

### TOPIC 3.1

# Settling In

#### 3.1 Lester and Company Premises, Trinity, 1800s

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, merchants began to find it more profitable to conduct a general supply trade. These premises are typical of the trading establishments built in regional centres. The merchants provided waterfront buildings for collecting and storing fish, oil, and seal skins for export, and storing imports such as flour, beef, and salt for the settlers. How does each structure shown in the diagram relate to the fishery? What differences do you see in the set-up of this fishing premises versus the one in fig. 2.53?

How would you feel if you were asked (or forced) to leave your family and friends to permanently settle in an unknown area?

If you were to move today to a new country, what challenges might you face? How would you overcome them?

## Introduction

For nearly 300 years the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador was a seasonal migratory activity conducted by Europeans during the late spring to early fall. A settled population, however, began to emerge from the early 1600s, and by 1815 the transatlantic migrations had almost ended.

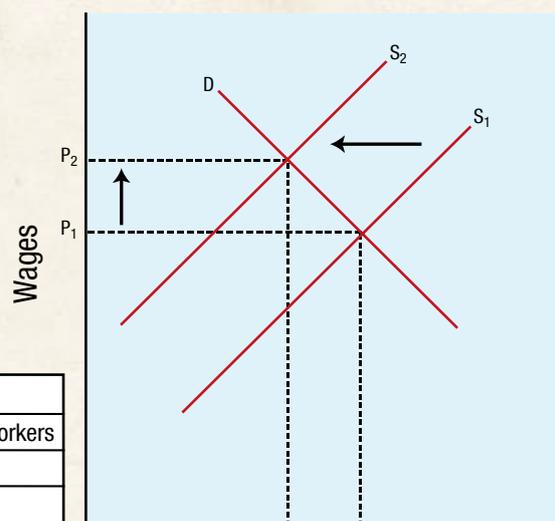
workers and supplies needed for the migratory fishery. Also, large numbers of able seamen were forced to work in the Royal Navy. This created a labour shortage in the migratory fishery. As a result, British merchants were forced to pay more for wages and provisions, reducing their profit margins. These events encouraged the development of a resident fishery, since it did not depend on a workforce from Europe and required fewer ships. By 1815, residents were catching almost all the fish the merchants required.

### Why did a resident fishery emerge?

By the mid-1600s, Newfoundland and Labrador was beginning to acquire a settled European population.\* As it increased, the migratory fishery declined. Merchants were now able to get all the fish they wanted from residents without the risk and expense of catching it. The nineteenth-century fishery would be conducted almost entirely by residents.

Several important factors contributed to the growth of settlement and a resident fishery. One of these was the wars that Britain fought with America and France over the period 1775 to 1815. These wars disrupted shipping and interfered with the transport of

\*Europeans who settled in Labrador were called *liveries*, a term also sometimes used in Newfoundland.



$P_1$	Wages at initial level
$P_2$	Wages with fewer workers
D	Demand for workers
S	Supply of workers

#### 3.2 Labour shortage

When workers were pressed into the Royal Navy, there were fewer available for hire in the fishery; the supply line shifted to the left ( $S_2$ ). As a result, market forces caused employers to pay higher wages ( $P_2$ ).



*Drawn by Collins.*

*Published as the Act directs by Bentley & Co. June 1, 1790.*

*Engr. by Barlow.*

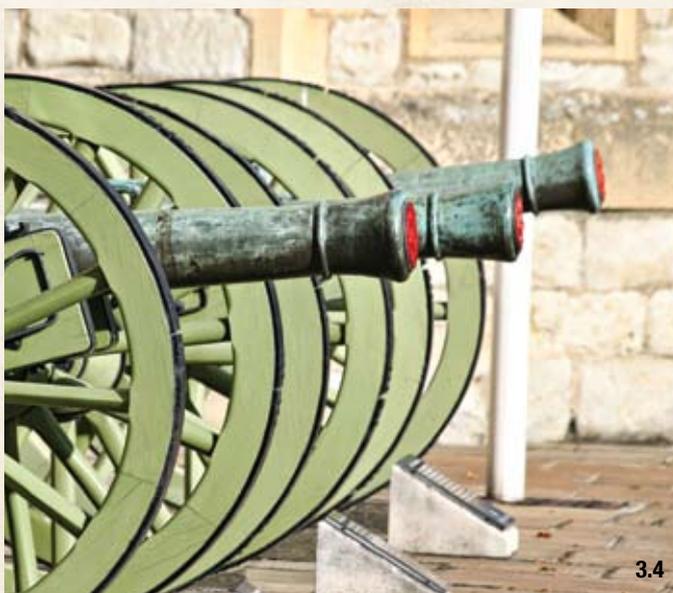
## MANNING THE NAVY.

### 3.3 You're going to sea.

This caricature published in 1791 shows a Royal Navy press gang at work. During times of war, the Royal Navy was permitted to recruit seamen by "pressing" them into service by force. The Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries were supposed to be training grounds for seamen who, when required, were expected to join the Royal Navy. Not surprisingly, press gangs were actively recruiting in the fishing ports, looking for experienced sailors. Individuals with a seafaring background were preferred, but vagrants were also taken. After 1740, the age limit for impressment was 55. The impressment of large numbers of men resulted in a shortage of workers for the migratory fishery.

## CONFLICTS IMPACTING THE FISHERY

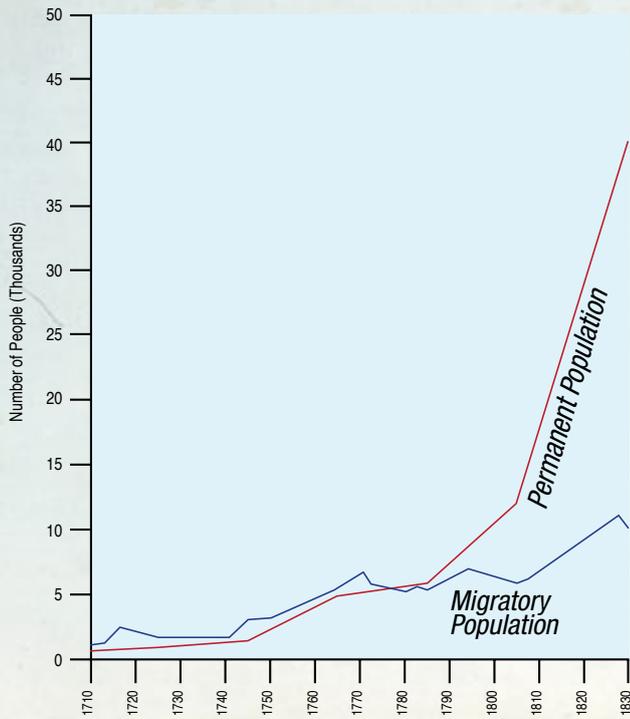
Britain was involved with over 30 conflicts from 1750 to 1870. The identified conflicts made it more difficult for Britain to operate a migratory fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador and encouraged the development of a resident fishery.



3.4

- French and Indian War\* (1754-63)
- Seven Years' War (1756-63)
- American Revolution (1775-83)
- French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802)
- United Irishmen's Revolt (1798)
- Napoleonic Wars (1803-15)
- War of 1812 (1812-15)
- American Civil War (1861-65)

\* considered part of the Seven Years' War



Merchants began to find it more convenient, profitable, and less risky to supply resident fishers than to catch the fish themselves and shoulder the total cost and risks of the voyage. This encouraged them to move from a purely fishing trade to a general supplying trade, even setting up some of their former employees to fish for them. To do this, many of the smaller traders and byboat-keepers settled here to handle their business in person. Larger merchants, on the other hand, often stayed in England and conducted their business through resident agents.

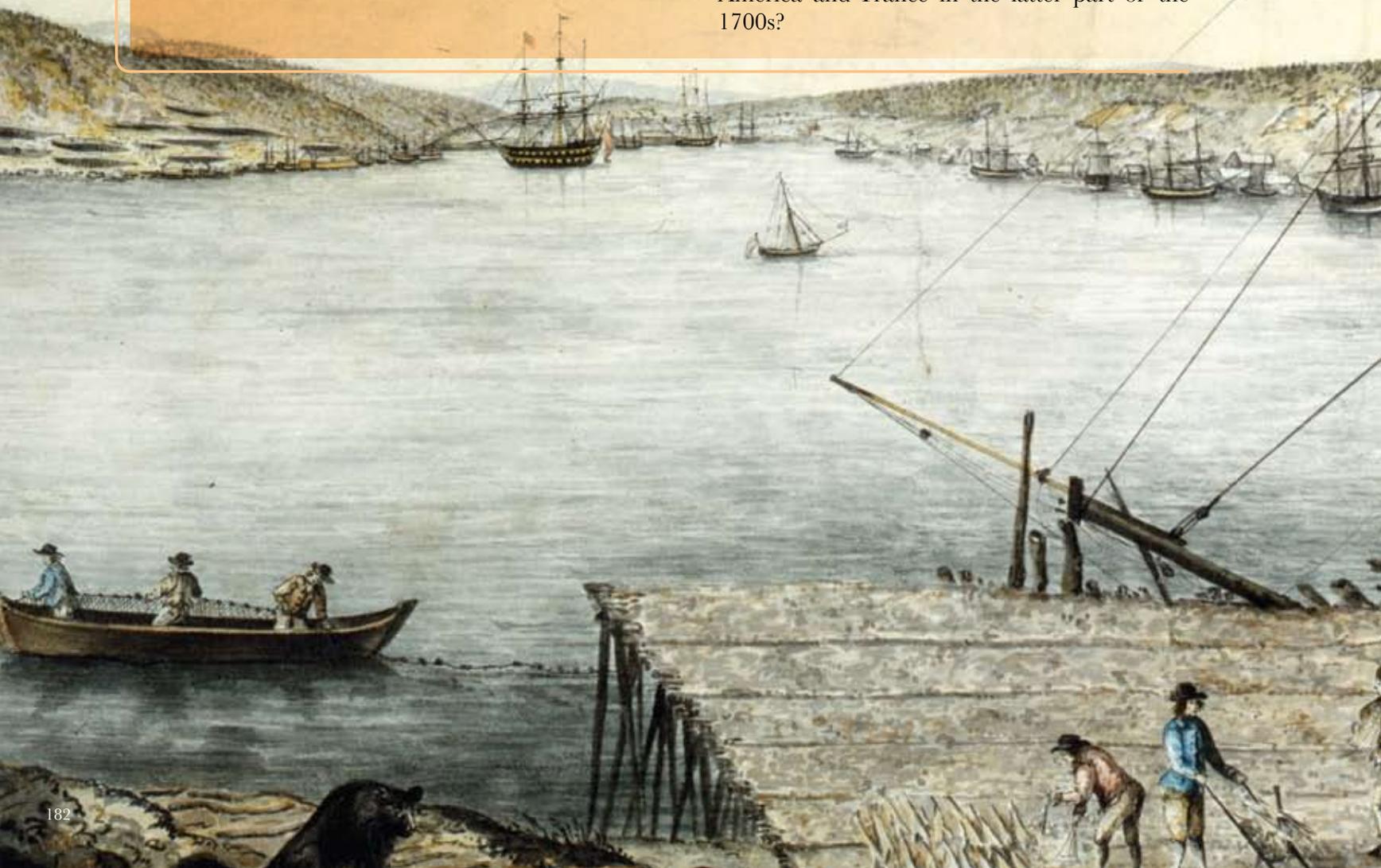
The emergence of winter industries (such as trapping, sealing, and boatbuilding) to provide a means of income during these months was another incentive for settlement. Worsening employment conditions in both England and Ireland promoted further **emigration**. By the 1790s, residents were the largest producers of fish in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### 3.5 Newfoundland population changes 1713-1830

(Based on information from "English Migration to Newfoundland" by W. Gordon Handcock in *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography*, Ed. John J. Mannion. Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977.)

## Questions:

1. What was the most significant reason for the emergence of a resident fishery?
2. How might our history have been different today if Britain had not been involved in wars with America and France in the latter part of the 1700s?



# FUR TRAPPING

Fur trapping allowed fishers to earn income during the winter months. Beaver, rabbit, foxes, and wolves were taken primarily, as well as some ermine, marten, and otter. Although fur trapping contributed little value to the colony overall compared to cod and seal, it was important in some regions as supplementary income. Fur trapping was pursued mainly north of Bonavista (and to a smaller extent on parts of the island's south and west coasts) and especially in Labrador. Although fur trapping usually complemented the cod fishery, in some districts there were planters who were mainly furriers and salmon fishers.

The fur trade in Labrador began in the sixteenth century between French from Quebec and Innu. By the mid-1700s, the French had a chain of posts along the coast. They enjoyed a near-monopoly of the trade in southern Labrador until 1763, when the Treaty of Paris transferred the area to the English. English trading posts appeared in Labrador by 1765, including one established by George Cartwright in 1770 in the town

that now bears his name. By 1800, Labrador had a small winter resident population of English men employed by merchant houses to trap during the winter months. They also fished salmon and cod in the summer. Some of these furriers became permanent settlers who then trapped independently.

In 1836, the Hudson's Bay Company expanded its territory from Quebec into Labrador. They established their Labrador headquarters in North West River, which became a central point for trading European goods with Innu in exchange for furs. The Company set up posts at Rigolet and Cartwright that attracted trade with Inuit. Moravian missions along the northern coast also encouraged many Inuit to participate in the fur trade.

Thus, fur trading had several long-term effects on residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. It encouraged English and Scottish settlement, and established a pattern of trade for many Innu and Inuit, which would permanently impact their cultures.

## 3.6 A growing city

View of upper end of the harbour from a little below Fort William, St. John's around the end of the 18th century, artist unknown. What evidence in this picture suggests St. John's is no longer a seasonal work camp?

