

The Newfoundland Historical Society

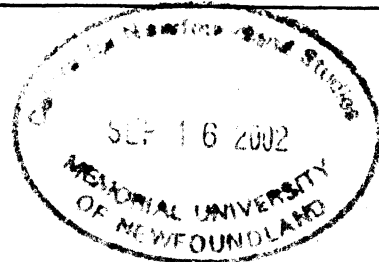


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NEWSLETTER

Fall 2002



Executive 2002:

President,

Jean Ritchey

Vice presidents,

Terry Bishop-Stirling

Jeff Webb

Recording secretary,

Fran Warren

Treasurer,

Larry Daley

past president,

Eleanor Dawson

Board

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Jerry Bannister

Anita Best

David Bradley

Emma Butler

Linda Cullum

Mark Ferguson

Sara Flaherty

Rosemary Healey

James Hiller

Aidan Maloney

Linda White

Fred Winson

Office manager:

Lenie Martin

President's Report

The 2001-2002 year finished up in April with the annual general meeting, a fascinating lecture by Dr. Willeen Keough and a post-lecture reception at Hampton Hall, Marine Institute.

A new executive is now in place. The new executive members are Aidan Maloney, Sara Flaherty, Emma Butler and Jerry Bannister. Gar Fizzard and Chris Butt have retired from the executive and we thank them for their interest in the society and all the work they did over the years. Eleanor Dawson finished her two-year term as president. The executive, and I am sure the members, thank her heartily for managing the society so well. Her knowledge will not be lost though, as she has taken up the duties we confer on past presidents. Office manager, Linda Williams, left for other pursuits and we thank her for all her hard work while she was with us. Melanie Martin, a graduate student in Memorial's Department of History is our new Office Manager.

During 2001-2002 a slate of seven lectures, and a day and a half symposium on World War II were brought off, attended by full or near-full audiences. The executive was particularly gratified by the large turnouts on some of the coldest and stormiest nights of the winter. Ingeborg Marshall's booklet, the Beothuk, was launched on one of those nights; nevertheless Ingeborg signed many copies for eager buyers. We hope this means that we are bringing you the kind of lectures and publications you want.

In February 2002, Eleanor Dawson and I were invited to attend the PATHS (Provincial And Territorial Historical Societies) conference in Quebec City. Meeting with members of other societies, comparing interests and concerns was as interesting and useful to us as the sessions, which covered national lobbying issues (history in the schools, Canadian Heritage funding), fundraising ideas and presentations on historical society newsletters and publications. The conference helped us see the Newfoundland Historical Society in context with the community of historical societies in Canada and to compare the quality and volume of its lectures, symposia and publications with other organizations.

Committees:

Publications

Linda Cullum--Chair
Jeff Webb
Anita Best--Newsletter Editor
Mark Ferguson--Web Page
David Bradley --NF Quarterly
James Hiller

Programme

David Bradley-- Chair
Eleanor Dawson
Linda White
Rosemary Healy
Debby Andrews
Jerry Bannister

Regional

Linda White-- Chair
Terry Bishop Stirling
Sara Flaherty

Finance

Larry Dohey--Chair
Fran Warren
Emma Butler
Aidan Maloney

Membership

Rosemary Healy--Chair
Debby Andrews
Emma Butler

Getting Resources for Community Based Heritage Projects

A Pre-Forum Workshop for those interested in more information on obtaining funding for their community projects will be held on Friday, September 13, from 1:30-4:30 PM in Canon Wood Hall next to St. Thomas Anglican Church on Military Road. Please register soon.

The Newfoundland Quarterly achieved its one hundredth anniversary in 2002. In light of this great milestone, Memorial University, which owns the Quarterly, has decided to re-vamp the magazine to make it appealing to a wider readership and to ensure its continuation. The University's plan will take some months to realize as an editor will have to be hired and a new Quarterly conceived. As we do not expect an issue to appear for a while we have decided to cut three dollars off the Newfoundland Historical Society "membership with Quarterly" rate for a year starting in September 2002. Look out for the new Newfoundland Quarterly sometime in 2003.

In this issue of the newsletter each committee chair presents an overview of its upcoming activities. The society's several committees indicate the society's interests - education, bringing good quality history to the public (through lectures, symposia and the publication series) and the promotion of history and heritage in our province (through our efforts to put history on the school curriculum and our connection with the Association of Heritage Industries).

Please contact executive members, committee members or me if you have something to say about the Society's activities or have an idea for something new. I hope to meet you all at the events. Please come up and introduce yourself to the members of your executive.
Joan Ritcey

Office Hours

Melanie Martin is in the Historical Society Office in the Colonial Building from 9:30 AM to 4 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Messages may be left on the answering machine, or by e-mail, but research enquiries will be dealt with only during office hours. Please call the Centre for Newfoundland Studies (737-7475) for reference help at other times.

AHI Forum 2002 at MUN Music School

The Future of Heritage

September 14, 2002
MUN School of Music: Cook Recital Hall
Heritage Trade Fair/Pre-Forum Workshop
Registration is Free
Call 738-4345 for more information

Committees:

History in the Schools:

Fred Winsor
Hope Squires
James Hiller
Anita Best
David Bradley (AHT)
Mary Ellen Wright (ANLA)
Janet Story (MANL)
Jean Brown (Wessex Society)
George Chalker (HFNL)

Regional:

Linda White--Chair
Terry Bishop Stirling
Sara Flaherty

THE NEW GRADE EIGHT HISTORY COURSE

The consultative committee appointed by the Department of Education to advise on the new Grade 8 course on the history of Newfoundland and Labrador finished the first part of its task earlier this year. A course outline and curriculum guide has been developed for a course that will cover the history of the province in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is an ambitious and challenging program, which covers social, economic and political history, and encourages students to explore the past of their families and communities. The course tries to present history as a discussion between the past and the present, as a process of exploration, not as a compendium of dates and fixed opinions.

The next stage will be the development of student resources, followed by piloting the course in the school system. The NHS hopes that this process will move forward in a timely manner. It is very important that this course should be implemented without further delay.

J.K. Hiller

LECTURE NOTES

17th Century Planter Household in Renews

On the coldest, windiest, iciest evening this year approximately 175 individuals found their way to Room 310 on the third floor of the Marine Institute. Our usual space in Hampton Hall was unavailable because of problems brought on by the weather. Despite the cramped quarters and unexpected difficulties the presentation was most enjoyable.

Archaeologist Stephen Mills spoke of his work with several Memorial University students in uncovering a site chosen by early planters on a hill backed by a solid rock cliff, overlooking the present harbour. They worked by following a trail of large rocks that ran from one excavation to another. One building, a barn, had a cobblestone floor that continued to the house that had an earthen floor. Digging down through the layers of the floor they found 1770 military pottery. In an area outside the door there appeared to be a circular pit that they determined had been an area dug out to use for the floor of the house. After each rainfall, the archaeologists noted that the excavation filled up with water. From this they ascertained that the reason for putting cobblestone on top of the earthen floor was to raise the level of the floor. The house had been approximately 20 feet x 14 feet, and the hearth had taken up one third of the entire floor space. This was typical of a small one-room North Devon dwelling; however, it appeared that the position of the hearth had been moved from the centre of the house to one end, by the door, perhaps to stop being inconvenienced by water every time it rained.

Newsletter of the Atlantic Association of Historians, No 41 Winter 2001/2002 page 9 column 3

"...I will give kudos to the Newfoundland Historical Society, who have, in recent years, sponsored some wonderful public lectures and symposia which have been extremely well attended because they have found that balance or that across-over appeal. (of combining popular and academic history)"
Dr. W. Keough

The diggers determined that there might have been a wooden floor placed around the hearth. Several hundred artefacts found surrounding the hearth were in remarkable condition, considering their age and the makeup of the floor. One coin dated from 1646-48. A copper rod with a 30" long eye may have been a mediaeval netting needle. One hundred and twenty six nearly complete 1660 style clay pipes were unearthed. 30 of these had marks on the heel, the initials PS, perhaps for Peter Steven. These pipes were typical of those coming from Barnstable, Devon in the period 1640-80. One unusual one was of white and red clay dated to Chesapeake (common about 1640 in Virginia).

It is known that fishermen lived there because of hooks and jiggers, and the remnants of residue, believed to be pitch that was commonly used for waterproofing. There were also indications that fish flakes had been in the area. There were many interesting ceramic pieces; probably cereal bowls from Barnstable, and other more expensive platters that indicated a degree of wealth among the fishing folks. There were also eggshell-thin glass pieces, possibly from pharmaceutical vials. There were parts of Devon butter containers. A photo showed them as shaped like a flower vase, and much taller when shown next to the average plastic margarine container we buy today. A large quantity of lead muskets balls of varying sizes was found.

Artefacts dating around 1710-15 and the 1770s indicated this particular site was visited and used for social occasions long after the house had disintegrated: glass stems and pewter spoons were found, one having an emblem in a shape similar to those found on Queen Anne artefacts.

House such as these were often "tippling" houses. A tippling house was usually a dark and dingy dwelling with very little light. After the fishing season, people socialized in these houses and there was much drinking and smoking, with women and children alike participating. It was known that David Kirke, of the nearby Colony of Avalon, had a tippling house and made money by licensing other tippling houses. The shape and type of glass remnants found on the site indicated that people drank strong liquor, not beer or ale. There was an artefact with the words "The Falcon" which may have been the name of this particular tippling house as no person by that surname could be found in early records. The archaeologists hope to continue their study of sites in this area next season.

Linda Williams

The 'old hag' meets St. Brigid

Our April lecture, delivered by Dr. Willeen Keough was entitled "The 'old hag' meets St. Brigid: Irish women and the intersection of belief systems on the southern Avalon." The lecture was peppered with humorous stories through which Keough demonstrated the central role played by Irish-Newfoundland women in the spiritual lives of early fishing communities on the Southern Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland. Keough showed that these women wielded considerable power and authority within their families and communities. According to her, they acted as mediators and



The next French Shores Conference will take place at St Anthony, September 12 - 14. For information contact Ken Carter, 454-3508.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The membership committee would like to remind all members that we depend almost entirely on the membership fees to finance the work of the society. Please renew as soon as you can.

A Newfoundland Historical Society membership could be the perfect gift to mark special occasions such as graduations, retirements or birthdays.

Membership fees are due in September and may be renewed or purchased by cheque or VISA.

Take advantage of our new low rates for 2003.

piritual guides within both orthodox Catholic practice and the informal, non-Christian system of beliefs that had been transported from the old country. The Catholic Church tried to limit the involvement of women in these capacities, and encouraged instead the view of women as selfless mothers and guardians of morality. Keough asserted that women were able to secure so much authority because of their role as co-producers in the family economy and that this authority acted as a counterweight to the intrusions of an increasingly patriarchal church.

Dr. Keough used stories and pictures in order to further illustrate her point.

Women were believed to have the power to heal the sick and injured. They were also willing to step outside their role as nurturer to defend rights to property. Sometimes they resorted to violence in order to right the wrongs they felt had been committed against them. As the lecture drew to a close Dr. Keough took questions and comments from the lively audience, many of them with stories of their own to share about the crucial role played by women in early Newfoundland.

Sara Flaherty

Perlin's Boys: Jewish Peddlers in 20th Century Newfoundland

There were no vacant seats at Hampton Hall on February 28th, and many more people stood at the back of the room, waiting in anticipation. Anita Best gave an eloquent introduction to the guest speaker, Robin McGrath, a woman of many talents and accomplishments academic, domestic and aesthetic.

We were drawn into the lecture by a performance by Robin and her partner John Joy of verses from "The Advertisers' Howl", Johnny Burke's collection of advertising jingles about St. John's business firms operating during the first decades of the twentieth century. Robin went on to speak of the origins of Israel Perlin, who came to Newfoundland from New York, where the family lived after fleeing from the Polish border when he was sixteen. His father was a scholar who could recite the five books of Moses while he worked. Israel Perlin became a leading wholesale merchant in St. John's, and founded a Hebrew community.

She spoke of Perlin's business, and his considerable place in the mercantile history of Newfoundland, primarily because of his employment of Jewish immigrants as peddlers. He provided a haven for Jewish immigrants running from persecution in Europe, giving them shelter, food, an opportunity to learn the English language, and the chance to make a living. With a heavy back-pack of goods and just enough English to get them on the train, they were sent around the bay to sell jewellery, hats, soaps, gloves, ribbons, threads, needles and so forth. Peddlers were apparently treated kindly in the outports with the best of hospitality. Many Newfoundlanders can still remember Perlin's peddlers coming to their outport communities.

Other Jewish immigrants probably came from England. Mr. Levi and Israel Palmer of George's Brook operated sawmills. Philip Duke was a fur trader from Jersey, at Bird Island and appeared no different from other English West Country men. They may not, however, have kept their Jewish identity, allowing themselves to be assimilated into Newfoundland society through the various Christian congregations. Their numbers increased in St. John's and spread out to Corner Brook, Grand Falls and Bell Island. Robin spoke briefly of the arrival of these Jewish entrepreneurs and the reasons why some were not as successful as they might have been—reasons including racial and legal prejudice. In St. John's local jewellers complained because under the existing laws, peddlers were not taxed.

Robin's talk left us all informed about the Jewish community in Newfoundland and with new thoughts on our collective past. After her talk, she answered questions and listened to the reminiscences of many of those present who remembered "Perlin's Boys" and the contribution of the Jewish community to the rich cultural landscape that is Newfoundland and Labrador.

Linda Williams

AAH CONFERENCE IN ST. JOHN'S IN OCTOBER

The Atlantic Association of Historians, an association of historians, academic and non-academic from the Atlantic Provinces and Maine will be meeting in St. John's on the weekend of 4-6 October 2002. The Newfoundland Historical Society will be co-host of the conference.

This year the Association will expand its focus and examine the place of history and the role of historians, professional and non-professional, in the public sphere.

Dr. Heather McDougall, a public historian from Waterloo will give one of the keynote addresses on the Friday night at the Colonial Building. She has considerable experience in the field and will identify some of the issues that will be examined in the Saturday roundtable discussions in the Arts Building annex at the University.

Dr. Dean Oliver, an historian with the Canadian War Museum, will speak on Saturday. He has played an active role in the planning for the new war museum in Ottawa.

Because the conference deals with issues of interest to those in the history and heritage sector of the community the AAH are extending an invitation to our members to attend and participate in the proceedings.

Such a gathering will also afford an excellent opportunity to promote local organizations and the important work they do in the community. Space will be available in the Atrium on the Saturday for displays and promotional material. Local heritage organizations and others are encouraged to make use of it for a small fee of \$50.

For more information please contact Dr. David R. Facey-Crowther President, Atlantic Association of Historians:

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**It's Not Too Late to Register For the
North Atlantic Forum (NAF) 2002!**

**Watch for Program Updates at
www.uccb.ns.ca!**

With Thanks

The Society is grateful for the continued support and assistance of a number of individuals and organizations: Provincial archivist Shelly Smith and her staff have made our office in the Colonial Building a much easier place in which to work. Memorial University is generous in its provision of meeting rooms for our monthly Board meetings. The Centre for Newfoundland Studies staff has generously been dealing with reference questions since our office hours have been cut. Thanks to you all.

OFFICE NEWS

Since May there have been 25 visits to the office, as well as 58 phone calls and 36 written and e-mail enquiries seeking assistance in a variety of ways, from historical and genealogical research, to information about ourselves and other organizations.

The Society is considering substantive changes to the current office operations, in part because of the changing situation of the Provincial Archives and their departure from the Colonial Building to The Rooms in 2004. The Association of Heritage Industries has made a proposal to Government concerning the use of a portion of the Colonial Building as a shared office space for heritage organizations. No decision has yet been taken by the government on this issue. You may write to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, Julie Bettney, in support of the AHI proposal.

A sub-committee will bring a report with recommendations concerning a revised system of operations to the NHS Board in the Fall.

