that buttered. He was a big man and a big eater. And Uncle Joe Wrixon from Epworth worked there, and he was about the same size as he, and he'd only eat a slice, a slice and a half. He thought more about his pipe than he did his food. But Uncle Joe Riggs didn't smoke. Then they'd all sit around and yarn 'til they had to go back to work again." (Len Brushett)

People were hired not only to work on Paul's room, but also in the house and gardens for Mrs. Paul. Marion recounts that Maria mainly hired young girls to help with the cleaning, cooking, and other duties in the house. One was hired as a "housekeeper", she says, and supervised the other girls along with her own work, which was mainly cooking; one or two were hired as "maids", to do general cleaning; and on occasion a girl was hired as a "seamstress". The gardens too were large enough to require extra help, during the growing season, but usually the maids were called upon to aid Maria in her gardening, her "hobby", according to Marion.

Maria was a great traveller, and would leave Newfoundland for two months each summer to visit Europe, the United States, or some other part of the world, Marion remembers. The housekeeper was then in complete charge of the upkeep of the house. These girls were paid in cash monthly by Maria, the female head of the house, as was the custom in Burin. Girls were hired through to the 1930s. Elizabeth Williams (age 61), a former member of a fishing family, states that her mother was one of the girls who worked for the Paul's in this capacity. As with all the girls, her wages for one month were three dollars, plus room and board. Len Brushett states that the men who worked on the room and in the vessels, however, normally did not receive cash for their labour. As was common practice in Burin, they tended to take up most of their wages in goods and supplies.



In 1906, however, Billy Paul abruptly terminated his business. Marion explains that the Newfoundland Customs head office, in St. John's, had been in need of a Sub-Collector for the Burin office, as the current officer was to be leaving, and Billy applied for the position. In February he received notice that he had been successful in obtaining the appointment, and soon after decided to sell his business. My informants say it is unclear why he would choose such a position over his business, since the salary of a Customs Officer was not large. Marion believes that the business had been failing, and that Billy preferred the assurance of a government cheque that arrived on a regular basis. Therefore, when an opportunity such as the Customs Officer's position came up, she says, "he gladly accepted".

John T. Cheeseman of Port Au Bra, just a couple of kilometres away, soon made arrangements to take the business over from Billy, Marion says. However, she says that Cheeseman could not afford to buy the premises outright, and instead an arrangement was made whereby he purchased only the stock in the shop, and rented the premises. Marion states that from 1906, Billy apparently never used any of his buildings nor his many flakes for his own fishing purposes again. Rather, he allowed a number of neighbours to use his flakes, at no charge:

"Grandfather didn't take any money from them. Fred Mayo and John Cy Mayo, their wives used to make fish on those flakes for Hollett's or

someone. The businesses used to bring down their fish, and the women would cure and dry it for a small wage, and then the businesses would come down and get it again. Grandfather never charged them for that." (Marion Hollett)

Marion recalls that since her grandfather was good friends with these two families, he freely gave them the use of his flakes. Their own flakes were not large enough to make all the fish that Hollett's had been sending down to them.

Marion reports that some time around the same period (after 1906), Billy decided to sell off some of his land (see Figure II). A Mr. Farwell bought a parcel of land on a small point between Billy's house and Joseph Keynes' land, and a Mr. Baker obtained a parcel adjoining that of Mr. Farwell. Billy decided not to let the rest of his property deteriorate, since most of it was now unused, including many of his buildings (except as sheds to hold firewood and such). Rather, he hired a handyman for maintenance and general duties. Although this person did some work around the house, such as bring water and chop firewood, Marion recalls that his main duties were to maintain the rest of the property. The flakes were to be repaired as needed, and the buildings were to be painted and tarred. This man was hired every summer until the late 1930s, more than thirty years after the business had closed. Marion is unsure of her grandfather's reasons for maintaining his property so long at his expense when it was being used by other people.

The operator of the shop, John T. Cheeseman, was involved

in politics, and his business lasted only until about 1919. In that year, he was elected as the Burin a.3a Member to the Newfoundland House of Assembly (History of Burin, 1977: 169). Marion recounts that he never returned to the shop after that, even when he ceased being Burin's Member in 1923. From then until the late 1930s, Billy's buildings were left vacant, although they were maintained. By then though, Billy had decided to sell off much of his property, and most of the buildings were moved off it. By the mid-1940s, all except the house were gone. The flakes had fallen largely into disuse, and the land was either sold or divided up among his children and grandchildren.

Billy passed away in 1949, at the age of ninety. Some of his grandchildren occupied the stately family home until the 1970s, Marion says. Then it was sold to a non-relative, and taken down in 1975, according to the History of Burin (1977: 44). In 1967, a large section of Paul's Hill was blasted away by a road crew so that the treacherous steep turn behind the house would no longer pose a threat to motorists. And in 1969, the section of road from there to Path End was blasted so that it could be widened. As a result of these two actions, much of the land and waterfront that had been owned by Billy Paul, Mr. Baker, and Mr. Farwell was buried beneath ten metres of rock and rubble, and today is mostly non-existent.

Mini-History II: The Merchant Firm of LeFeuvre Brothers

Like the firm of John Paul, the LeFeuvre Brothers establishment had its origins in the nineteenth century, although much later. Gordon LeFeuvre (age 89), states that its founder was Francis LeFeuvre, known locally as Frank. His father, Franck (note spelling) was a native of Jersey, in the Channel Islands of England. Gordon believes Franck had worked for the long established Falle merchant family there. Since the 1790s, the Falle's had also been plying the summer fishery out of Burin, and they eventually set up a permanent, year-round business there in 1830, according to the History of Burin (1977: 51-5).

In 1865 or 1867, Franck and his brother Philip sailed for Newfoundland, Gordon states. The Falle's had transferred them to their branch in Burin, known as Richard Falle and Company. Philip soon returned to Jersey, however, while Franck decided to make Burin his new home. Marrying Jane Martin, a native of Bulls Cove, Franck raised a family on the "Jersey Room", the site on George's Point in Little Burin Harbour where the Falle's were located.

"It was a Jersey firm see, and they used to call business places 'rooms'. You went to work on 'Hollett's Room', or you come to work on 'LeFeuvre's Room', or you went to work on 'the Jersey Room'. That's how Room come into it. That was a word denoting where the business was to. It was their room... So that's how George's Point was called the Jersey Room." (Gordon LeFeuvre)

Gordon recounts that Franck and Jane lived with the foreman of the Falle business, William Goodridge, for some time after they were married, and had two sons: Francis (Frank; no 'c'), born 1876, and Thomas, born 1878. Franck skippered vessels, including a schooner called the "Jersey", for the Falles for many years, Gordon says. But Richard Falle and Company went bankrupt in 1893 (see Chapter I). Gordon is unsure if Franck worked for the ensuing string of owners.

Gordon relates that, in May 1897, Franck's son, Frank, obtained all the stock that A.M. Harvey and Company had been unable to sell when they closed business on the old Falle premises sometime in the previous year or so. Gordon doesn't know how his father, Frank, managed this, since he apparently did not work for A.M. Harvey and Company. But somehow he obtained and then sold the Harvey stock, which amounted to \$718.22, priced by Frank in his inventory list for the stock. The LeFeuvre family today believes that Frank did not buy the goods, but rather sold them along with his own in the former Falle shop and then either paid A.M. Harvey and Company the full amount once the goods were all sold, or in instalments. These instalments may have been in amounts of \$100, since on the first page of Frank's inventory list, before the itemizing begins, there is a brief note written in pencil:

"Paid to A.M. Harvey, Esquire, 100 dollars"

It is possible, however, that Frank bought the goods for \$100

outright, which would explain the placement of the note before the itemized list, and then simply sold the goods as his own.

Gordon says that Frank operated his new business in the old buildings for a little over a year, beginning in 1898. He believes that Frank only rented the buildings.

In 1900, Frank left the Jersey Room to occupy a site in Bulls Cove (see Figure III), about half a kilometre away. According to Gordon, the previous year he had decided to move over to Bulls Cove for unknown reasons, and had begun to build the premises that would serve the business through its best years. It was during the erection of the new shop in the fall of 1899 that Frank LeFeuvre suddenly passed away at age 55. It was about this time that Frank was joined in his venture by his brother, Thomas, and the new partnership was named LeFeuvre Brothers, Gordon states. Charles LeFeuvre (age 81), Thomas' son, reports that Thomas had been teaching school in Port Au Bras (a couple of kilometres away) since he was 16, but permanently left this position when he joined his brother in the business.

Charles relates that the brothers soon prospered, and were able to quickly increase the size of their premises, adding new buildings (salt stores, stages, and such), to the extent that their water frontage covered some 200 metres or so. Although this was much smaller than the water frontage owned by Billy Paul on Paul's Hill, which was less than a kilometre away by boat, LeFeuvre Brothers carried on a

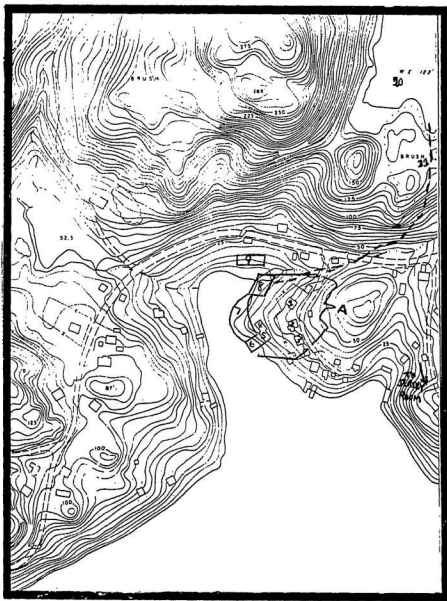


Figure III - Please refer to next page.

Department of Municipal Affairs  
"Burin Bay Arm", 1966

LEGEND  
Figure III

Map indicating general land holdings and premises of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove during the period 1898-1930s. Some buildings, shown or not, were built or torn down during this period.

Area A shows general area of LeFeuvre Brothers' holdings. All houses are described as they would have been in the 1920s.

- 1 - Thomas LeFeuvre's house (later owned by his son, Charles).
- 2 - Frank LeFeuvre's house.
- 3 - Gordon LeFeuvre's house (Frank's son).
- 4 - LeFeuvre Brothers' general shop and office.
- 5 - their fish store.
- 6 - their stage.
- 7 - their flake.
- 8 - site of their icehouse.
- 9 - site of George Martin's cooperage.
- 10 - Edie's Pond.
- 11 - ice chute from Edie's Pond to the icehouse.

All other buildings within Area A are outbuildings. Road leads to Path End on the left. To the right, it leads to Port Au Bras.

From Department of Municipal Affairs. "Burin Bay Arm, Newfoundland. Sheet Number Six". Scale 200 ft to 1 inch (24m = 1cm), 1966.

All descriptions are courtesy of Gordon LeFeuvre, Charles LeFeuvre, Esther Williams, and Ernest Williams.



business comparable in scale. They also operated a branch store in Lawn, about thirty kilometres distant by boat (History of Bur'n, 1977: 53). By 1906, the Bulls Cove premises had nearly reached their maximum size.

By 1910, these premises (see Photographs III and IV) consisted of four large fish stores (the upper floor of one contained LeFeuvre Brothers office and general merchandise shop), a stage, an ice house, a wharf, the large family home (plus a number of outbuildings), a flake about 100 metres long, and three schooners - the "Mary Matthews", the "Lavinia May", and the "Centenary", Gordon recalls. Sometime soon after, the business acquired another vessel, the "Theresa Antle" (Names File).

These premises were located within the community of Bulls Cove, not away from it as was the business of Billy Paul. LeFeuvre Brothers' vessels were moored to the stage amongst the jackboats, skiffs, and dories of their close neighbours, as that section of the cove was quite small:

"Well, it's like in every place... all around the shoreline, all along the landwash... and just alongside was Uncle Bill Dibbon's place, then Cy Hollett, and John Francis... You'd almost walk right around the cove on flakes. Right around. Over here there'd be Uncle Tom Martin and Skipper George Martin. Flakes and wharves all around." (Charles LeFeuvre)

The ice house was a familiar fixture in some of the various Burin coves, and it was very important to Bulls Cove as well. This was the building in which ice was stored, which



Photograph III

Please refer to next page

LEGEND  
Photograph III

Photograph indicating the general land holdings and premises of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove, 1929.

- 1- George Martin's cooperage.
- 2- LeFeuvre Brothers' ice house.
- 3- Originally Thomas LeFeuvre's first house. Here, it has been converted into a general-purpose store/shed.
- 4- Thomas LeFeuvre's second house.
- 5- LeFeuvre Brothers' henhouse and coal shed (in separate parts).
- 6- Frank LeFeuvre's house.
- 7- their general shop, with their office in the upper right corner.
- 8-9- their fish stores.
- 10- dirt road to Port Au Bras away from the reader. Towards the reader, it leads to Path End.

Other buildings are owned by other people.

Photograph courtesy of Gordon LeFeuvre. All descriptions are courtesy of Gordon LeFeuvre, Esther Williams, and Ernest Williams.



Photograph IV

Please refer to next page

LEGEND  
Photograph IV

Photograph indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove, ca. 1906-07.

- 1- Thomas LeFeuvre's first house.
- 2- Frank LeFeuvre's barn.
- 3- LeFeuvre Brothers' henhouse and coal shed.
- 4- Frank LeFeuvre's house.
- 5- LeFeuvre Brothers' general shop, with their office in upper right corner.
- 6-7- their fish stores.
- 8- their first vessel, the "Mary Matthews". She is having her hull maintained or repaired.
- 9- a large jackboat (four-dory), the "Stranger", owned by Cyrus Hollett.
- 10- house in which foremen of the former businesses of the "Jersey Room" (including Richard Falle and Company) resided, before 1896. Here, it is probably occupied by a fishing family.
- 11- buildings on the "Jersey Room", formerly owned and occupied by various businesses from 1830-1896, including Richard Falle and Company. The protrusion from the side is the artificial fish dryer. Other buildings on the site are fish and salt stores, and the old general shop. Here, they seem to be all vacant.
- 12- LeFeuvre Brothers' flake.

Other buildings are owned by other people.

Photograph courtesy of Gordon LeFeuvre. All descriptions courtesy of Gordon LeFeuvre and Ernest Williams.

was purchased by vessels to preserve bait for the spring fishery and the June caplin scull. Charles says that LeFeuvre Brothers began operating their ice supplying business soon after they moved to their Bulls Cove premises.

Enclosing Bulls Cove are high, steep hills, some 100 metres high, upon one of which is a small deep pond known as Edie's Pond. Edie's Pond provided the ice, and during most of the winter (until the spring thaw), LeFeuvre Brothers employed as many as sixteen men in harvesting the ice, which thus provided winter work for a fair percentage of the small community's men. Len Brushett recounts that when the ice was thirty to forty centimetres thick, it was cut into blocks using large ice saws (which resemble pit saws), handled by one man. He was guided by lines marked into the pond's surface by another man who measured out squares about sixty by sixty centimetres. "Uncle Joe Riggs used to mark it out, and then they'd saw it out, and lay it on the chute", Charles recollects.

Charles says that the hill down to the ice house was far too steep to enable horses to pull the blocks on a slide, therefore a more practical solution was required. A suspended wooden chute was built, connecting Edie's Pond to the ice house below. The ice blocks would simply slide down the chute to their destination, right to the ice house door. However, the placement of the chute required that it cross the road, which meant that a removable section had to be built over the

road. During the summer, this section was removed altogether. But when ice was being cut in the winter and early spring, a man was hired to stand on the road, and if anyone had to pass, the procession of ice blocks had to be halted, and the chute section was raised. "Uncle Albert Isaacs used to be on the road," Charles remembers, "and he'd watch for horses and slides going along." As well, Charles states that he had seen the blocks, on occasion, jump out of the chute when they came to a turn, because of their high velocity down the steep hill. "Those blocks would take right off!", Charles recalls. Thus men with ice hooks were stationed at various points to slow the blocks down.

The activity in the ice house was equally fast paced. Charles recalls that as the heavy ice blocks bounded down to the door, many at a time, several men would be picking them up, using ice hooks, and piling them into a neat arrangement, along the walls:

"I was there in the ice house after school. That ice would be comin' some fast, when the chute'd get slippery! In the doorway they had to have a rope to stop the ice from coming on in." (Charles LeFeuvre)

The ice house had no floor, but rather the ice was laid down upon a thick layer of sawdust, as it was a superior insulator to a wooden floor, according to Charles. The rest of the ice was covered in a thick layer of sawdust as well. George Martin's cooperage, just a hundred metres or so away,

supplied all the sawdust they needed, which was brought over in barrels. As a result, the ice that completely filled the ice house usually lasted until late July, sometimes even into August:

"It depended on the summers. You'd get some summers a bit warmer than the others, maybe by August you'd see a bit (of ice). Sometimes some of the skippers'd say 'Save me another four loads' but we (never did that) because we didn't know if it'd be there or not. Sometimes there would be some left, and more times there wouldn't be... There was one year we never got frost enough to get any ice! The men went up, and opened up the pond (cut holes so that the water that welled up would freeze, making the ice thicker), a nice morning, and it came bad around lunchtime. Come mild and rain. That was the end of it! Never got much ice that year. That was the only time we never got it." (Charles LeFeuvre)

During the spring, usually late March and early April, vessels from Lunenburg in Nova Scotia arrived for the spring fishery, and in June for the caplin scull. These vessels needed ice to preserve their bait\*, and would anchor in Ship Cove, about three and a half kilometres away by water, which was the main cove to anchor in (very deep and well sheltered). Charles remembers that as many as three a day during the caplin scull would send their large banking dories down to LeFeuvre Brothers to get the ice they needed. One dory, usually rowed by two men, would tow another three dories behind them.

Charles explains that the ice house had a side door, from which a chute passed down to the dories. Each would be filled



to capacity, for which LeFeuvre Brothers charged five dollars per dory during the 1920s and 1930s (rates for earlier years are unknown). Most vessels required four dory loads for a trip to one of the Banks (i.e. Quero, St. Pierre, Grand), but larger schooners would need five. Each vessel spent twenty or twenty-five dollars for its ice requirements. Then each pair of men would tow the string of fully laden dories back up to Ship Cove to their respective vessels. Once there, the ice was loaded on board, crushed, and spread over the bait, which they had already obtained.

The selling of ice thus provided a much needed income supplement for many fishers and their families during the winter months. Although the wage was somewhat low (six cents an hour in the 1930s and early 1940s), my informants say taking up this amount in goods from LeFeuvre Brothers' shop was much preferred to "going on the dole". This is the system whereby needy unemployed fishers could plead their case to the government, and, if successful, would receive the sum of six cents per day for their families on which to survive (see Chapter VI).

During the caplin scull, Esther Williams (age 81) explains, another entrepreneur in Bulls Cove set up a small business catering to fishing vessels, a business much like the ice house. The land on which her father, Joseph Riggs, built his house contained a small brook, and into this brook Joseph placed a wooden chute so that barrels could be filled with

fresh water. When the Lunenburg vessels ran out of bait after a period at sea, they came to Burin to buy caplin from fishers, at which point they also replenished their water supply. Esther recalls that when these vessels sent their dories to LeFeuvre Brothers to get ice, they also brought empty barrels to Joseph. He had a hose connected to the chute which he could direct into the barrels without having to lift them out of the dory. Each dory could hold four barrels of water, for each of which Joseph charged five cents, she says. Many of the vessels that were anchored in Ship Cove needed several dory loads of these barrels to fill their holding tanks, thus Joseph could earn as much as a dollar a day. However, this lasted for only two or three weeks each year, as the vessels soon returned to the Grand Banks.

"There'd be twelve or fifteen of the Lunenburg vessels in Burin Harbour and Ship Cove. Each one would need water. They'd all arrive at the one time, and a couple of weeks later they would all pretty well leave at the same time too. For them, Burin was a stopover for food, bait, ice, and water." (Ernest Williams)

LeFeuvre Brothers also employed as many as a dozen people to work on their flakes, washing and drying the salt cod that their schooners brought in, reports Gordon LeFeuvre. Most of these people were women and young girls and boys, as most men were already employed on the vessels or in the fish stores stacking the fish and loading vessels, he states. All the employees normally took up their wages in goods from the shop.

"That was the first place I worked. I was about twelve years old (1922), and I got ten cents an hour. I'd mostly take that up with them but if you wanted a dollar for the church or if you were going to a time (garden party or dance), they'd give it to you. But they mostly wanted you to take it up with them. Most merchants in other places didn't want to give you any money a'tall, but they would if you asked." (Len Brushett)

Esther Williams notes that in their shop too occasionally a person was hired, if the amount of work required it. Otherwise, Thomas, Frank, and Frank's son, Gordon, were usually able to take care of this end of the business.

Being the only such business in Bulls Cove and the largest one for some distance (after Billy Paul closed out in 1906), my informants report that the business was the main source of income for most of the community of Bulls Cove. Their shop had a fairly large clientele, and it was able to carry a wide variety of drygoods and foodstuffs. "The shop carried everything", Gordon LeFeuvre explains, "boots and shoes and cotton and medicines". The stock was obtained mostly from larger firms in St. John's. LeFeuvre Brothers' largest supplier was the firm of Harvey and Company, but Royal Stores and the Monroe Export Company were other important suppliers as well. Gordon remembers that, like LeFeuvre Brothers, who dealt with their customers mainly through the terms of the credit system (as explained earlier), so did these suppliers.

Gordon and Charles LeFeuvre recount that LeFeuvre

Brothers received fish throughout the spring, summer, and fall from fishers, who settled up their accounts in the fall, usually sometime from October to early December. Likewise, the St. John's suppliers, such as Harvey and Company, dealt this way with their customers, the outport merchants. Gordon and Charles recall that LeFeuvre Brothers received most of their stock on credit, and in the fall they settled up their accounts with their suppliers, paying with either cash or fish. Oftentimes the supplier requested salt dried cod as payment, in lieu of cash, since selling the cod on European markets often returned a higher net profit for the supplier than did payment in cash, Charles surmises.

How the stock was transported from St. John's to Burin was not a matter for the suppliers, but rather was the sole concern of LeFeuvre Brothers, Gordon states. Harry Dibbon, nicknamed Big Harry Dibbon, operated his own small coaster, travelling back and forth between St. John's and various communities on the boot, charging (in cash) the merchants for his service. He says that Big Harry was available most anytime that a merchant requested, unlike the government coastal boat's set schedule, so that a merchant who needed stock from St. John's quickly could rely on Big Harry to obtain it in the shortest time possible.

The main support for LeFeuvre Brothers came not from supplying the cod fishery (i.e. the retail shop and the ice house), but from the operation of their own vessels, Charles

LeFeuvre states. Besides owning several banking vessels, he recalls that they had two coasters, which were used to transport the cured fish to market. On the return trip the coasters would be laden with cargoes such as molasses, and sometimes liquor for the Government, which would be landed in Nova Scotia or St. John's. LeFeuvre Brothers also owned trap skiffs and two or three cod traps.

"LeFeuvre's had one of their traps out beyond the Jersey Room, out by Pardy's Island. They had six men in a big skiff. LeFeuvre's owned the boat and the motor. The two LeFeuvre brothers, Thomas and Frank, took a share for themselves, and one for the trap, and one for the boat. That was three shares for them. Then each of the men would get a share." (Ernest Williams)

"I went to the trap a year or two to Pardy's Island with Uncle Joe Giles. He and I used to have to haul up the bar\*. Now I was in my prime then and Uncle Joe Giles was an old man, white headed. 'I'm gonna be so good as Uncle Joe' I said. Now he and I was haulin' up the bar, and I was sweatin'. I sweat blood. And Uncle Joe was hauling it up hand over hand easily. And I was sweatin' on the other end hauling it up. Just so well I wasn't hauling a'tall!" (Gordon LeFeuvre)

The banking vessels they owned at various times, Charles recalls, were the "Mary Matthews" (four two-man dories, plus cook, captain, and ketchie), the "Lavinia May" (probably four dories), the "Centenary" (probably four to six dories), the "Mina Swim" (ten dories), and the "Theresa Antle" (probably four dories). At any one time, forty to fifty men were employed on these banking vessels. Leaving in late March and

early April, these schooners, powered only by sail, left for the Banquero and St. Pierre banks, since the Grand Banks were generally too stormy in the spring of the year, my informants report. As explained in Chapter II, trips to these banks lasted one to two months, with all vessels having returned home again by June, in time for the caplin scull. Then the vessels set sail for the Grand Banks, and the season ended in late October or early November.

My informants say that these trips involved extremely long hours and backbreaking work, and the often unpredictable weather claimed many vessels and lives. One such vessel that was lost was LeFeuvre Brothers' "Mina Swim", with her entire crew of twenty-three men, a tragedy that has never been fully explained. On February 7, 1917, she left Bulls Cove enroute to Rose Blanche to take on a load of dried salt cod, but she never arrived. Harold R. Mitchell, who arrived in Rose Blanche the following week on the next coaster, believes that she was crushed in a heavy run of Arctic ice. Len Brushett and Charles LeFeuvre feel that she was cut down by a steamer that had been sighted in the area at the same time. Regardless of how she went to the bottom, the tragedy of the "Mina Swim" could have been worse for the families of the crew, had the community and LeFeuvre Brothers not aided them. The residents of Bulls Cove, as in any outport, helped the families in any way they could, my informants recall, and LeFeuvre Brothers kept the families supplied with food and

provisions until they could once again support themselves that spring (see Chapter V).

Charles LeFeuvre says it was normal procedure for all vessels to be insured before every season, so that in case of just such a loss the owners would be compensated for the worth of the vessel. However, as it was so early in the year, the "Mina Swim" had not yet been insured for the upcoming season. Requests for insuring a vessel could only be made at the telegraph office in Burin North, he says, where a message would be sent to the insurance company in St. John's.

"She left here in the evening. However it was, they (Thomas and Frank) didn't go over that evening to send the telegram. I don't know if the motorboat wasn't working or if it was too late in the evening when she went. And they said 'Oh, we'll insure her tomorrow morning'. And so then they went over to insure her. And you had to state where she was to. 'Insure the "Mina Swim" in Burin' or 'Insure the "Mina Swim" in Rose Blanche'. You couldn't do it when she was on her way. So they said 'We'll insure her when she gets to Rose Blanche'. But she never got there. They lost the whole works of it. That was a big loss then. That was a gamble in business, when you were handling with fish." (Charles LeFeuvre)

LeFeuvre Brothers lost their largest and most profitable vessel, with family men aboard, and bore the cost of not only the loss of the boat, but also its outfitting (gear, supplies, and such), and providing for the families until the spring. In the months of January and February of 1917, the "Mina Swim" (not counting the amount of supplies and provisions received

by the crew and their families) took on board supplies and equipment to the value of nearly \$900, including new dories, gunpowder, oil sugar, flour, and other goods in great amounts (LeFeuvre Brothers ledger, 1917). Considering that the schooner itself was valued at several thousand dollars, the disappearance of the "Mina Swim" was an expensive loss for LeFeuvre Brothers. However, a new fishing season was just a month away, and Gordon LeFeuvre believes that LeFeuvre Brothers were able to rely on their other vessels and other operations until they could afford to buy a new vessel to replace the "Mina Swim". The effort eventually paid off, and the 1910s on the whole were good years for LeFeuvre Brothers, according to my informants.

Charles LeFeuvre says that LeFeuvre Brothers had the "Mary Matthews" and the "Centenary" to fall back on. As well, LeFeuvre Brothers began to operate their own coasters. During the 1910s and earlier, they had been hiring other vessels to transport their fish to market and to bring back goods. However, after the "Mina Swim" was lost, it was decided that the business needed its own coasters, and so LeFeuvre Brothers bought the "Lelia" and the "Maxwell R", Charles recalls. Although her dimensions are now forgotten, the "Maxwell R", skippered by Tommy Bennett, was the largest of the firm's vessels. Charles says that she was so large that she could not be anchored in close by the buoys, since she would ground at low tide, and had to be anchored off the end of the



wharf, outside all the other schooners.

The dried salt cod that they produced was culled after it was made, then shipped in the coasters in barrels and casks:

"My father Joe Riggs worked for LeFeuvre's. He was a culler. He used to cull the fish and put the same grade in the one cask, and another in another. Then they were shipped off to Oporto or wherever." (Esther Williams)

Charles states that the barrels and casks that the fish was packed in were obtained from George Martin Sr's cooperage, practically next door to LeFeuvre Brothers. George made barrels in quintal and half-quintal sizes, and the casks (really just large barrels) held four quintals. From his cooperage these were rolled into LeFeuvre Brothers' fish stores, and the barrels and casks were filled to the brim with cod. Len Brushett explains that a hand-operated press compacted the fish in the barrel to about three-quarters full, to which more fish was added until the barrel was full again. Then the "head" (cover or top) was put on the barrel, and sealed tightly with a birch hoop placed around the outside. A metal stencil was laid upon the head, and the destination and origin were painted onto it by hand. Len remembers that the barrels and casks were then stored until enough were completed to fill one or both of the coasters, at which time they were shipped to market.

Charles LeFeuvre says that these barrels and casks were not returned, so LeFeuvre Brothers had to keep buying more

from George Martin Sr, which undoubtedly helped keep him in business, as they were his largest customer.

"The fish casks could hold four quintals. I remember they were \$1.80 until the Depression. Then Skipper George said he had to pay labour and all this, and he had to charge \$2.00. A cask was two drafts, or 448 pounds... Roll them up over the wharf, and roll them down to the vessel." (Charles LeFeuvre)

They would then be lifted from the wharf up into the hold of the coaster using "can hooks". This is simply an apparatus consisting of two large hooks that each grab a side of a barrel or cask, with two or three men pulling on a rope attached overhead to a pulley which lowers and raises the barrel. Filling the hold of one of the coasters usually required two hard days work, Charles says.

Charles states that the main destinations of the coasters were to Oporto, Spain; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and to Barbados, carrying to market the dried salt cod that had been cured by the firm. The Newfoundland and Canadian governments often commissioned LeFeuvre Brothers to bring loads of rum up from Barbados, he says, to be landed in St. John's or Halifax, but most often molasses and sugar were brought back from Barbados, and a variety of goods from Oporto and Rio de Janeiro. In most cases, the round trips of the coasters lasted from thirty to forty days, but occasionally bad weather or really calm weather would slow the sailing ships, extending some voyages to as long as fifty days.

The 1910s were mostly good years for LeFeuvre Brothers; in 1913 or 1914 one of the fish stores was so full of fish that it collapsed, Len Brushett remembers. According to my informants, World War I brought prosperity on a large scale, and the soldiers fighting in Europe provided a huge market for Newfoundland fish. Burin as a whole benefited economically during the war years, and this was possibly LeFeuvre Brothers most prosperous era. By 1919, however, the tide of good years began to change. Gordon LeFeuvre recalls that since they were one of the largest merchant businesses in Burin, and had a wide-reaching international market, LeFeuvre Brothers was adversely affected by a new Government policy. Gordon steadfastly maintains that this policy was "poorly thought out."

"Sir William Coaker, he was the Minister of Fisheries. He was the man who put most of the businesses on this south coast out of business. He broke them." (Gordon LeFeuvre)

In 1918, the Italian Government had introduced regulations with the goal of reducing the price of imported fish. The Newfoundland Government, worrying that this maneuver would cause problems in all of Newfoundland's overseas markets, introduced a pricing policy in 1919 designed to combat this perceived complication. This policy was officially entitled "The Codfish Standardization Act", but became known as "the Coaker Regulations", and covered the entire Newfoundland saltfish trade (Alexander, 1977: 22). Sir William Coaker, Minister of Fisheries in the then Sir Richard

Squires government, put these regulations into effect on November 20, 1919 (Bouzane, 1974: n.p.).

"The 'Codfish Standardization Act' established a Commission with responsibility for regulating all aspects of catching, processing, culling, warehousing, and transportation of saltfish. The objective of the Act was to force an improvement in the quality of Newfoundland fish... and to establish a national grading system which would command respect in the markets and undercut buyers' claims relating to poor quality when it was landed overseas... and to stabilize returns on an annual long-term basis." (Bouzane, 1974: n.p.)

Some of the responsibilities of this Commission were to set the market minimum price for the sale of salt cod, and the maximum quantity of salt cod that could be exported to any one market (Bouzane, 1974: n.p.). Most relevant to Burin merchants, however, was the minimum price regulation. The going rate per cured quintal in the area was about twelve to thirteen dollars, Gordon LeFeuvre recalls. In other areas of the island, the same circumstances prevailed: in Port Union, for example, the going rate was about twelve dollars per quintal, according to a speech by a fish exporter in 1920 ("Convention of Licensed Codfish Exporters", in Rules and Regulations Made Under the Codfish Exportation Act, 1920: 45). Having already paid fishers the going rate, LeFeuvre Brothers were now forced by this policy to set the price of their fish on the international markets at no less than fifteen dollars a quintal, Gordon maintains. He says that with the prevailing market price falling, this meant LeFeuvre Brothers were not able to

sell their product, since merchants from other countries (i.e. Canada especially) were not bound by this law. Thus they could adjust their prices according to the prevailing market price, Gordon explains, and thereby escape with small losses, if any, if the prevailing market prices dropped. But due to "the Coaker Regulations", LeFeuvre Brothers were not able to adjust their prices when the prevailing market prices began to fall unexpectedly. They then began to incur larger and larger losses as the prevailing market price continued to tumble. Their fish was lying in warehouses, too expensive to buy while other producer's fish was selling, according to Charles LeFeuvre.

"This was the time when fish prices were right up. The fishermen were getting twelve or thirteen, even fourteen, dollars a quintal for their made fish. But all of a sudden the prices started to fall. Now we had 10 or 15,000 quintals of fish and we had paid twelve or thirteen dollars a quintal for it... But Coaker put his limit on it. 'You can't sell that fish for under fifteen dollars a quintal'. Now nobody could get fifteen, since the price on the market had fallen to thirteen dollars. If you had paid fourteen dollars and you could sell for thirteen dollars, you could have gotten away with only a small loss, wouldn't you? But you couldn't do it. Then he said 'You can sell it for twelve dollars a quintal'. But the going price had gone below twelve. We still couldn't sell it. So he said 'You can sell for ten dollars'. But you couldn't get ten dollars by that time! By the time he dropped his price, the going price was gone below that. By and by, he finally took his price off. But all you could get then was four or five dollars a quintal... You paid thirteen dollars a quintal for it, and you got four for it, so there you go. You lost nine dollars a quintal. If you had 10,000 quintals

of fish, that was \$90,000. Well, you were ruined! I suppose he thought he was doing a good thing, but when he realized he wasn't helping, he wasn't quick enough to fix it." (Gordon LeFeuvre)

However, the regulations were difficult to enforce, and when several major St. John's fish merchants defied the law and sold their fish at the prevailing market prices, the regulations fell apart (Alexander, 1977: 23). Just thirteen months after they were imposed, "the Coaker Regulations" were repealed (Bouzane, 1974: n.p.)

For LeFeuvre Brothers, the blow dealt by the regulations had been severe, my informants believe. Although the regulations were in effect only briefly, LeFeuvre Brothers suffered a huge financial loss, which was almost fatal, Gordon LeFeuvre recalls. But they were able to continue in their operations, functioning at a reduced level for some time while they recouped their loss, and struggled through the early 1920s. LeFeuvre Brothers regained some of their previous prosperity during the mid-1920s, my informants recall, and it seemed possible that they would soon be able to fully recover within a few more years. This was not to be, as the firm was soon dealt a double blow.

The year 1929 was a prosperous year for the salt cod fishery. The bad memories of "the Coaker Regulations" were in the past, and the long, slow recovery of LeFeuvre Brothers was coming to fruition. By November, all the vessels had returned home, and winter had begun to set in. But soon a freak

natural disaster struck the Burin area fishery: the tidal wave (tsunami) which occurred on November 18, 1929 (see Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion of its effects on merchants and fishers). This tidal wave destroyed millions of dollars of property, took many lives, and almost completely wiped out the area's inshore fishery for the next decade (History of Burin, 1977: 157-8).

To make matters even worse, on the international scene the Great Depression had begun with the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in the same month. World markets for many products shrank, and prices plummeted. The markets for cod-fish were no exception, and by the following spring, an economic depression descended on the Burin area, one that did not lift until World War II brought war-industry induced prosperity, my informants feel.

The devastation to the area's fishing grounds by the tidal wave in November was enormous, and the economic problems were amplified by the Great Depression. From these two crippling misfortunes LeFeuvre Brothers began another economic decline. However, Charles LeFeuvre recalls, Thomas and Frank LeFeuvre looked for one last chance to rebuild their business, and embarked upon a new venture. Using what little capital they had left, and operating at a much reduced level, they began to buy Irish salmon from fishers in the area, then readied it for export to Canada. Using their own employees on their premises, Charles explains that the salmon were cleaned,

headed, and gutted, then packed in ice and crated. As salmon were not plentiful in the Burin area, only a few cases would be ready at any one time (never enough to fill one of their coasters). So LeFeuvre Brothers sent the crates up to the government wharf in Burin North, where they were put on board the steamer. From there they arrived in North Sydney, ready for sale, Charles says. Unfortunately, low prices paid for salmon in the early 1930s never made the venture profitable, so within two or three years this operation was discontinued. This experiment may place LeFeuvre Brothers as the pioneers in the fresh fish industry in the Burin area (History of Burin, 1977: 53).

This last resort having proved unsuccessful, LeFeuvre Brothers discontinued most of their operations by 1934 or 1935, Charles recalls. LeFeuvre Brothers as a fish merchant ceased to exist, he says, although they continued operation of the ice house and the cod traps. By this time the sons of Frank and Thomas were young men, and were employed in other occupations. Charles says that the ice house remained very busy into the 1940s, since the newly opened Fishery Products fish plant in Burin North required large amounts of ice. But by the early 1950s, the fish plant began to make its own ice, and the ice house also closed. After a period of high catches that coincided with World War II, he says, the use of the cod traps ceased in the late 1940s. The salt cod fishery had been in decline since the opening of the Fishery Products fish



plant, and the fresh fish industry began to assert its current dominance.

The last of LeFeuvre Brothers' buildings was torn down in the 1970s, having been used as little more than barns and sheds for more than twenty years. The property is still owned by members of the LeFeuvre family, but only their homes still stand. There are few indications of the business that for two generations was the largest single employer in Bulls Cove.

## Chapter IV

### Mini-History Analysis: Were Merchant and Fishing Classes Distinct?

It appears to be the popular Newfoundland attitude that merchants and fishers were quite different classes\* in Newfoundland communities, sharing few social bonds. In this chapter, we will discuss the information presented in the two mini-histories along with information about other Burin merchants and the fishing class in the area. This discussion revolves around the current local attitude presented in Chapter I that "fish merchants formed a class of people fundamentally different from fishers in many ways, with few or no similarities or social bonds with the fishing class". We will discern where differences did exist in the Burin context, and where the classes were similar.

Thomas Nemec, in his study of Trepassey (1974) and its class structure in the nineteenth century, writes:

"(S)ince fishermen overlap with local officialdom, it follows that some of their number could as well have belonged to an incipient middle class, as well as to the lower class... As a result, a status gradient emerged." (Nemec, 1974: 88)

Nemec explains that fishers in Trepassey could not be considered only as members of the lowest social class. He states that "a graduated scale of local officials and authorities existed, which spanned various classes" (Nemec, 1974: 88); some were members of the local "upper class", of a

rising middle class, and some were inshore fishers and subsistence producers. However, he points out that:

"(C)ertain officials were obviously more prestigious than others, as for example, the magistrate, doctor... and local suppliers... Accordingly, there was a broad spectrum of officials in the Harbor." (Nemec, 1974: 87)

He writes that although a "status gradient" appeared to have arisen and fishers were not considered to have simply occupied the lowest class, there were indeed some distinctions between the highest and lower classes. For example,

"The parish priest was situated at the very apex of the social scale... (H)e held a social position above that of anyone else... Following the priest on the local social scale at Trepassey were various authorities, officials, professional men, and... certain primary producers... (T)hey included the Magistrate, Justice of the Peace, Postmaster... Constable, Customs Preventative Officer... (and) fishery suppliers (merchants or their agents), the doctor... telegraph operators... the mailman... school teachers... and of course, any individual elected to the Island's House of Assembly." (Nemec, 1974: 87)

This description makes no note of any fisher who did not hold some public or official office. Rather, persons who were solely fishers and subsistence producers were not considered members of the higher classes. However, Nemec argues that these fishers cannot be all lumped together either. Instead, according to their success and thus their ability to obtain better fishing technology, there were "at least three primary classes of... fishermen present in Trepassey for the latter

half of the nineteenth century: punt and dory, skiff, and banker or schooner" (Nemec, 1974: 88). As he explains,

"(W)ithin the class of skiff fishermen, boat owners/skippers who had two traps, had a somewhat higher status than those with just one... (A) skipper who was a great 'fish killer' was afforded prestige... and status out of proportion to that normally ascribed to his class. If he was... a charismatic figure and had demonstrated strength, stamina and courage, he could even be ranked above visiting 'bankers' or schooner captains." (Nemec, 1974: 88)

It is the current view of my informants that the Burin area class structure was similar to Trepassey's in the late nineteenth century, and into the pre-Confederation twentieth century. Members of the fishing class in Burin often held official posts, and there were doubtless several levels in that class. My informants seem to feel that, among fishers, owners of jackboats and trapboats held a somewhat higher status level than owners of smaller boats like skiffs. Likewise, skiff owners occupied a slightly higher status level than did those fishers who could afford only the smallest boats, dories. My informants today maintain that there was no huge social or class gap between the fishing and merchant classes in Burin such as current local attitude contends. Rather, like Nemec discovered, my informants believe that there was a rough progression through a number of classes, from the smallest boat owner to the largest vessel owner or merchant, with the minister/priest at the top.

People in such occupations as craftsmen, shop owners, and

shore workers, who did not fish for a living (and were generally not boat owners), occupied various levels on this gradient system. Large-scale craftsmen like George Martin Sr, Bulls Cove's cooper, were considered neither merchants, nor fishers. This occupation constituted a separate class in Burin that my informants seem to position roughly between fishers and merchants. Shop owners (i.e. small grocery and drygoods stores that did not deal in fish; see Chapter III) also seem to have occupied this social level.

Shore workers, on the other hand, were considered by my informants to be members of the fishing class. Most fishers in Burin, as in many Newfoundland outports, performed well the duties of a number of occupations, as part of their everyday lives. For example, a fisher who needed a shed built did not contract a carpenter, but erected it himself. A fisher who had a dory or skiff that needed repairs often possessed the skills to perform the repairs. As well, merchants often hired fishers to become part of shore crews to work on their premises, especially before the fishing season began or during the winter (for example, the men who worked on LeFeuvre Brothers' ice house operation were all fishers). These people did not constitute separate classes as small-scale craftsmen, carpenters, or shore crew, but as fishers. My informants see these people as having simply been fishers who had become adept at the skills of other occupations. However, I will use the term "fishing class" instead of "fishing classes" in

reference to fishers who did not supply or outfit the fishery, in contrast to the "merchant class" who did not themselves fish. Other occupations (e.g., craftsmen/shopkeepers) are referred to separately.

One often meets the view today, particularly among the younger generations who did not experience the credit system, that merchants and fishers were altogether different classes of people. The three most common beliefs that many people currently hold to be true are that merchants and fishers received different and separate educations, that they associated mainly with other merchants and married only within their class, and that specific occupations were exclusive to members of either the merchant or fishing class, but none were shared by both. It is my argument that these are stereotypic beliefs that are largely false and oversimplify the actual practices. I do not argue that fishers and merchants were entirely similar; instead, my argument is simply that the "two" classes had more in common than is currently recognized. These beliefs are examined below.

#### Formal Education

The institution of formal education illustrates both differences and similarities between the fishing and merchant classes. My informants report that the education system in the area provided Primer (equivalent to Kindergarten today), Grades One through Five (known as Books I to V), then levels

known as Primary (equivalent to Grade Six), Preliminary A (Grade Seven), Preliminary B (Grade Eight), Intermediate A (Grade Nine), Intermediate B (Grade Ten), and Junior Associate (Grade Eleven). Students had to leave for St. John's to attend the last level, Associate (equivalent today to Grade Twelve). This was not usually possible for children of fishers, but it was common for children of merchants, my informants recall. In Bulls Cove and most of the other small communities, for example, the little schoolhouse contained only Primer and Grades One through Five, at which point students had to walk to Burin North. Len Brushett states that there, in places like the Parish Hall, Primary through Junior Associate were taught.

The children of fishers and the children of merchants (of the same religious denomination) all went to the same schools (up to and including Junior Associate). According to Charles LeFeuvre, two options that existed for the merchant families that were not possible for fishing families were to send the children off to private school in St. John's for these levels, or to employ a tutor. However, my informants do not remember any merchant families in Burin having exercised these options, and they instead sent their children to the local schoolhouse.

In principle and in practice, there seemed to be little or no apparent differentiation while the children were being educated in Burin: my informants feel today that, when they were schoolchildren, the background or class of their families

seemed to make little difference at the time. Gordon LeFeuvre recalls that since they were all in the same one-room school (up to and including Junior Associate), the children all played together, and made friends in all classes. As such, in the small communities like Bulls Cove, merchant's and fisher's children grew up knowing each other well. Disciplinary action also seemed to have been meted out equally. As a former fisher explains:

"Me and Cecil Shave used to sit in the seat together. If you turned your head sideways or done anything, you had to come up to the front and the teacher, old Haynes, would get the hardwood ruler and beat the hands off ya! That'd harden your heart, sure! I seen Ern Bartlett, that was Policeman Bartlett's son, he was a big fella, I seen Pearce ringin' his ears... And Mr. King, he was there before Pearce, he was goin' to strap Gordon Bartlett (a member of the Burin North merchant family), and Gordon wouldn't take the strap! And he seized into him! The two of them, like two cats, on the floor, tumblin' head over heels! And King was a big man too! But when Ern went home, his father strapped him for not taking the strap from the teacher!" (Len Brushett)

The teacher may have treated children of one economic background differently than those from another, but information from my informants suggests that they either did not recognize such cases at the time, or do not today feel that such differentiation occurred.

School chores were assigned to each student equally, regardless of class. Harold R. Mitchell remembers that girls were given lighter tasks, such as cleaning the chalk board and



running small errands, while boys were given heavier, more manual tasks, such as bringing wood to light the fire in the morning.

However, there were class differences in educational expectations. Merchant and fishing families had different requirements for their children, and this greatly affected their attitudes towards learning, educational experience, and long-term accomplishment.

#### Fishing families:

Due to the laborious nature of fishing, fishers needed help from their families whenever they could get it. As already discussed, the wives had domestic tasks to take care of, including curing and drying their own fish and making hay. But the wives were also regarded as a very important part of the workforce, working on the merchant's premises, and often being contracted by fish merchants to make their fish. With their wives already overburdened, fishers looked towards their sons for help, and wives looked towards their daughters for help. In concert with this, the perceived lack of a need for a full formal education meant that children of fishing families rarely received any amount of education beyond Grades Four or Five (Books IV or V), roughly ages 10-12, depending on what age a child began school (a child who started school at age seven or eight might not have progressed past Grade Two or Three, notes Len Brushett), according to my informants.

Charles LeFevre maintains that there were few jobs or

careers in Burin in the pre-Confederation era that required any more education than that which could be obtained in Burin. Among these were "the Magistrate, the Constable, and the Customs Officer". Len Brushett adds to this the doctor (and occasionally a nurse), the clergy, school teachers, and the fish merchants.

The lack of jobs that required an education often meant that fishers tended to consider any amount of formal education that was beyond a basic level to be unnecessary. Walter Brown Hodder maintains that "education was only a hindrance then." The ability to read and write, however, was seen as beneficial by everyone. Most liked to be able to read the Bible, for instance. But my informants said that, at the time, being able to sign their names rather than mark with an "X" was the most that was actually needed in any daily activities. Even so, "many fishermen and their families still could not read or write", according to Mary Dober.

Therefore, when a son or daughter was needed to help the father or mother of a fishing family, he or she was simply taken out of school. Harold R. Mitchell states that daughters were taken out of school so that they could take care of domestic chores while the mother was on the flake or in the garden. Boys were taken out of school so that they could fish with their fathers and uncles, he says.

"I was glad I could help my poor ol' father.  
He worked so hard for me for a few years... I  
was satisfied to come out of school and help

him.. If you were the son of a fisherman, you had to help your father. When you were old enough, he took you out of school." (Harold R. Mitchell) (Note: "old enough" - the age at which a child's parents deemed him/her able to help with chores/fishing on a regular basis; in some cases, as young as eight or nine).

There were, however, a few fishing families that preferred that their children stay in school. Sam J. Hodder says that some of the children of these families left school of their own accord, even against the wishes of their parents, to seek employment. Some did so to help their parents, while others left school to support themselves:

"I could've had a good education, but I didn't want to learn. Many didn't bother with an education them days. We wanted to get to work, make a few dollars." (Len Brushett)

Some children of fishers managed to obtain a higher education than most, but affordability was a factor in limiting this as well. While schooling was free, to receive an education higher than that which was offered in the area (Associate) meant sending the children off to St. John's. The cost of doing so, for board and books alone, was prohibitive to most fishing families in the area. Thus children of a fishing family could not reasonably expect to obtain a full education, my informants feel, even if they desired one.

Merchant families:

On the other hand, children of a merchant family could expect to receive a full education, if they were so inclined.

In this case, the cost of education was usually not prohibitive. All the children of merchants had progressed past Primary, and most obtained at least Junior Associate in Burin. For many merchants' children, according to Gordon LeFeuvre, education beyond Junior Associate, which meant boarding in St. John's, was obtained.

Why children of merchant families were able to obtain a good education was not limited to affordability. The main reason is that all merchant businesses were family-run; their sons were expected to carry on the business (daughters often worked as clerks and bookkeepers until they got married. Since they left and joined their husband's families, only males are remembered by my informants as carrying on the businesses). The imperatives of operating a competitive business included higher skill in literacy, numeracy, and business subjects, such that confidential business matters could be kept within the family circle of interest and thus managed effectively. Most members of fishing families did not acquire these higher levels of training. The most important difference here is that, whereas most fishing families saw little need for advanced formal education, merchant families realized that education was the key to staying in business.

All merchant firms in the Burin area were started by persons with higher levels of education than the general populace, and usually much higher than that of the fishing class. In Chapter III we saw that Billy Paul had received an

education from what was probably a business or accounting school, according to Marion Hollett, and had inherited the business from his uncle John, a man whom Marion believes also had a similar type of education. We also saw that the firm of LeFeuvre Brothers was started by Frank LeFeuvre, a man whom Gordon LeFeuvre says was well-educated (although he doesn't know what kind of education). And Frank was joined by his brother Thomas, a teacher himself. W. and T. Hollett Ltd as well was founded by two men who had been well-educated beyond the local school system, which Wayne Hollett recounts from family tradition (although he doesn't know what kind of education). In each of these cases, my informants state that the merchant's children usually received "the best kind of education". This tended to be higher than that of the general public, according to Wayne and Charles LeFeuvre. Most of these children eventually took some part in their parents' businesses, usually as bookkeepers or clerks, recalls Esther Williams. In some cases, for example W. and T. Hollett Ltd and Billy Paul, the sons and nephews took over the firms when the founders passed away or retired. My informants believe this was only possible through advanced education.

Indeed, it was assumed by fishers and merchants alike that all members of a merchant family had obtained or would obtain an education higher than that of the general populace:

"The merchants had a better education than the fishermen... They could afford it. And their father before them too. They grew up with it,

see, and then they were put into it too."  
(Harold R. Mitchell)

"You could get a very good education in those days if you had the money. A few people got a good education. Mr. Tom and Mr. Frank LeFeuvre had the biggest kind of education."  
(Len Brushett)

Linked to this understanding was the appreciation that merchant and fishing families had different needs. While fishing families needed as much help from their children as possible, merchant families were not in such a bind. Merchant families in the area were able to hire people, not only to work on their premises, but also in their homes and gardens, as did Maria Paul (Chapter III). This, in part, gave merchant's children the time and opportunity to further their education, a luxury which children of fishing families usually did not have.

Attitudes differed little among merchants and fishers regarding advanced education. Children of fisher families who saw the children of merchant families (their age-mates and often their friends) being sent away to St. John's for advanced schooling rarely felt that they were missing out on a good opportunity, my informants state. Those who were children of fishers assert that they were bothered little by this, since they usually preferred to "work (i.e. fish) and earn an income, even though it wasn't much, over sitting in a classroom. Anyone who was fishing didn't need a big education anyway", Len Brushett replies. They missed their friends,

they say, but they figured "that is how it was, all a part of life, and we would see them again anyway", another former fisher notes. My informants who were children of merchants had a similar attitude. They say that although they knew that their friends and age-mates from fishing families would be earning an income while they (the merchant's children) were away at school, it did not bother them. Merchant children knew that once they finished "in a couple of years or so", one former merchant family member reports, "they would be home again and earning a good income. Besides, they had to learn how to run their business, so they had to go".

We have seen that, in respect to education, merchant and fishing families had both similar and contrasting experiences and values. The quality of education that the children received while they were still in the same grades, in Burin, appears to be similar. My informants feel that, ostensibly, little or no differentiation was made between students by the children themselves or the teacher. Students seem to have been treated equally. The major difference comes beyond these lower grades, when the children of fishing families began to leave school, whereas the children of merchant families tended to stay in the local school system, and eventually attend school in St. John's. Thus they are similar as a result of initial common education while they differ in their perceived need for education, the ability to afford it, and the amount of education obtained.

### Marriage Patterns

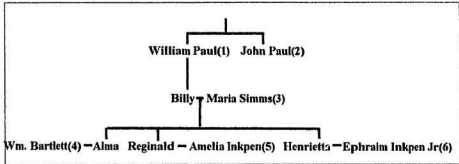
It is often assumed locally that members of the merchant and fishing classes only married within their respective classes. However, the historical record offers much evidence to counter this view. Using three merchant families as examples, I will show that the merchant class in Burin did not entirely practice class endogamy, but rather that interclass marriage was common between the merchant and fishing classes. These three families have been chosen because I have been able to obtain a more complete kinship record of them. Kinship for other merchant families was less certain. My informants (including members of these families) were less often able to say, for example, whether a certain person's parents had been members of fishing families, or had come from merchant families. Likewise, other considerations discussed below sometimes could not be ascertained for a certain member or members of a particular merchant family. Only for these three merchant families discussed below (out of about 9 or 10 that, according to local history, operated in Burin during the study period) was an accurate (according to my informants) and more complete kinship record available, during the period that these families operated merchant businesses. These are the Paul family of Paul's Hill, the LeFeuvre family of Bulls Cove, and the Hollett family of Burin North.

Of the three discussed, only Billy Paul's family seems to have married wholly within their class (see Kinship Chart I).



Kinship Chart I

Kinship chart of the Paul family of Paul's Hill, during their operation of a merchant business, 1840s - 1906:



1- William Paul was the son of an upperclass businessman in Weymouth, England. William too apparently worked with his father in this business.

2- John Paul, William's brother, arrived in Burin ready to set up a fishery supply business. It seems that he did not apprentice in Burin, but rather had already obtained the capital needed to start such an operation. Marion Hollett believes that John must have been successful in Weymouth, either through his father's business, or one of his own. John did not marry, and had no children.

3- Maria Simms, Billy's wife, was from a "relatively upper class family" in Harbour Breton, Marion Hollett says. She believes that they may have been shopkeepers and owned vessels.

4- William Bartlett was a member of a merchant family that operated out of the Bay Roberts area during the late nineteenth century.

5- Amelia Inkpen was the daughter of Ephraim Inkpen Sr., a small-scale merchant and vessel owner in Ship Cove, Burin. His business operated during the 1890s.

6- Ephraim Inkpen Jr. was the brother of Amelia Inkpen.

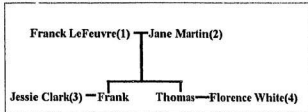
All information is from Marion Hollett, and includes all members of the family for this period that she can recount from oral history.

Marion Hollett states that her grandfather Billy married Maria Simms from Harbour Breton, who was from a "relatively upper class family, possibly vessel owners or shopkeepers there". All their children married members of other merchant's families. Their daughter, Henrietta, married Ephraim Inkpen Junior, and their son, Reginald, married Ephraim's sister, Amelia, Marion says. Ephraim Inkpen Senior was the owner of a merchant business in Ship Cove in the 1890s, and had several fishing schooners and two coasters (History of Burin, 1977: 41). Marion also states that their other daughter, Alma, married a non-local Bartlett. He came from a merchant family in the Bay Roberts area. Whether the Paul family's apparent class endogamy was by conscious prescription or not is not known by their descendants today.

However, members of the LeFeuvre family of Bulls Cove married both inside and outside their class (see Kinship Chart II). Gordon LeFeuvre tells us that the first LeFeuvre who permanently resided in Burin was his grandfather, Franck, a prominent vessel captain. In the 1870s he married Jane Martin of Bulls Cove, who was from a fishing family that apparently owned no fishing vessels. Around the turn of the century, their son, Frank, married a young lady from a similar fishing family, Jessie Clark of Burin North. However, Frank's brother, Thomas, courted within his class. Charles LeFeuvre says that he married Florence White, the daughter of the Constable who was stationed in Burin.

Kinship Chart II

Kinship chart of the LeFeuvre family of Bulls Cove, during their operation of a merchant business, 1898 - 1930s:



1- Franck LeFeuvre was probably from a middle class family, in Jersey. He was employed by the Falle merchant family, and worked his way up to eventually become captain of one of their vessels.

2- Jane Martin was the daughter of a fisher in Bulls Cove. Her family apparently did not own any vessels.

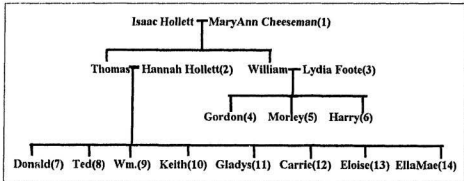
3- Jessie Clark was from a fishing family in Burin North. Her family did not own any vessels.

4- Florence White was the daughter of the Constable stationed in Burin. Originally from Brigus.

All information is from Gordon and Charles LeFeuvre.

Kinship Chart III

Kinship chart of the Hollett family of Burin North, during their operation of a merchant business, ca. 1914 - 1961:



1- Mary Ann Cheeseman's background is unclear. Her family was from Port Au Bras, a small fishing community near Burin.

2- Hannah Hollett was from a Burin fishing family. Her father, although not a vessel owner, was the captain of a vessel for a merchant firm.

3- Lydia Foote was the daughter of a fisher in Burin. Her family did not own any vessels.

4- Gordon married Minnie Lorenzen of Garnish, Fortune Bay. Her family operated a seasonal salmon and lobster cannery there during the early part of this century, as well as a general store. Although they were one of the merchants in Garnish, they were a small operation and owned no vessels.

5- Morley married Marion Bartlett, grand-daughter of fish merchant Billy Paul.

6- Harry married Millicent Reid of Collins Cove, in Burin. She was a member of a fishing family, and her father was employed as a cook on a fishing vessel for many seasons.

7- Donald married May Stevenson of Harbour Grace. Her background is unclear, although Wayne Hollett feels that her family was more likely fishers than merchants or shopkeepers.

8- Ted married Marguerite Morris, the daughter of the United Church Minister in Burin.

9- William was killed in World War I, and was not married.

Kinship Chart III continued

10- Keith married Peggy Butler, the daughter of another United Church Minister in Burin.

11- Gladys died in her teens, and was not married.

12- Carrie married Rod Dancey of Great Burin (on Burin Island), the son of an entrepreneur. His father John operated a small ferry that carried passengers and cargo from the communities on Burin Island to Burin. Rod later took over, and operated this ferry until 1935.

13- Eloise married Wilfred Buffett of Grand Bank. His family were the operators of the merchant firm G.A. Buffett Ltd.

14- Ella Mae married Harold Stevenson of Harbour Grace, the brother of May Stevenson.

All information is from Wayne Hollett. Chart is limited to three generations for clarity.

Like the LeFeuvre family of Bulls Cove, the Hollett family of Burin North, operators of W. and T. Hollett Ltd, did not practise strict class endogamy or exogamy (see Kinship Chart III). Rather, members of the Hollett family married members of their class and members from other classes. Wayne Hollett reports that both of the founding partners, brothers Thomas and William, married daughters of fishers. About 1900-10, William married Lydia Foote, and Thomas married Hannah Hollett, the daughter of a fishing captain (Wayne recalls his family history says that Hannah's father was not a vessel owner). Their sons and daughters too married both within their class and outside.

From this evidence, it seems that strict class endogamy was not the norm for merchant and fishing classes in the Burin area during the study period. Instead, members of one class often married members of another, and the merchant class was no exception. Members of the LeFeuvre family, for example, married not only "down" (e.g. to fishers' daughters) but also within their class (e.g. to a policeman's daughter). Members of the Hollett family married down, within their class, and also married "up" (e.g. two sons married daughters of the highest local class of all - the Minister's family - see Kinship Chart III). The Paul family's practice of endogamy may have been a matter of preference, but my informants are uncertain.

Information from my informants suggests that daughters

and sons of fishing families who married up into these merchant families may, in part, have had aspirations to marry for convenience (i.e., to better themselves). But my informants believe that marriage reasons were "much more likely" the result of affections than for any other purpose, although they admit they cannot say for sure. They believe that any person, whether a member of a merchant or fisher family, would have been selective in their choice of partner, preferring those who had such desirable traits as being more industrious and attractive. As we have seen, these partners were chosen from all of the local (and sometimes non-local) classes.

The evidence presented suggests that some merchant families were class endogamous while others married both within and outside their class - the point being that marriage partners for any member of the merchant and fishing classes could be, and often were, chosen from any other class. Therefore, merchant and fishing classes in the Burin area were less socially distinct than popular opinion suggests.

#### Occupational Possibilities

Like the foregoing discussions of education and marriage patterns, both contrasts and similarities existed between the two classes with regard to occupational possibilities. While certain occupations were more or less exclusive to a particular class, some major ones were pursued by members of both.

In the Burin area, it was fairly certain that members of fishing families would not aspire to the position of merchant. Even if they might, such a position required an education, or at least skills, higher than the general populace normally obtained. In a few cases, however, successful fishers with at least basic literacy skills did open small shops (see Chapter V). These small scale operators did not take fish from fishers, so they were not regarded locally as "merchants", according to Len Brushett and James Reddy (age 61), whose father was one such shopkeeper.

In the Burin area, it was expected and often necessary that sons would usually follow in the footsteps of their fathers. A fisher trained his sons in the ways and the knowledge of the sea:

"I just went into Grade Two, and my father said 'You can't go no more. You got to come with me'. He was dory fishing. I turned eleven years old when I went with him, and I stayed with him until I was fourteen... Then I was able to go with George Bennett in Port Au Bras. That's how I started, and I never stopped no more. I was fishing almost sixty years." (Sam J. Hodder)

"I went with me father in the boat in the spring when I was twelve years old. And I was fishing before that too. Out in the cove, dory fishing with Uncle Pad and Uncle Tom first... And I've been at it ever since. You had to help your family, see, b'y. It was bad times... When you were working with your father you didn't see much money. Work for my board and a bit of clothes... That's how I learned." (Michael Doody)

Likewise, a merchant desired that his sons learn the



business so that they might one day take it over. Occasionally a daughter worked as a clerk or a bookkeeper, but this position was always seen as temporary, since the daughter often left when she married (no female merchants operated in Burin, my informants say). Sons of merchants learned as they grew up how such a business operated; monetary transactions, credit advances, dealing with their own suppliers, and such. Sons of fishers had no like knowledge. The son of a fisher was greatly disadvantaged for such a position, even if he had higher than usual formal education (not to mention the capital required to embark upon a new business). Formal education could not entirely teach one how to be a merchant. It was learned also through direct association, Gordon LeFeuvre maintains, through working with a merchant. A merchant's sons had that advantage. Likewise, sons of merchants did not usually become fishers. This is one instance in which social distance is clearly apparent.

Other positions besides that of merchant were largely inaccessible to members of the fishing class; the Customs Officer was one. Marion Hollett's grandfather, Billy Paul, had been Customs Officer, and she states that this role required a good formal education. The Customs Officer had to be highly literate, and proficient in numeracy (each vessel that he dealt with often carried a large value of cargo). Generally, these men were hired from elsewhere on the Island, my informants recall, and were all educated above that of the

typical fisher. Although Billy was a Burin resident, Marion believes he was chosen for the position at least in part because of the formal education he had received in England, and almost thirty years of running one of the largest merchant businesses in Burin. So Customs Officer (and Tidewaiter, a similar posting) was a position to which a member of the fishing class could not reasonably aspire, but to which a member of the merchant class often did. Another position was that of Constable, who also was required to have a relatively high formal education, according to Charles LeFeuvre, whose grandfather had been Constable in Burin for a number of years.

However, some occupations were not exclusive to any one class. Members of both the merchant and fishing classes could, and did, aspire to them. One such example was the important and highly respected position of vessel's captain (fishing vessels and coasters). It was often expected of the sons of a merchant that they would captain ("skipper") his vessels. W.H. Hollett of Burin North is probably the best example. Wayne Hollett explains that since William (W.H.) had skippered vessels himself, he taught his sons Morley and Harry the ropes. They became very able captains in their own right. Morley, as skipper of the "Calvin Pauline", and Harry, skipper of the "James Young", two of W.H. Hollett's several vessels, Wayne says, had learned mainly through hands-on experience.

Andersen (1988) supports this finding. He reports that the knowledge required to become skipper of a vessel was

indeed generally obtained through hands-on experience:

"Most Newfoundland banks skippers were nearly or totally illiterate by informant accounts. Their success hinged greatly upon extensive experience, keen observation, and memory. Regularly kept logs were rare, and much of what a master knew he had to 'find out for himself'." (Andersen, 1988: 91)

Many skippers were not illiterate of course; the well-educated Hollett's, Morley and Harry, are one such example. Marion Hollett states that Morley attended Memorial University College in St. John's, and his brother Harry obtained a full secondary education, although he did not attend college. However, as Andersen points out, formal education was not considered a prerequisite. Fishers (especially banks fishers) could become captains of vessels for merchant firms. In fact, many of the most recognized captains who sailed from Burin were from fishing families: Art Manning, Don Moulton, and Jack Brenton, among others, according to Ernest Williams. Men like these, my informants say, had proven themselves as above average fishers on board the merchant's vessels, and were seen to possess leadership skills. Andersen writes that these were the types of men selected to learn to skipper a vessel:

"Vessel owners preferred to recruit skippers who came 'up the ladder' from the ranks of experienced banks dory fishermen. Steps in the progression were: dory fishermen or dory 'mate', to dory 'skipper', mate or first hand, to fishing captain." (Andersen, 1990: 170)

Another position into which members of both classes could

enter was that of Telegraph Operator, the first one of whom was Billy Paul's wife-to-be, Maria Simms. Later this position was held by members of fishing families, such as Christine Flynn (History of Burin, 1977: 131; Ernest Williams). Other positions were Post Master or Mistress (Hannah Cheeseman of Port Au Bras, one of my informants, served in this capacity for many years), and shopkeeper (each community had one or two small general stores that dealt only in cash [Chapter V]). Hannah says that although literacy was considered necessary in her occupation, and Charles LeFeuvre says both literacy and numeracy were necessary for shopkeeping, this did not dissuade members of fishing families from obtaining such employment. However, these people did tend to have a higher level of formal education than most in their class. As well, members of merchant families, and members of fishing families who did receive higher levels of education, entered such occupations as school teachers, clergy, or entered an order of nuns. However, in most cases, these positions were not held in Burin, but were transferred to various areas of Newfoundland.

As in the discussion regarding education, once again we find that the merchant and fishing classes had both contrasts and similarities, with regards to occupational possibilities. The amount of formal education a person had obtained could limit or expand these possibilities. The amount of informal education did likewise: since sons usually followed in their father's footsteps, members of each class often obtained only

the knowledge that was relevant to their own livelihoods. However, we have seen that, in some important instances, members of different classes shared in prominent and often highly regarded occupations. The requirements for these did not necessarily hinge on high levels of formal education, but rather on high levels of ability, gained through lengthy experience, as demonstrated in the case of vessel captain.

#### Other Considerations

A few more examples of social interaction that occurred on a daily basis are described here, which show similarities and disparities between the fishing and merchant classes. Religion, for example, played a large part in the lives of Burin residents, my informants say. They believe that religious affiliation tended to unify the two classes. Merchants were not all affiliated with one denomination while fishers belonged to another. Rather, fisher and merchant families belonged to the same denominations, and worshipped at the same respective churches. According to Ernest Williams, the LeFeuvre family, the Bartlett family, and the Taul family were Anglican, like so many fishing families in Burin. The Hollett's of Burin North belonged to the United Church, Wayne Hollett states, as were many other Burin residents (I am not aware of any merchants that operated in the area with other religious affiliations). Members of one Church do not seem to have tended to associate with a merchant simply because he was

a member of their denomination or congregation, my informants maintain. A merchant might have as employees and clients members of any denomination or congregation.

As well, my informants state that Church-based groups, such as the choir and vestry, often were made up of members from both classes. For example, Marion Hollett reports that Billy Paul was a long-time member of his Church's choir, and occupied a pew "right next to the people who worked for him". My informants report that other merchants in the area also performed regularly in such voluntary associations. Religion was thus neither a barrier nor a prerequisite to economic relations, my informants feel.

Special occasions too meant that all residents of the area could meet and interact socially. During Christmas, members of merchant families were often invited to visit at a fisher's home, and my informants state that they usually accepted the invitation. And similarly, fishers visited at merchant's homes during Christmas. Members of both classes were invited to each other's weddings as well, Marion Hollett remembers. She says that her grandfather Billy Paul never turned down an invitation for a visit. Likewise, common celebrations such as "times\*", soup suppers, and garden parties were all well attended by members of both classes, my informants recall.

In a similar vein, class had little part in childhood relations. Just as children of both merchant and fisher

families worshipped and went to school together, they also played together and oftentimes became close friends. Childhood friendships often endured for years, even into the senior years, Charles LeFeuvre says.

However, a social difference is apparent when discussing the growing of gardens and the raising of animals. Nearly all families in the Burin area kept gardens with a variety of vegetables, but those of merchant families tended to be oriented more towards complementing their diet, while gardens of fisher families often were intended to provide as much sustenance as possible. As well, my informants state that although most fishing families kept a couple of sheep for wool and mutton, maybe a cow or two for milk, butter, and beef, and occasionally a few hens for eggs, merchant families tended to keep few, if any, animals, except for horses for transportation. Merchants bought butter, eggs, and milk, and were able to order meat from their suppliers, along with other goods, or to buy it from other residents of the community.

"We used to get fresh butter from Mrs. Hennebury in Mortier. She used to make wonderful fresh butter. My mother used to ask me to walk down there all the time." (Gordon LeFeuvre)

Fishing families could not afford to buy these items, and therefore they raised their own animals and utilized the various products they yielded, Ernest Williams explains.

### Class Analysis Conclusions

We have seen in this chapter that there were many similarities and social bonds between the fishing and merchant classes, in contrast to the current opinion of local people that these classes were very separate and dissimilar. I have not argued that fishers and merchants had no differences; rather, I have argued that they were not as different as current local opinion seems to hold. Sider (1986) as well suggests that fishing and merchant classes in Newfoundland were quite dissimilar. Amidst the similarities I have given as examples, I must concur with Sider that the main differentiating factor relates to the classes' access to economic roles, their differing responsibilities, and their ability to control the economic activity in their area (for example, for LeFeuvre Brothers it was Bulls Cove; for Hollett's and G.A. Bartlett Ltd it was Burin North). The fishing class had little power; rather, they were either employed by the merchants or sold their fish to them. As such, fishers did not control economic activity; they were largely governed by decisions made by the merchant. In particular, the control of price knowledge and price setting, and record keeping, were the merchants' domain. As well, fishers had no direct access to markets. Lacking capital with which to finance their own market development, they were forced to rely on the merchants for their livelihoods. The merchants bought fish from them, then sold it on the markets. These distinctions between



merchants and fishers were the main factors that separated the two classes. Therefore, this thesis recognizes that the two classes did have some differences, as has been illustrated. However, the similarities I have shown in this chapter present class relationships that were also based on strong social bonds (formal education, marriage, common occupations, religious affiliations, and such), not just social inequalities, as current local opinion incorrectly maintains.

## Chapter V

### Merchants and Fishers: A Discussion of Arguments

This chapter discusses two positions relating to arguments put forward by prominent writers, as noted in Chapter I. The first position concerns the popular idea met in literature dealing with Newfoundland, that cash and cash transactions were non-existent or at least rare in pre-Confederation Newfoundland. We will find that while the credit system was still prominent in the Burin fishery and economy, cash was nonetheless present and important for much of the period examined in this study. The second position concerns a viewpoint reflected in a statement by Gerald Sider (1986), who seems to feel that Newfoundland merchants exploited fishers to the extent of keeping them poor and powerless at every opportunity, and that they displayed little or no concern for the fishing class. While my aim is not to refute this viewpoint, when examined against evidence from the Burin area, we find a number of exceptions. These serve to better qualify this perspective to allow for regional diversity.

### The Local Economy and Cash: Another Method of Transaction

Lord Amulree, reflecting upon the Newfoundland fishery in general, wrote in the Newfoundland Royal Commission Report of 1933 that "Money did not change hands... there were families in Newfoundland who had never seen money in their lives" (Lord

Amulree, 1933, as quoted by George Ferlin, 1974: 117). This statement encourages a somewhat stereotypic notion that cash and cash transactions were nonexistent in the Newfoundland fishery. Although the fishery in Burin still operated mainly on the credit system (also referred to as the "truck system" by many scholars) until Confederation with Canada in 1949, I shall present examples of cash and cash transactions that were common in the Burin fishery and economy. These became increasingly more common through the first half of the twentieth century, especially since the early 1920s. As well, G.M. Story states that "Not until the Second World War... did... cash incomes arrive in Newfoundland" (Story, 1974: 19). Story fails to make the distinction between the economy as a whole, made up of many industries and occupations, and the fishery, which was only one component of it, although the major one. Whereas Lord Amulree leads one to believe that cash and cash transactions did not exist in the Newfoundland fishery, Story's statement leads one to believe that they did not exist in the Newfoundland economy at all prior to World War II.

My argument here is twofold. First, while the Newfoundland fishery still concentrated on the credit system, cash and cash transactions were not nonexistent as Lord Amulree believed, but were instead an important, albeit small, ongoing part of the pre-Confederation Burin fishery. Secondly, in the Burin economy as a whole (which includes other industries and occupations), cash and cash transactions were quite important,

long before World War II, unlike that which Story suggests for the Newfoundland economy. Historian James Hiller offers a better description of the actual workings of the Newfoundland (and Burin) economy. He writes:

"In the late nineteenth century, and increasingly in the twentieth, the cash component of the economy expanded, but the fishery itself remained based on an exchange of commodities between fisherman and merchant until the 1940s and '50s" (Hiller, 1990: 86).

Hiller makes the distinction between the economy as a whole and its major component, the fishery. His statement permits the presence of some cash and cash transactions in the fishery, but it remained organized such that these were not the primary method of doing business. As for the economy, he does state that the "cash component" was indeed becoming more important as a means of transaction and income. I will discuss the "economy" and the "fishery" together.

That there was an important "cash component" in Burin in the early years of this century is evidenced by the fact that the first bank in Burin was established in 1910 (History of Burin, 1977: 183). However, Keough (1976) notes that expansion of banking facilities throughout the Island had begun earlier:

"With the failure of indigenous banks in the crash of 1894, Canadian banks moved to Newfoundland to fill the resultant vacuum... Small banks were established in certain out-ports where it was felt they were necessary and feasible." (Keough, 1976: 41)

A number of merchant businesses operated in the Burin area during the first half of this century (see Figure IV). In Burin North, most prominent were G.A. Bartlett Ltd and W. and T. Hollett Ltd (which was to later become Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd, but both were known each as simply Hollett's). In Bulls Cove, there was LeFeuvre Brothers and on Paul's Hill, the business of Billy Paul, as well as various other smaller shops (History of Burin, 1977: 47-54).

Located in Burin North, G.A. Bartlett Ltd (see Figure V) was one of the largest firms in Burin. Their transaction preference was to have their employees and fishers take up supplies with them instead of cash, recalls Jim Riggs. For those people who worked on the premises (on the flakes and in the fish stores) and on their vessels, cash was not made readily available, he says. At all the fish merchant firms, most employees, instead of wages, and fishers, in exchange for their fish, received goods and supplies from the merchant (it was called "taking it up"), rather than cash, according to Len Brushett. My informants say that G.A. Bartlett Ltd was restrictive with their cash, and they let it be known that they did not prefer any cash to be taken instead of goods. G.A. Bartlett Ltd employees rarely received cash at all, except where the Church, times, and small expenditures such as doctor's fees, were concerned.

W. and T. Hollett Ltd (see Figure V and Photographs V and VI), most often referred to as Hollett's, was the largest firm

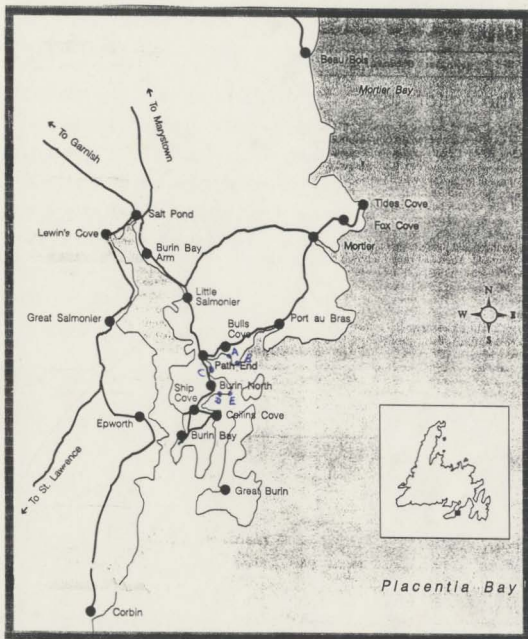


Figure IV - Please refer to next page.

Map courtesy of Decks Awash (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland), Volume 19, Number 6, p.2, 1990.

LEGEND  
Figure IV

Map indicating the location of prominent fish merchants in Burin in study time frame.

- A - site of LeFeuvre Brothers' business, Bulls Cove.
- B - site of Falles' business, Jersey Room.
- C - site of Billy Paul's business, Paul's Hill.
- D - site of Hollett's business, Burin North.
- E - site of G.A. Bartlett Ltd's business, Burin North.

From Decks Awash (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland), Volume 19, Number 6, p. 2. 1990.

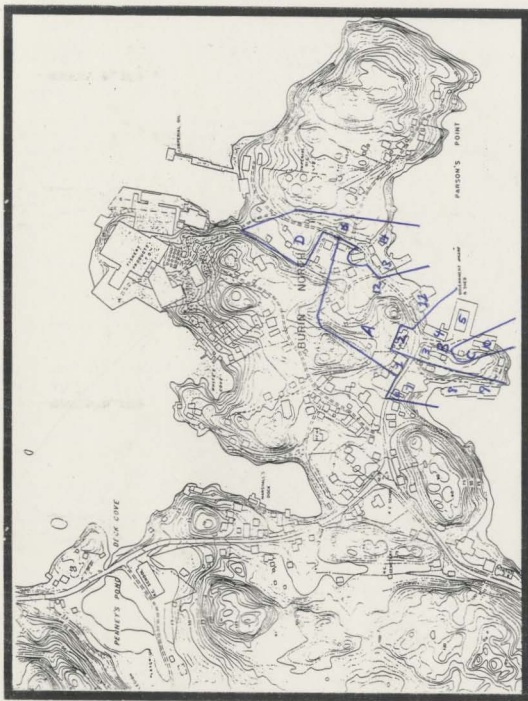


Figure V - Please refer to next page.

Department of Municipal Affairs  
"Burin, Newfoundland", 1966



LEGEND  
Figure V

Map indicating general land holdings and premises of Hollett's and G.A. Bartlett Ltd in Burin North during the period 1910s-1950s. Some buildings, shown or not, were built or torn down during this period.

Areas A and C are owned by Hollett's. Area D is owned by G.A. Bartlett Ltd. Area B is owned by others, mostly the Federal Government since Confederation; by the Newfoundland Government before.

- 1 - Hollett's shops.
- 2 - current Post Office (the original was also on this site).
- 3 - Courthouse.
- 4 - Cold storage. Held bait which had been brought in by the government to sell to fishers.
- 5 - Government wharf (the original was built in the 1880s).
- 6 - Bank of Nova Scotia since 1919. Hollett's had formerly owned this land.
- 7 - William Hollett's house (partner of W. and T. Hollett Ltd, later the operator of W.H. Hollett). This house was later owned by his son Morley.
- 8 - artificial fish dryer owned by W.H. Hollett; originally a fish store owned by W. and T. Hollett Ltd.
- 9 - fish/salt stores owned by Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd
- 10 - general purpose store owned by Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd; originally owned by W. and T. Hollett Ltd.
- 11 - general purpose store owned by Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd; first floor stored heavy items such as lumber.
- 12 - garage owned by Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd.
- 13 - fish stores owned by G.A. Bartlett Ltd. Long rectangular building across the road is G.A. Bartlett Ltd's general shop.
- 14 - cookhouse owned by G.A. Bartlett Ltd.
- 15 - George A. Bartlett's house.

Other buildings are houses and outbuildings. Other land is generally pasture and marsh.

From Department of Municipal Affairs. "Burin, Newfoundland. Sheet Number One". Scale 200 ft to 1 inch (24m = 1cm), 1966.

All descriptions courtesy of Wayne Hollett, Ernest Williams, and Marion Hollett.



Photograph V

Please refer to next page

LEGEND  
Photograph V

Photograph indicating a portion of the general land holdings and premises of W. and T. Hollett Ltd in Burin North, ca. 1905-1919.

1- William Hollett's place of residence until 1919, when he built a house across the road in front of #7 (towards the road).

2-3- W. and T. Hollett Ltd's general shop. When the firm went bankrupt in the 1920s, #2 became the shop of W.H. Hollett, and #3 became the shop of Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd (the shop was partitioned in the middle).

4- Thomas Hollett's place of residence until he bought a house that is located outside this photograph. After W. and T. Hollett divided, Thomas used this for storage for Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd.

5- Post Office.

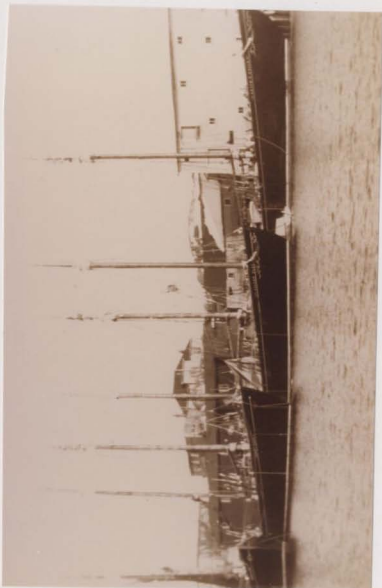
6- outbuilding in which a generator was kept to supply electricity (mainly for electric lights) to Hollett's shops across the road (before electricity came to Burin in 1931). Called the "Delco house".

7- Hollett's flakes.

8- Courthouse.

Other buildings are owned by other people.

Photograph courtesy of Wayne Hollett. All descriptions courtesy of Wayne Hollett, Marion Hollett, and Ernest Williams.



Photograph VI

Please refer to next page

LEGEND  
Photograph VI

Photograph indicating a portion of the premises of W.H. Hollett and Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd, known as "Hollett's back dock", ca. 1946.

1-4 are all Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd's schooners.

1- "Joan Ella Mae", a fishing schooner; 60 tons.

2- "Trinity North", a coasting schooner ("coaster"); 75-80 tons.

3- "Golden Glow", a fishing schooner; 106 tons.

4- "Keith V. Colin", a fishing schooner; 160 tons.

5- the building housing the shops of W.H. Hollett and Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd.

6- W.H. Hollett's artificial fish dryer.

7- Courthouse.

8-10- Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd's salt and fish stores.

All weights are approximate.

Photograph courtesy of Wayne Hollett. All descriptions courtesy of Wayne Hollett and Johnny Lundrigan.

in Burin North, and possibly in Burin, according to my informants. Like the other large fish merchant firms, Hollett's made cash available to those who had a need for it. They too preferred that one's earnings be taken up in supplies with them, but cash was given when needed for Church donations, times, and such. But Hollett's was less restrictive with cash, my informants say, since "you didn't have to persuade them as much" as one did with G.A. Bartlett Ltd.

LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove was established in 1898 (see Chapter III), and soon became a large business concern. They employed a fair proportion of the community's workforce (men, women, and children), out of a total population of about 150, Gordon LeFeuvre says.

Like other local merchants, LeFeuvre Brothers preferred that each employee or fisher who dealt with them take up their wages or value of fish with them. This was partly because cash, although present, was not yet plentiful in the area nor was it the primary method of transaction, and partly because supplying a fisher on credit, against his wages or earnings, kept him beholden to the merchant, better ensuring constant returns. Taking up goods and supplies was not an absolute rule though. Rather, it was the customary way of doing business, and it was not expected by either LeFeuvre Brothers or Bulls Cove's residents that a fisher or employee would prefer otherwise, according to Len Brushett and Gordon LeFeuvre.

However, LeFeuvre Brothers did allow a relatively minor

amount of cash to fishers and its employees. The amounts were small, but the cash was still important to the residents of Burin, maintains Len Brushett. He says that a person could receive a small amount of cash, usually a dollar or two, if he or she was going to a time, for the doctor's fee, or if he or she wanted to make a donation to the Church.

The business of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill (Chapter III) existed only until 1906, and little information is available on methods of payment for fishers then. It is surmised by my informants that fishers took up the value of their fish in goods and supplies from Billy's stock, as was the usual practice in Burin. We do know that the employees on the premises took up their wages in goods and supplies from Billy's stock, as Len Brushett states. But Marion Hollett recalls the custom in Burin at the time was that the women and girls who worked in the house were paid in cash, by Billy's wife, Maria. Alice Hodder remembers receiving five dollars a month in cash during the summer, and only two dollars a month during the winter, as housekeeper for a family in Epworth (near Burin Bay).

While taking up one's fish or one's labour was the usual practise, some people placed a premium on obtaining cash instead. The significance of obtaining cash for one's labour or for one's fish was simple: having cash allowed that person to deal with the merchant or shopkeeper of one's choosing. In some communities, such as Bulls Cove, a large merchant firm was located within the village. But in other places, such as

Burin North, there were two or three large merchant firms, plus a number of smaller shops. And in more remote communities, such as Salmonier, there were no large merchant firms at all, only one or two small shops. A person with an amount of cash received from a merchant could spend it with their local supplier, which was especially preferable, my informants say, when one lived some distance from the merchant from whom the cash was received (most often, that person's employer). A winter trip for supplies was made much easier when the supplier was close at hand. A person who had taken all his wages or fish up in supplies from a fish merchant had no choice but to travel to that merchant for an advance on more supplies. My informants maintain that there was no premium on having cash, other than convenience. Prices for an item "changed little from merchant to merchant or shop anyway", states Charles LeFeuvre. "Prices were much the same everywhere", he recalls.

Richard Power remembers that, occasionally, a young man (either as an employee or a fisher) "on his own with no family to support" would ask for a full cash payment, or a payment of mostly cash with a few supplies. He says that fish merchants sometimes granted these requests after bargaining the amount of cash to be paid, but both usually "went away pleased".

The above discussion suggests that only a small amount of cash was getting to the residents of Burin through the fish merchants. The bulk of the cash that got into the pockets of



the people came from other sources, both within the fishery and from outside. However, this cash was spent with the fish merchants and other businesses of Burin, even though much of it came from non-local sources. These other means of cash inflow, and use of cash transactions, are discussed below.

From the turn of the century at least, there were a number of businesses operating in Burin that did not accept fish from their customers. Cash (and the extension of credit based on repayment in cash) was their only accepted form of payment. As such, they were merchants, but not fish merchants. For example, among these numerous small shops was one operated by Vincent Reddy in Burin North that dealt exclusively on a cash and credit basis, states Jim Reddy, Vincent's son. Len Brushett reports that in the tiny community of Path End there were two small grocery and drygoods shops, one operated by Charlie Brushett and the other by Tommy Shave. Tommy also owned one or two coasters, not unusual for a small Burin shopkeeper. The coaster crews were paid their wages in cash:

"One thing about Tommy Shave, if you made \$210 on his coasters, he'd give that to you in cash. He wouldn't ask you to spend a cent. He had that little shop, but he wouldn't ask you to take it up with him, not a dollar. It was up to yourself if you mind to spend a few dollars with him." (Len Brushett)

These small shops were similar to those discussed by Brian Keough (1975), in his study of outport shops on the southern Avalon Peninsula, although a couple of main differ-

ences are readily apparent. Burin shops tended to be somewhat larger in scale than Keough's "huckster" shops, and he notes that the owners of these shops of the same period did not usually own any vessels. In Burin, shopkeepers often owned one or two vessels, but these were mostly coasters. Unlike the fish merchants (such as Hollett's and LeFeuvre Brothers), shopkeepers in Burin and hucksters on the southern Avalon did not supply large fishing vessels; these were most often owned by the fish merchants themselves. But the small shopowners in both areas realized that extending credit to their customers would result in a larger clientele:

"The use of credit by the shopkeeper, though limited in comparison to the merchant's, offered security to both shopkeeper and client; an alternate but frequently necessary source of credit for the client, and for the shopkeeper, a regular and reliable clientele."  
(Keough, 1975: 65)

Throughout the early part of this century, the cash economy of the Burin area was also boosted greatly by the earnings of the men who left the area to search for work. Len Brushett states that the seasonal lumbercamps of Grand Falls and Corner Brook, for example, all paid cash. Each year, he recalls, many men returned home, having been gone for several months, with a couple of hundred dollars to spend.

"I was down in Grand Falls one summer, and we got there the 24th of May. And the flies struck right numerous, the little black flies. And they'd get in your nose, in your ears, and your eyes. And the spruce we were cutting was

right up the side of a hill, and it was some knotty wood... For that, they give us \$2.50 a day. It was hard goin'." (Len Brushett)

Richard Power recalls that even greater numbers of men in the same period worked much of the year out of Lunenburg and Halifax, fresh fishing, both for firms there and for Burin firms that sent vessels up in the spring. Hollett's in particular sent vessels every year, crewed with Burin men. After each trip to the banks around Nova Scotia, the vessels returned to Lunenburg or Halifax, at which point the crew would receive their share of the voyage in cash. Both Nova Scotian and Burin firms paid the wages of their crew in cash, which they sent home to their families, Richard remembers. The men could not take up their wages in supplies, because it was too difficult to ship the supplies back to Newfoundland. If they were on a Burin vessel, it returned home only in June and during the fall, so the men would have had a lot of supplies returning with them. The vessel was normally carrying a shipment for a client, and so could not carry the men's supplies anyway. As well, bringing goods from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland meant passing through Customs. For these reasons, Richard says, the crews were all paid in cash. However, once home, the men still often owed money to the merchant (most often, Hollett's).

"When we were fresh fishin' with Hollett's, if you earned 200 dollars or even if 'twas 300 dollars... the skipper would go to the bank and get your money and pay it out to you. But

in June, when you come down for two or three weeks, you had to go to Hollett's, if you owed them money. So you'd straighten up with them then, whatever you owed, out of that money."  
(Richard Power)

This is the one major exception to the small amount of cash that had fish merchants as the source. With the dozens of men who pursued the fresh fishery in Nova Scotia each season, the amount of money that they earned as a whole was substantial, and therefore this was one of the primary sources of cash flow into the community.

Another source of cash wages was the Newfoundland government-owned marine dock in Ship Cove. Built in 1921 (History of Burin, 1977: 119), it was an important facility for the repair of such vessels as coasters and fishing schooners. Activity there was brisk, since there were a large number of vessels plying the fishery, and it operated on a year-round basis. Len Brushett recalls that several local men were employed there, all of whom were paid in cash. It was very strenuous work, he says, but the wage was higher than could be gotten elsewhere in Burin. For example, in Chapter II we saw that Jim Riggs received ten cents an hour during the same period, as labourer on Bartlett's flakes.

"My father used to be foreman on the dock. And I was getting twenty-five cents an hour there. After he died, I was put in charge, and they give me another five cents. 'Twould never worth it. You was in charge of it all, and only got five cents an hour more. Never worth it a'tall, for the extra work you had to do." (Len Brushett)

In addition to this, the illegal trade in alcohol and tobacco from the nearby French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon probably added to the cash flow into the Burin area. Although many of my informants declined to discuss this point, local history holds that this trade gained momentum when Prohibition was undertaken in 1914. It supposedly provided an income supplement for many families on the entire Burin Peninsula. Some smuggled goods were sold among the local population, but a large percentage seems to have been destined for the rest of Newfoundland. St. John's was supposedly an especially good market, where there were many people eager to buy such goods.

My findings that cash was important in the Burin area economy are reinforced by Keough's research (1975) on Newfoundland's southern shore. He found that cash and cash transactions, during the first half of this century, in the general local economy were neither non-existent nor scarce, but were slowly becoming more important :

"(C)ash entered the local economy, as it did in other parts of the Island, by the wage labour market and the fishery... It was then ideally possible... for the retail trade to be conducted by entrepreneurs not at all involved in the purchasing and marketing of fish, nor willing to become entangled in large credit transactions such as fitting out." (Keough, 1975: 46-8)

We can conclude that, as on the southern Avalon Peninsula, cash and cash transactions in the Burin area were

important in the local economy. They were also slowly becoming more important in the fishery, even though the credit/truck system was still the primary method of exchange. Through wage labour and other sources, cash circulated in the Burin area long before Confederation and World War II. As well, the ability to spend these wages in the small shops was part of the expansion of the cash component of the economy, which grew rapidly through the 1940s, especially with the introduction of the Fishery Products fish plant in 1942 (History of Burin, 1977: 31). In concert with this, the prosperity brought on by the American wartime activity at Argentia (see Chapter VI), where many Burin residents were hired as wage labourers, further fuelled expansion of the cash component. This trend continued until Confederation in 1949, and the demise of the traditional salt cod fishery, when the credit system gave way to the prevalent cash-based system.

Keeping People at the Bottom?: Exceptions to Sider's Argument

It has been argued by some writers, including Sider (1986), that in outport Newfoundland in the pre-Confederation era, the merchant class endeavoured to keep fishers and their families poor and powerless. As noted in Chapter I, Sider has written that the fish merchants sought, through the credit system:

"how to keep the people at the bottom continually within the existing system... (it) per-

mitted the merchant to capture much of the profits in good years and push off onto the fisher families much of the losses of bad years." (Sider, 1986: 86)

Although my intention is not to disprove Sider's argument, I will present a number of exceptions to his analysis below. These show that Burin fish merchants, in times of community need, could and did display concern for the welfare of their employees and fellow residents. Few instances of such merchant concern are found in literature dealing with the credit system, so the examples presented may be more the exception than the rule. However, my informants feel that the actions of the fish merchants described below were "not what they had to do when something happened but what they wanted to do to help", maintains Richard Power.

For example, my informants feel that LeFeuvre Brothers, in Bulls Cove, showed compassion for a number of families after an incident that occurred in 1917. One of their vessels, the "Mina Swim", was lost with all hands in February, (see Chapter III), as she was travelling to Rose Blanche to take on a load of dried saltfish. The vessel was lost in the middle of the winter, a time when food supplies in every parlour were getting low. With the main (or sole) provider never to return, it seemed that the families, some of them quite large, would be destitute.

However, as was common on the Burin Peninsula, LeFeuvre Brothers had a policy whereby they supplied the crew's

families before the men left, with provisions enough until they returned, according to Charles LeFeuvre. The cost of these provisions was added to their debt ledger when the items were received, but was paid by the men generally at the end of the fishing season, in the late fall. When it was realized that the "Mina Swim" would not be returning, the widows and their families would normally have been still in debt to the merchant for the supplies they had been forwarded. Instead, Charles maintains, LeFeuvre Brothers bore the cost of all these provisions, and supplied them with more, enough to last until the spring, when the families could begin to support themselves again. Charles recalls his father, Thomas LeFeuvre, saying that LeFeuvre Brothers had decided to give these provisions to the families after "the tragedy" without expectation of being repaid.

"The little bit the government was going to give them was useless. It was little or nothing. The bit of food they had in the house is gone in a few weeks. So we helped them out. You had to give them something to eat! 'Tis no odds about the vessel, but the people that got lost." (Charles LeFeuvre)

W. and T. Hollett Ltd was also seen by my informants to have been able to publicly show concern for their employees. They feel that, like LeFeuvre Brothers, people who worked for Hollett's were treated well, and were able to take comfort knowing that they would be provided for in times of need:

"The likes of Hollett's was never seen any-



where else. You could go to Hollett's whatever time of the year and take whatever you wanted! Anyone could do it who was in their schooners, because you had to pay them back of course... See, you had to be working for them, you had to be trusted by them, and be available to go in their schooners. But no odds what you wanted, 'sposin it was a load of coal you needed for your family and you were up in Halifax. They'd bring it down to the house and unload it by the door!... If I wanted a house built, all I had to do was go up to Hollett's and say 'I wants a house built', and they'd build it. They built that one that Bill Roff owned, Hollett's built that... But you had to be working for them, so they'd know that you'd pay them back." (Richard Power)

Wayne Hollett states that W. and T. Hollett Ltd was forced into bankruptcy by the "Coaker Regulations" (of 1919-1920; see Chapter III). Later, sometime during the 1920s (Wayne does not recall the date), it was reorganized by the founders, brothers William and Thomas Hollett, into two separate divisions in order to begin anew. One was known as W.H. Hollett, operated by William, and the other was Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd, operated by Thomas. The new businesses were still known collectively as "Hollett's", and shared the large building that contained their former single office and shop. However, it was now partitioned down the middle inside, effectively creating two separate but joined buildings.

During the 1920s, a period of rebuilding, Hollett's bought more schooners and was able to expand. But the tidal wave of November, 1929 (Chapter VI), which nearly wiped out the inshore fishery for the next decade, and the Great Depression in the 1930s, brought new problems. Like the other

businesses in the area, Hollett's suffered economic difficulties due to poor catches and low prices, Wayne Hollett reports. Unlike LeFeuvre Brothers though, who succumbed to the poor economic climate in the mid-1930s, Hollett's managed to survive until the advent of World War II. Wartime brought new markets and prices began to rise again, and Hollett's prospered once more.

"They were a great company, there was no mistake about that! No one could say anything against Hollett's... They certainly never tried to keep you from working. Years ago, up at the Courthouse, there'd be two or three hundred people waiting outside, all day, trying to get the dole, back in the hard times. Hollett's shop was across the road, and I seen Tommy Hollett rising the window in his office. And he'd sing out to the people he knew: 'Come over out of that! You haven't got to be there! Vessel is leaving in three or four days. Come over and take whatever you wants!' Not many people would do that."  
(Richard Power)

In this instance, Hollett's provided work for a few men that were familiar to and trusted by its managers, even though the crew requirements for the vessels had already been filled (in a case like this, the extra men would simply help the other members of the crew, or work on the premises). Richard notes that "there was work to be found for them to do."

Richard believes that these men would not have received work from Tommy Hollett had they not been hard workers. There was implied reciprocity in cases like this: Richard feels that Hollett's rewarded loyalty and hard work with income security,

meaning that they helped out their employees if they felt they deserved it. Otherwise, men who did not measure up to Hollett's standards faced the dole. This seemed to be their way of ensuring good men in their workforce every year, he says. Even so, there were plenty of men willing to work long and hard to feed their families; Hollett's were well aware of this, Wayne Hollett states. Therefore, Hollett's were not merely ensuring an advantageous labour supply, but my informants felt that they were also concerned about the economic security of the residents of the community. Of course, Hollett's could not employ everyone: there was a certain limit to their labour force, beyond which it would become economically unfeasible at the very least to hire any more people.

No published and little oral information was to be found regarding other fish merchant firms in the Burin area. However, it is the opinion of my informants that the fish merchants in the Burin area in general during the first half of this century, especially during the Depression, extended their credit more so than merchants in other areas. Some feel that Burin fish merchants were benefiting the people simply by being employers in the communities and marketers of the fishers' catch. Many were grateful for the work they supplied to people who often had little education:

"A lot of people couldn't read or write. No education at all. My father couldn't sign his name. But these merchants gave them jobs. They could have said 'You've got to have an education before you get hired' because there was

lots of people looking for work, and they could pick who they wanted. But they didn't ask for an education... They gave jobs to people that had no education." (Len Brushett)

Of course, most positions that these men were offered required no formal training or schooling, such as dorymate. But as Len points out, the labour force in Burin was large, and employers were able to choose their employees. Len feels it was logical that a person with a little education (even just Grade One or Two) as well as experience would have had a better chance of obtaining a position with a merchant, but "that was not the way it worked", he says. Rather, people were chosen for a position, whether dorymate or culler, primarily on the basis of their experience and trustworthiness.

Although my informants feel that Burin's merchants were often considerate of the needs of their employees and fellow residents, they also believe that the fish merchants "had to look out for themselves too", says Michael Doody. My informants understand that a business had to place its own finances first in order to maintain a profitable income, and that the needs of its employees and residents of the community, although a concern, was secondary. "That was all part of running an operation like that. If they went out of business, then they couldn't help anyone", Richard Power remarks.

"See, the fisherman was beholden to the merchant. The merchants had a reason to try to keep them beholden to them... They had to buy all their stock from their suppliers. They had to pay big money for all their stock.

Well, the only way they're going to get their money to pay for what they got - get the fish from the fishermen. But having the fish didn't pay their bills. They had to drum that fish and send it off to Oporto or the West Indies, then they had to wait for it to sell... They'd get their money eventually. In the meantime they had to pay the fishermen for the fish. So now you got both sides of the story. It's almost so broad as it is long!... The merchants around here were not crooks. They had to be openhearted enough in their own way, because they owned the goods. I mean, if you bought all that stuff and then you had twenty or thirty men comin' to you a day saying 'Can I have a barrel of flour?' or 'Can I have twenty pound of salt beef?', wouldn't you think about it? There's no money, because they all wants it on credit. And then when it comes time, some of them won't or can't pay for it. So merchants had to be cautious what they were doing, just so well as what the other man was." (Harold R. Mitchell)

In his ethnographic study of a Northeast coast fishing community, Cat Harbour, James Faris acknowledges that, although in many areas the credit system "has led to flagrant misuse of the fisherman by the merchant" (Faris, 1972: 114), in his area of study at least one merchant business (the "Scarlets") was not considered by the fishers to be exploiting them. Rather, as in Burin, the merchant seemed to realize that oftentimes good business and profitability could also be reached through good relations with their clientele (see Chapter 9 in Faris, 1972).

We have seen that the actions of some Burin area fish merchants present exceptions to Sider's argument. On the whole, his argument is not incorrect: we realize that all merchants had to be concerned with their own welfare first and

foremost, which is necessary for economic survival. But some merchant firms in the Burin area are considered to have been fairly attentive to the needs of their employees and clients, such as LeFeuvre Brothers and Hollett's. The merchants described aided their employees during times of economic crises and tragedies, and present an example of reciprocal exchange, albeit on the merchant's terms. This exchange suggests that paternalistic concern and profit are compatible: when helping fishers in occasional times of need, merchants expected in return loyalty and hard work, better ensuring consistent returns from the fishery. This benefited both merchants and fishers, and allowed for some measure of stability in a volatile fishing enterprise and economy. It is likely that merchants purposely provided aid in bad times, knowing that fishers might feel compelled to try to repay them with loyalty and hard work. It is also just as likely that fishers expected the merchant to aid them in bad times, for the hard work and loyalty they had been providing all year long.

## Chapter VI

### Bad Times, Good Times, and Changing Times

The Burin area has been greatly affected by periods of fluctuation in the global economic and political climate in the twentieth century. Among the most important were the tidal wave of 1929, which occurred just before the Great Depression of the 1930s; World War II, during which time the modern Fishery Products fish plant was opened in Burin North; and Confederation with Canada in 1949. In this chapter, we will discuss how these three different periods affected Burin area fishers and merchants, often in quite dissimilar ways.

#### The Joint Effects of the 1929 Tidal Wave and the Depression

The Burin area was dealt a traumatic double blow in November, 1929. History books are filled with descriptions of how the crash of the New York stock exchange affected state and local economies in the western hemisphere. The island of Newfoundland was no exception. However, the Burin area was already reeling from a natural disaster - a tidal wave which occurred on November 18. These two disasters, economic and natural, will be discussed together.

An earthquake on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean some distance off the Burin Peninsula occurred about five o'clock in the evening. This caused a fifteen metre high wall of water to rush towards the foot of the peninsula, in the region

from Burin to Lawn. At 7:30 PM, the tidal wave crashed into the area, leaving twenty-seven people dead and resulting in millions of dollars of damage. Fisher and merchant property, houses, wharves, boats, bridges - nearly everything in its path was destroyed. Relief aid soon came from the rest of Newfoundland, Canada, the United States, England, and elsewhere (History of Burin, 1977: 159). Residents were able to rebuild their property relatively quickly, within a few months, according to my informants, although the lives that were lost were never forgotten. As well, the damage done to the fish stocks and the coastal ecology would have negative consequences for years to come:

"Fishermen on the south coast suffered for more than a decade because of the disaster. All marine growth was swept clean and it was not until the early 1940s that cod and other fish began to return to the local fishing grounds... A world depression in the early thirties, as well as the scarcity of fish, kept the area in a depressed condition for some time." (History of Burin, 1977: 157-9)

Had it not been so late in the year, when the season's fish were already landed, the economy of the Burin area would have been completely devastated immediately. As it was, even with all the property destruction, most of the yearly income had been made by fishers and merchants alike. But the next few years, it was feared, would be much worse, as there would be few fish to catch (History of Burin, 1977: 158). This fear was borne out indeed.



Unfortunately, since the economic system of the western hemisphere began a rapid descent at almost the same time as the occurrence of the tidal wave, it was an especially hard time for the Burin area. This difficult period lasted though the early 1930s, with some recovery through the mid- to late-1930s. Gordon LeFeuvre maintains that merchants suffered right along with fishers.

An assumption that merchants, with their stored capital, would have been able to weather the poor economy much better than fishers is misleading. While many fishers fell into debt with their merchant, some merchant businesses actually went bankrupt. During poor seasons, it was commonplace that many fishers did not earn enough to pay for the goods and supplies they had been forwarded by their merchant in the spring. Merchants most often "carried" (extended credit to) these fishers into the next season, when they hoped they would be able to repay their debts. In most cases in Burin, my informants recount that fishers were in debt to their merchants for only one or two seasons, and were able to repay their debts relatively quickly.

Just as merchants carried several fishing families each year on their books, each merchant was accustomed, to some extent, to being extended with his own creditors. From these suppliers, he was forwarded goods and supplies for his business, according to Gordon LeFeuvre. However, the Depression and tidal wave together meant not just one or two seasons of

having to carry several fishing families, but several seasons of having to carry many more fishing families. This meant that merchants themselves often had to be carried by some of their suppliers. During this period, some merchants, such as LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove and W. and T. Hollett Ltd in Burin North, were not able to repay their debts, and went bankrupt altogether.

Fishers and their families, on the other hand, though often deeply in debt during this period, were able to depend on being carried by their merchant from season to season. Most merchant firms did manage to survive, despite being heavily burdened with such unrepayable debts and their own debts to their suppliers. Fishers who had relied on LeFeuvre Brothers and W. and T. Hollett Ltd were able to find credit with other merchant firms, say my informants. It is unclear how fisher's debt in these cases was handled (however, W. and T. Hollett Ltd reorganized as separate divisions sometime after their bankruptcy; see Chapter V).

Fishing families were better able to depend on themselves for subsistence, however, than were merchant families. Most fishing families in the area, in poor times such as the 1930s, were able to rely on their own resources, such as growing their own vegetables. Prominent basic dietary vegetables included cabbage, potato, turnip, and rhubarb, states Michael Doody. As discussed in Chapter IV, fisher's gardens tended to be more suited to providing basic sustenance if need be (i.e.

they were larger and included more of the basic dietary vegetables). As a result, reliance on outside sources was kept to a minimum, and included only food items that they could not make or grow themselves. Merchant's gardens, on the other hand, seemed to be interlarded more as a supplement to their diet (i.e. they were smaller and often did not include many of the basic dietary vegetables), according to Marion Hollett, and thus reliance on other sources, whether local or outside, continued. As a former fisher explains,

"The only thing you'd buy then was something that you couldn't make or grow, like flour, sugar, and molasses... Sometimes what you grew in your gardens was pretty much all you had to live on." (Michael Doody)

Likewise, as mentioned in Chapter IV, fishing families tended to keep animals that could produce dietary essentials, such as dairy products, meat, and eggs. Most fishing families had several hens, a couple of sheep, and often one or two cows and pigs. Merchant families often did not keep many such animals (for example, Billy Paul's family as described in Chapter III). Since buying meat, for example, seems to have been largely impossible (due to its cost) for most fishing families during the Depression, the variety of animals that they kept provided them with basic dietary essentials otherwise unobtainable:

"Fishermen would have had it harder, except they had gardens and animals. They could live off that if they had to... Only had to buy a

few things you couldn't raise. We used to keep cattle, and my mother would set all kinds of vegetables, and we kept a couple of pigs. Plenty of pork, see. Kill one in the fall, when there was frost enough to keep him all winter, hung up in the barn... With the cows we had lots of fresh butter and milk. My father was working all the time, so my mother used to do all that... And my father used to kill birds too in the wintertime. Perhaps he'd get ten or twelve turrs in the harbour, and they was great big turrs too, my son! We lived pretty good then, better than you might think." (Len Brushett)

"We had sheep and a cow. Made my own fresh butter, and we had lots of milk. And we had hens, so we had eggs... Then we'd kill a sheep in the fall, when it would freeze so it would keep. Nothing tastes so good now like your own mutton." (Mary Dober)

This traditional self-reliant subsistence strategy undertaken by most if not all fishing families enabled them to smooth out ups and downs in the fishery, and to lessen their dependency on the local merchant. The decade of poor catches and economic returns after 1929, believes Len Brushett, again proved the worth of this strategy.

The last resource to keep one's family alive was social assistance. The government welfare program at the time was referred to locally as "the dole". My informants recall that this bare minimum assistance level of six cents per day was a life-saver for some, yet it was regarded only as a reluctantly taken last resort. A person "on the dole" bore a severe stigma, that of being unemployable and lazy. While most people receiving welfare assistance were indeed capable members of the community, it was seen otherwise, my informants say.

Locally, no one remembers a member of a merchant family having to turn to the dole. LeFeuvre Brothers and W. and T. Hollett Ltd lost their businesses, but they did not have to resort to the dole, since they were able to rely on credit and their savings. While they did not have enough to save their businesses, it seems they did have enough to support their families, according to Marion Hollett and Ernest Williams.

We have seen that the decade following 1929 was filled with uncertainty and economic hardship for both classes. Each in their own way managed for the most part to survive these difficult years. But prosperity was not really reached again until the advent of war in 1939 brought new markets for Burin's fishery. This is discussed below.

#### The Effects of World War II and the Fishery Products Plant

World War II was an era which pulled the Burin area economy out of its depressed state, and brought prosperity on a large scale (see Story, 1974: 19; and Britan, 1974: 25, for its effect on Newfoundland in general). This prosperity was partly a result of the substantial labour market that arose in Newfoundland during the war years, primarily to supply the labour needs of military bases such as Argentia. It was also partly a result of the opportunity to supply the Allied forces in Europe. This led to a huge market for salt fish. They required a food product that was inexpensive, nutritious, and most of all, would not spoil quickly. Salt cod and, to a

lesser extent, fresh cod were the answer. This new prosperity was seen as a godsend, says Len Brushett.

"Before the war, the economy was stagnant for years. There wasn't a lot of money, but when the war broke out, it was fallin' like the rain from Heaven. Prosperity came, see. There was lots of work... There's nothing can change things like a war can." (Charles LeFeuvre)

Merchants and fishers were affected in pretty much the same ways. Both enjoyed much higher incomes compared to that of the preceding ten years, since along with this increase in sales came a rise in the market price of fish. Together, they led to greater profits for the merchants. Fishers benefited from the new wage labour markets that arose. Oddly, the beginning of the war coincided with a huge cod population explosion, as cod stocks returned from the devastation of the tidal wave of 1929 with almost a vengeance, according to Richard Power:

"My God, you could catch a load with a trout pole almost! That's how plenty the fish was... 'Twas really good there for a few years while the war was on." (Richard Power)

"That's the most fish was ever on this coast, into the traps and everywhere. All around... fish got so plentiful! I know one day Little Jack Antle had the cod trap... in Mortier Point Cove, and when he tried to haul up the bar, the trap was full... Captain Will Hollett had a trap into Gripe Cove. He took a thousand quintals out of it one summer!... My God, there was no trouble to hear 'Oh, Josh Mayo had fifty quintals this morning', or Henry Hollett from Great Burin, 'He had sixty quintals this morning'... That was in only one

haul too." (Gordon LeFeuvre)

Government spending increased during the war, especially on capital works projects. Locally, this came particularly in the form of roadbuilding. Charles LeFeuvre says that old roads were significantly upgraded; new roads were built to nearly all of the large Peninsula communities. Now travel to other towns, especially to those on the other side of the Peninsula, was made much easier and faster. Many men were hired on these road-work projects, which paid little more than did the fishery. However, Jim Riggs recalls, many preferred a cheque to taking up wages with a merchant.

Perhaps the most significant benefit of World War II for the Burin area was the development of American and Canadian military bases on the Island (see Britan, 1974: 25), of which the base at Argentia was especially important. Many dozens of fishers left the area to work in Argentia, where the wages were significantly higher. Len Brushett says that although they had to leave their families behind, all sent money home via wire, or just simply saved it if they were single.

"I was getting ten cents an hour here with Bartlett's. Then I left and went to Argentia, and I was hired for fifty-five cents an hour! Now that was a lot of difference, wasn't it? And it was in cash too... That was big money then. And I saved it all. Nowhere to spend it down there. You would go to a scatter show, but most of the time they were free. So all the fellows that went down there, they came back, and spent their money up here in Burin." (Jim Riggs)

As a result, the base at Argentia meant a huge influx of cash into the Burin area economy. As well, but on a lesser scale, the Canadian government contracted minesweepers to be built at Marystown, at which nearly everyone who was hired was from the surrounding area, reports Walter Brown Hodder. With many residents of the Burin area having much higher incomes than ever before, the merchants seemed to benefit as well, my informants recall. People in the community, whether working there or away, still spent their earnings with the local merchants. Men who worked at Argentia, for example, mostly spent their earnings in Burin, since there was little to buy at Argentia that they could send home anyway, Jim Riggs says. As a result, merchant businesses now shifted somewhat towards a cash trade; however, the acceptance of fish in exchange for supplies was still the primary means of transaction, Charles LeFeuvre states.

Many residents of the Burin area worked at some form of wage labour during World War II, supplementing their earnings from salt fishing. Since this meant a higher income than fishing alone, my informants report that many people were able to repay their debts to their merchant. They could now also afford to buy modern conveniences. Merchants and fishers alike began to buy radios to listen to war broadcasts, once they had electricity installed in their homes; more fishers bought motors to power their boats; and automobiles slowly became more numerous, remembers Jim Riggs.



Therefore, fishers benefited from the increased economic activity, just as did the merchants. Of course, the war had negative consequences too. Many local men died or were wounded while fighting overseas, and the possible presence of enemy submarines in Newfoundland waters, along with the hazard of friendly vessels (due to the increased amount of traffic, many fishing vessels were accidentally run down during the war), made any fishing or coasting trip dangerous, recalls Sam J. Hodder.

This war-induced prosperity lasted until 1945. With the war won and soldiers having returned home to their various countries, the war's vast market for Newfoundland cod had vanished. It might be expected that an economic depression would have hit the Burin area, especially with much less fish being sold and soldiers returning home looking for jobs. Quite the opposite happened: in 1942, Fishery Products Ltd. had opened a fresh fish processing plant in Burin North (History of Burin, 1977: 31), and began to exploit the traditional salt cod markets. The introduction of this plant meant several things for the Burin area: it signalled the beginning of Sunday workdays, the addition of motorized groundfish trawlers, mechanized fish processing, cash wage employment, and most importantly, the end of saltfishing, the use of fishing schooners, and the credit system. From this, a wage earning industrial class emerged fairly quickly, made up mostly of members of former fishing families, and which

remains prominent today.

For all of the Burin area, working on Sunday was sacrilegious. Rarely did a person fish, mend nets, dry fish, or do any form of labour whatsoever on Sundays. Hannah Cheeseman recalls that even splits for the fire to heat the house on Sunday morning were made on Saturday. Michael Doody jokes that "You couldn't touch anything on Sundays then, you couldn't pick up a nail". With the arrival of the fish plant, however, this tradition became relaxed fairly quickly. The plant operated seven days a week, and Sunday shifts were no different from any other shift. The plant's work regime contrasted with that of the fish merchants, Jim Riggs says, who still did not ask their employees to work on Sundays, since they too kept the Sabbath.

With its much larger operating budget, the plant could afford to buy such mechanized vessels as "draggers" or ground-fish trawlers, as early as 1943 with the dragger "Mustang", recalls Richard Power. Inside the plant, the workers were aided by such machines as conveyors. In contrast, the fishery under the fish merchants was virtually unmechanized. Local fish merchants, lacking the capital, simply could not afford the expensive new equipment, even if they desired to enter the fresh fish industry. As a result, the fish plant was more efficient, and could process and produce much more fish than all the people combined working for fish merchants in Burin, Ernest Williams reports.

The most important changes in the fishery resulting from the introduction of the plant were not these changes in the method of production, but rather the complete reorganization of the fishery. These changes affected merchants and fishers in different ways. Whereas fishers enjoyed higher incomes and wage labour, within a dozen or so years the merchant fishery system, along with the credit system, was all but eliminated. Confederation with Canada in 1949 as well played a key role in these changes. The implications of the changes that began with the opening of the fish plant in 1942 and that continued with Confederation are further discussed below.

End of One Era, Beginning of Another:

The Effects of Confederation

Newfoundland's confederation with Canada in 1949 had the strongest effects of all the three periods. In the decade following Confederation, salt fishing, the credit system, and fishing schooners disappeared. As explained earlier, these changes had their origins during World War II, with the first operation of the Fishery Products fish plant in 1942. The introduction of such a plant, which relied not on salt fish but on fresh fish, combined with its high production output, meant that many people who had been engaged in salt fishing now found employment with the plant. More important than a reduction in the salt fishing labour force was that the plant had huge markets for its fresh fish products. It was working

full-time, year round, and was turning a good profit. The market for salt fish declined fairly rapidly, as the more popular fresh fish products gained their share of the fish market, my informants report. The salt fishery began to get unprofitable for all still employed in it, they say, for both merchants and fishers. Many of the large number of sailing vessels were idled; all over the Peninsula many were sold to foreign buyers for other purposes. Some were turned into floating museums in the United States, recalls J.B. Foote, a former Grand Bank merchant.

As the salt fishery quickly dwindled, the fish plant took over the position as top single employer in Burin (similar to nearby Fortune and Grand Bank during the late 1940s, according to J.B. Foote). Plant and dragger workers received all their wages in cash, not credit. My informants say this led to a decrease in the power of the fish merchant, who now had much less fish being sold to him by individual fishers, as these people tended to sell fresh fish to the plant instead of going salt fishing. This decline of salt fishing, the credit system, and the use of sailing vessels continued through the 1940s, and into the 1950s. I should explain that this decline was not intentionally due to any policies of the Fishery Products fish plant. Rather, this decline was a byproduct of the operation of the plant, and a natural response of a decision by the residents of the area to choose the more viable option. My informants say that, at the time, salt fishing was con-

sidered to be "old-fashioned" and little profit could be made from it, compared to the better and more stable wages paid by Fishery Products. As well, working at the fish plant (and in the draggers and trawlers) was seen to be far less hazardous to one's health than fishing in a schooner or in a dory, whether on the banks or inshore.

Confederation with Canada became law in March 1949. The decline of the "old way" of life that had begun in 1942 now was hastened even further. The new attitude in the Provincial government was modernization: to industrialize meant to be competitive. But the application of this idea had been underway in the Burin area since 1942. The local attitude was that the old method of salt fishing had no future; it was felt that fresh fishing for the plant was the best was to "modernize" Burin's economy.

It may seem as if Confederation had little to do with the end of the old era, that Confederation simply coincided with changes that were underway. This is not quite true. Confederation hastened these changes in two ways: first, as a part of Canada, my informants remember that many residents of the area wanted to become "modern" and thereby throw off old ways. Fresh fishing was already seen to be achieving that goal for the area, Len Brushett recalls. Secondly, the new influx of government spending, especially on capital works projects like building the Burin Peninsula highway in the early 1950s, created a quick and efficient link to the rest of the Island.

Indeed, the second point was probably the most influential in finishing off the "old ways". With much improved communications and transportation, the plant's products could more quickly and less expensively reach and expand its markets, thereby increasing efficiency and enabling more people to be employed. As well, people could now easily venture to other parts of the Island, in their new automobiles, which became affordable partly through employment at the fish plant. Gerald Britan (1974) saw a similar occurrence in the community of St. Brendan's during the same postwar period:

"...The intrusions of the wider industrial economy continued. The development of a commercial fishery... created new sources of employment. A whole range of Canadian social services suddenly became available. New consumer goods could now be purchased... The development of transportation and communications infrastructure after Canadian Confederation... made it possible to market a more diverse catch." (Britan, 1974: 25, 83)

As a result, by the mid-1950s, according to my informants, "only a handful" of people were employed in the salt fishery. The salt fish market had shrunk considerably, and could sustain no more than a few fishers anyway.

By 1955, only a few schooners were left, and all had been converted to coasters, powered by the internal combustion engine. Although Hollett's and Sons Company Ltd of Burin North had ten schooners in 1956, Wayne Hollett reports, none were fishing: all were coasters and freighters. By 1961, he says, they too were bankrupt. Other merchants converted their

businesses into drygoods and grocery stores, with coasting on the side. These too ceased operation by the late 1960s. The last of the old era was gone altogether; the fish plant was in full swing, trucking expanded on the new highways, and coastal shipping declined steadily.

## Chapter VII

### Summary and Conclusions

In this thesis I have attempted to illuminate fisher-merchant relationships in the Burin fishery and economy, from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. In particular, three perspectives of these relationships were considered, with attention to contemporary local attitudes and scholarly literature. The study period of this thesis reaches only as far back as the 1840s-1850s, but the permanent occupation by the English and their descendants in the area began after about 1718. With the success of Spurrier's, the first large merchant firm that arrived in that year, the area began to grow and prosper. From this period, the cod fishery evolved out of the seasonal migratory fishery into one carried out by permanent residents. Other merchant firms later followed, and Burin enjoyed an expanding economy and population.

The new settlers who arrived to become fishers during this period realized they had no direct access to markets. With Europe and the Americas so far away, they relied on the fish merchants, who were organized exclusively to take command of the trade in this situation. As such, the fish merchant played a dominating role in Burin society. He controlled market access, since he had the commercial connections and capital to do so, and most of the importation of goods. His position as single largest employer and his ability to control prices of goods and fish meant that, as a result, he was at



least partially able to control the purchasing power, and the amount of cash flow, in the community. Since he preferred to receive a specific commodity, salt dried fish, instead of cash from fishers, he controlled his supply, the amount of economic diversification of the community, and, to a large extent, the economic freedom of his fisher clients. This meant that the economy was based primarily on a single resource, the sea.

In this thesis, we have found that in Burin the fishing and merchant classes were similar in many respects. Of course, since they were different classes, dissimilarities existed, and were perpetuated through the balance of economic power. But as in Trepassey, where Thomas Nemec (1974) discovered that a status gradient had emerged and there was actually a more smooth progression from fisher to merchant and not a huge gap between them, Burin too did not function with merely a two-class system. The distinctions between a member of the fishing class and the merchant class were often blurred, and a number of status levels could exist within each occupation. Discussions of equality and similarities seem rarely to be found in literature about merchant capitalism and the Newfoundland credit system.

In sum, we have discussed in this thesis several key points regarding fisher-merchant relationships in the Burin area, and have found where differences and similarities did exist. Current local attitudes regarding Burin fisher-merchant relationships over the past century or so are quite

different from the recollections and feelings of the people who experienced these relationships and exchanges firsthand. The merchant and fishing classes were different in important ways, but they shared many more characteristics and experiences than are commonly recognized in local opinion. Both groups were engaged in a system of morally loaded understandings and obligations reinforced by membership in a common community of experiences and social relationships, including:

Formal Education - Children of both merchants and fishers went to the same one room schoolhouses while they attended school in Burin, and my informants feel that they were taught uniformly and fairly. As well, punishment for infractions was not more severe for one group or another, but instead was meted out equally. However, the children of a merchant family could reasonably expect to further their education beyond that which was available in the area, which they were encouraged to do. This was not often an affordable option for fisher's children, who did not tend to desire to pursue higher education. They did not incline to feel that it would serve any purpose other than to hinder their induction into the fishery.

Marriage Patterns - The norm for the merchant and fishing classes in Burin was neither strict class endogamy nor exogamy, but rather a combination of marriage with other classes and within their respective class. The only case of class endogamy which I discovered of any Burin fish merchant family

was that of the family of Billy Paul. Members of other Burin fish merchant families, on the other hand, such as Hollett's and LeFeuvre's, married both within and outside of their class. Sons and daughters of merchants who married outside of their class married both "down" (several members married sons or daughters of fishers) and "up" (others married the sons or daughters of Church Ministers and Police Constables), both locally and from other communities.

Occupational Possibilities - Again, differences and similarities are evident between merchants and fishers. The professions of merchant and fisher did not normally see any member of one becoming employed in the other. Formal education was a major factor here, as was the knowledge gained from having grown up in the respective families. Notwithstanding, some occupations were often pursued by members of both families. One such example, perhaps the most important post on a vessel, was that of captain or skipper. My informants relate that more sons of fishers became captains than did sons of merchants, but this is likely in part because merchants were a numerically small group, compared to fishers. At this post, formal education was no doubt beneficial to a captain, but the most important knowledge was to be obtained through experience at sea, and fishers certainly had a surplus of that.

Other Considerations - I presented a variety of examples in which merchants and fishers shared similarities. In religious

life, they often shared the same affiliations, attended the same churches, and took part in the same voluntary associations. On special occasions and holidays, such as weddings and Christmas, each invited the other for social visits, and my informants state that they both enjoyed such festivities as garden parties and soup suppers. So too did both fishers and merchants share social relations during various stages of life, most particularly childhood. Later, these friendships sometimes developed into marriage bonds, and also endured well into the senior years. As in the aforementioned points, differences existed as well. Merchant families did not tend to keep gardens as major supplements to their diets, as did fishing families, but rather more to complement what they could buy. In Maria Paul's case, for example, gardening was more a hobby than a necessity. As well, fishing families tended to keep more animals than did merchant families, since they could less afford to buy meat, eggs, milk, and such. The main differentiating factor that separated the two classes was their different economic roles and responsibilities, and their disparate ability to control local economic activity. Fishers had little such power; they could not set prices of goods or fish, they had little or no access to their markets, and they lacked the capital needed to finance their own market development and to buy larger vessels and cod traps.

The literature on the subject dealing with various areas of Newfoundland, and Newfoundland as a whole, however, paints

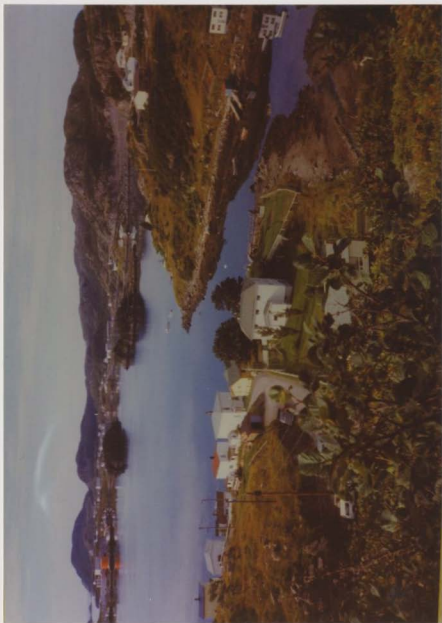
a not unfamiliar scene of merchant domination in these relationships. But such literature does not apply entirely to the Burin context. Rather, I have presented examples of instances where my informants feel that Burin fish merchants expressed concern for the welfare of their employees, fishers, and other local people. As noted earlier, these may be more the exception than the rule, but my informants do not consider the Burin merchant class as having been composed entirely of exploitative and oppressive entrepreneurs. This does not oppose such images as that suggested by Sider (1986), but rather qualifies them to allow for regional variation.

As well, we have discovered that cash and cash transactions were neither non-existent nor rare, as Amulree (quoted in Perlin, 1974) and G.M. Story (1974) believed, but had an important place during the pre-Confederation and pre-World War II period in the Burin area. Fish merchant firms preferred that wages be "taken up" rather than in cash until the end of that period, but as Keough (1975) discovered on the southern Avalon Peninsula, smaller shops (non-fish merchants in Burin) that preferred to deal strictly in cash were numerous even at the turn of the century, and became more so as time progressed. Cash found its way into the people's pockets through several avenues. Wage work earned by men who worked in other areas of the Island at various seasonal jobs, especially in the lumbercamps of central Newfoundland, was a major source of cash in the Burin economy; men who want fresh

fishing out of Lunenburg and Halifax also brought home cash wages. On a lesser scale, the marine dock at Ship Cove provided cash wages to a few local men, and illegal trade from St. Pierre probably also boosted the amount of local cash. World War II's prosperity set the scene for the end of the credit/truck system, especially with the introduction of the Fishery Products fish plant in 1942, and cash incomes eventually supplanted "taken up" earnings.

Lastly, economic and natural events, both adverse and beneficial, did not always affect both fishers and merchants differently; rather, both classes could be affected similarly. The discussion of the tidal wave of 1929 and the Depression of the 1930s demonstrated that fishers and merchants in the Burin area both suffered economic hardships during this devastating period, and both struggled for years to rebuild their livelihoods. World War II greatly helped in this respect, bringing with it vital and substantial markets for their fish. Economically, both fishers and merchants benefited greatly during the war years. The opening of the Fishery Products fish plant, however, held a different ending to the pre-Confederation story for merchants than for fishers. This modern mechanized plant ushered in a new era, one that eventually led to the discontinuation of the centuries old tradition of salt fishing. Fishers found more economic viability in this new mode of sea harvesting, and the credit system, along with the merchant firms, was consigned to history within a few years.

## APPENDIX



Photograph VII

Please refer to next page



LEGEND  
Photograph VII

Photograph indicating Bulls Cove, Paul's Hill, and Burin North, 1982.

A- Bulls Cove

B- Burin North

C- Paul's Hill

I- Fishery Products fish plant

II- site of former premises of Billy Paul

III- site of former premises of LeFeuvre Brothers

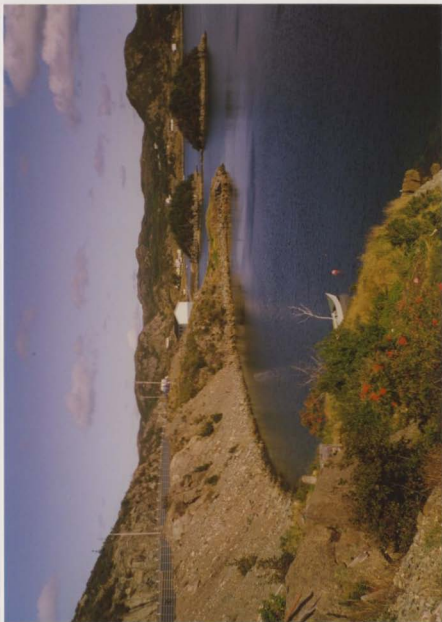
1- former LeFeuvre Brothers' office and general shop being torn down.

2- site of former LeFeuvre Brothers' icehouse.

3- originally Frank LeFeuvre's house. Here, it has been cut down to one storey and is owned by his son Eric.

4- site of former LeFeuvre Brothers' flake.

Photograph courtesy of George LeFeuvre. All descriptions courtesy of Charles LeFeuvre.



Photograph VIII

The site of the former business of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill as it looks today. The land has all been sold and none of the business' buildings exist.

Photograph by the author, 1992.



Photograph IX

The site of the former business of Billy Paul on Paul's Hill as it looks today. The land has all been sold and none of the business' buildings exist. Note that the road has covered most of the waterfront.

Photograph by the author, 1992.



Photograph X

The site of the former business of LeFeuvre Brothers in Bulls Cove as it looks today. All the buildings and flakes along the waterfront are gone, but their family homes remain, occupied by their children and their families.

Photograph by the author, 1992.

List of a Typical Interview's General Questions

These typical questions were left general, so as to leave room for interpretation by the informant. By structuring these questions in such a manner, I felt I would be better able to elicit personal responses from my informants. As well, such open and wide-ranging questions allowed the conversation to take any number of paths, and enabled me to loosely guide the conversation rather than strictly direct it. As a result, more questions arose in each interview than I had thought of for this list, which meant that each interview always led to useful new information. Note that these do not follow in the order in which the information is presented in the thesis, and that their answers were different for each informant. As well, the thesis may not have dealt with each question as stated below, but relied on the answers given by my informants, which may not have exactly matched the question as posed.

Questions for informants from fishing families:

-How did you start in the fishery?

-Explain your annual and seasonal work schedule.

-Local opinion seems to feel that the merchant always took advantage of fishers and their families. How do you feel about this?

-Could a fisher have taken advantage of the merchant? How could he have done this?

-Was everyone treated the same by all the merchants, or did some merchants treat some people better than others?

-Were the merchants in the Burin area local, or were they from outside the community?

-What were the Burin merchants like as employers? What were they like as buyers of your fish?

-What amount of education did you and your family obtain?

-Were the merchants better educated than everyone else?

-Explain how people on the dole dealt with the merchant.

-Did only the merchants have access to the markets? And were fishers actively kept out of the marketing process by the merchant, or did they simply not have the power to sell their fish to outside places themselves?

-What effects did Confederation have on Burin life? Do you think these effects were beneficial or not? Were Burin merchants affected differently or similarly from fishers?

-How did World War II affect Burin life? The Depression? The tidal wave of 1929?

Questions for informants from merchant families:

-What year did the firm begin operating? Who started the business?

-How did the business deal with clients? - credit, barter, cash, etc.

-How did the business deal with other merchant firms? - competitive atmosphere or just co-existence?

-What roles did the business fill in the community? - main source of income/sole employer, distributor of goods, outlet to the world (markets for goods going out and source of global goods coming in, etc.)?

-How were debtors dealt with? Creditors?

-Explain how the firm dealt with people on the dole.

-How did the firm deal with its own suppliers?

-Explain the business year - spring pursuits, summer, fall, winter.

-What vessels had the business owned over the years?

-Explain how ice, water, and bait was obtained for, and brought to, the vessels.

-How many people were employed on the vessels in one season? On the shore? On the premises?

-What amount of education did the founders and his (their) families obtain?

-How much property did the firm own?

-How did Confederation affect Burin life? How did World War II affect it? The Depression? The tidal wave of 1929? Do you think that merchants and fishers were affected differently or similarly, and how?

-When did the business cease to operate? For what reasons? What happened to the premises then?

Granted, this list is rather short. But I realized that these questions would prompt other questions and topics as the conversation progressed. These new ideas that arose were different for each informant, and could not be foreseen before each interview. I think my method of questioning worked quite well. Also, a number of my informants were or had been members of both merchant and fishing families (for example, a merchant's son married a fisher's daughter), and so a mixture of the questions above were asked in the interview.

## Glossary of Terms

**Artificial fish drying plant:**

A building in which split salt cod was cured and dried much more quickly than by traditional means (i.e. drying on the flakes). This building acted like a huge oven, as outside air was heated and blown in by a coal fired machine, before the advent of electricity (Len Brushett).

**Bait:**

Bait for the spring fishery mostly consisted of herring, which was caught in Fortune Bay during February and March. The caplin scull was the main means whereby bait was obtained for the summer fishery. Squid, caught usually in August, and herring, which reappeared in the waters again in August and September, was the bait most used during the Fall (Walter Brown Hodder).

**Bar:**

A wooden bar which closed the mouth of the codtrap as it was hauled up out of the water (Ernest Williams).

**Berth:**

A small area upon the sea where a dory would set its lines. Each dory had a separate berth.

**Class:**

A marked status structure of social stratification. A good definition is given by Hoebel and Weaver (1979: 471): "a category of persons within a society who hold a number of related statuses in common, who through the associated roles receive similar rewards and privileges, and who through a common life style develop an awareness of common interests in contrast to those of other such categories". Information from my informants suggests that they tend to agree with this somewhat verbose definition, but would qualify this definition with the recognition that, in actuality, roles, life styles, and interests often overlapped from one supposed "class" to others (re: my argument that local classes were not entirely distinct, but shared common bonds and experiences).

**Coasters:**

These are schooners that did not fish, and did not carry dories, but primarily transported the made fish to the overseas markets, and then returned with other cargoes, and secondarily engaged in coastal trading (travelling from community to community on the South Coast, loading and unloading cargoes). They were not the same as the government coastal boats, which carried paying passengers



### Glossary of Terms

and travelled only around Newfoundland's coasts. In many areas of Newfoundland, coasters did double-duty: they were used as fishing vessels whenever they were not needed for coasting. My informants, including former coaster crewmembers, stated that as far as they are aware, Burin merchants never equipped their coasters to be able to fish.

**Codtrap:**

This trap is essentially a net in the form of a cube, measuring twelve to fifteen fathoms\* on each side. This was set in deep water but had to be near land, as it had to be anchored or attached to the land so that it would not drift away. Upon swimming into this large net, the trap's design prevented the fish from swimming out again. During the summer spawning months, cod will not readily take bait; therefore the trap was more efficient than baited hooks and lines (Len Brushett; Ernest Williams).

**Dressing:**

The process of heading, gutting, and splitting the cod on board a banking schooner, after which the dressed fish was put into the hold of the vessel and salted down (Michael Doody).

**Fathom:**

Most commonly, a unit of measure of the depth of water; less often, a unit of measure of a horizontal distance. Equal to about 1.8 metres.

**Flakes:**

A large, flat, raised platform, covered with dry tree boughs, upon which split fish would be laid to dry in the sun (curing the fish). All Burin merchants had one or more large flakes; many fishers owned smaller ones. These were usually located near the shoreline, often suspended out over the water.

**Hand barrow:**

A small flat wooden platform, with handles for a person at each end, on which to carry dried fish. When carried, it would be waist-high (Jim Riggs).

**Haul:**

A haul is the process of setting a codtrap, then hauling it up when it was thought to be full, and forking the fish out of it into the dory. Several men were required, in a skiff.

## Glossary of Terms

**Lines:**

Long thick twine, with smaller lines ("suds") tied all along it, each with a hook at the end, placed in a wooden tub in the dory. These lines were attached to buoys, so they are easy to find and haul up out of the water, and to anchors, so that they do not drift away.

**Making fish:**

The process whereby salt split cod, after it had been brought onshore, is washed and then cured and dried on flakes to ready it for market.

**Nippers:**

Knitted palm protectors that fit over the hand.

**Painter:**

A rope attached to each end of a dory, which was held by someone on the deck of a schooner or tied to the deck so that the dory would remain relatively steady as the fish were being forked up onto deck.

**Room:**

The location or site of a business and its premises (buildings, flakes and such).

**Seasonal fishery:**

The type of fishery most often associated with the sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries in Newfoundland. European merchants sent their vessels to Newfoundland waters in the spring to fish offshore, and made their fish onshore, on the beaches. They resided onshore for the summer, and in the early fall, they would return to Europe. The residential fishery of the nineteenth century eventually supplanted the summer or seasonal fishery.

**Time:**

A local garden party, soup supper, or dance, usually sponsored by a local church or voluntary association, such as the Society of United Fishermen.

**Quintal:**

A unit of weight equal to about fifty kilograms.

A Note on the Authorship of the History of Burin (1977)

Since the book History of Burin has been cited frequently in this study, a brief note on its authorship and relevance is necessary. It was compiled by the Burin Senior Citizens Association and was published in 1977. Working with a small government grant and their own funds obtained from bake sales, soup suppers and such, this group of people researched their own community and surrounding areas because they felt that no adequate history of the area had yet been undertaken. The book includes a vast array of facets of Burin life, covering the period since the arrival of Europeans in the sixteenth century. It is a rich source of information. Much of it was gathered from interviews and conversations with some of the same Seniors interviewed for this thesis, in and from the town. However, historical information found in the book (for example, about the French and English conflicts in the area in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) was gathered from archival records and other sources.

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Photographs

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Maps

Arklie, Robert Sr. Burin Peninsula Integrated School Board,  
Burin. Scale 9.6 km to 1 cm. No date.

Decks Awash (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland),  
Volume 19, Number 6. November - December 1990. Reproduced  
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Department of Municipal Affairs. "Burin, Newfoundland. Sheet  
Number One". Scale 200 ft. to 1 inch. 1966. Reduced to  
80% original size.

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