



TOPIC 3.5

3.69 Heart's Content, 1885

Lifestyle and Culture

What are the advantages and disadvantages of “winterhousing”?

In 1900, less than 50 per cent of children under age 15 attended school. Today more than 90 per cent attend. Why might this shift have occurred?

Introduction

During the migratory fishery, most occupied harbours and coves were essentially seasonal communities of transient populations. As the resident fishery developed, communities began to emerge.*

Life on Land and Sea

As most communities in the 1800s were based upon the shore fishery, they were located along the coast. Fishing communities, however, were not all alike. A few continued to function mainly as fishing stations, while others became regional centres with a wide range of occupations.

In some cases, even permanently settled communities lost some of their residents for parts of the year. (For example, whole families from Conception Bay would spend the summer working in the Labrador fishery.) In many areas, especially in the first half of the century, many families moved into the woods for the winter. This was called **winterhousing** and was practised in most regions outside the Avalon Peninsula. Usually the main reason for this move was to obtain wood for fuel and shelter. In some areas, winterhousing survived well into the twentieth century.

The nineteenth century inshore fishery was mainly a

family fishery. Family labour was used to crew boats and cure fish, replacing the hired hands that had been used in previous centuries. When expensive cod traps, requiring much labour to operate, came into use late in the century, **kinship** ties were used to acquire and utilize them. Brothers usually fished together and fishing crews were completed by **sharemen** when family members alone could not crew boats. Those able to form trap crews usually had higher incomes than those who fished with simpler gear such as handlines.

Although the cod fishery was the main economic activity for most, it only lasted for a few months in summer (except on the south coast), so it was combined with other fisheries or land-based work during other seasons. Rural households engaged in subsistence production for home use, and sometimes for sale. Subsistence was an important part of **outport adaptation**, which had emerged in some areas at the end of the 1700s and became common during the 1800s.

The seasonal round for most householders was built around the salt cod fishery, which ran from late May to early November. The land-based harvest of seals occurred during February and March. Subsistence farming began with the planting of crops in late May or

*Some would argue this was the true beginning of modern Newfoundland and Labrador society.



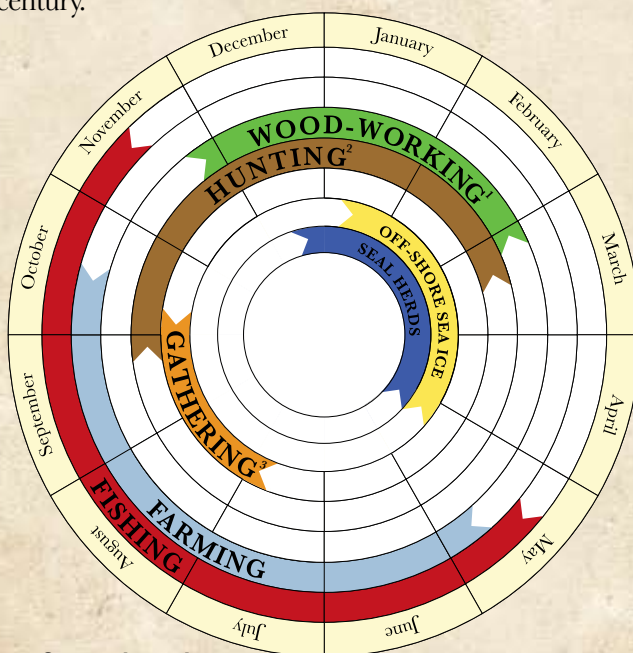
3.70 Farming near Quidi Vidi Lake, St. John's, c. 1900

This was an important activity for many households in 19th century Newfoundland and Labrador. Vegetable and hay gardens were common in many communities.

early June, and hoeing, weeding, and fertilizing with kelp, **fish offal**, and manure required attention during the summer.

Crops were harvested and stored in September and October. Fruit and berries were gathered in August and September to be preserved for the winter. From October to early March, game and seabirds were hunted. Early December to late February was the time to harvest timber for firewood and to repair or construct houses, outbuildings, wharves, boats, etc. During the late winter and early spring, nets, handlines, and boats had to be repaired in preparation for the fishery.

Shore fishing was combined seasonally with other fisheries – herring and lobster on the south coast, sealing and the Labrador fishery in the north. On the west coast, cod was not the main species. Rather, salmon, herring, and lobster fishing were combined with logging, trapping, and farming. Life in fishing communities, therefore, had a regional character in the nineteenth century.



3.71 Seasonal round

An example from a household in rural northeastern Newfoundland c. 1850.

1 Wood-working includes firewood, fencing materials, saw-logs, and other building materials

2 Hunting for birds, terrestrial mammals

3 Gathering of wild fruits and berries

NOTE: All boundaries are approximations and represent decreased activity

A HARD LIFE

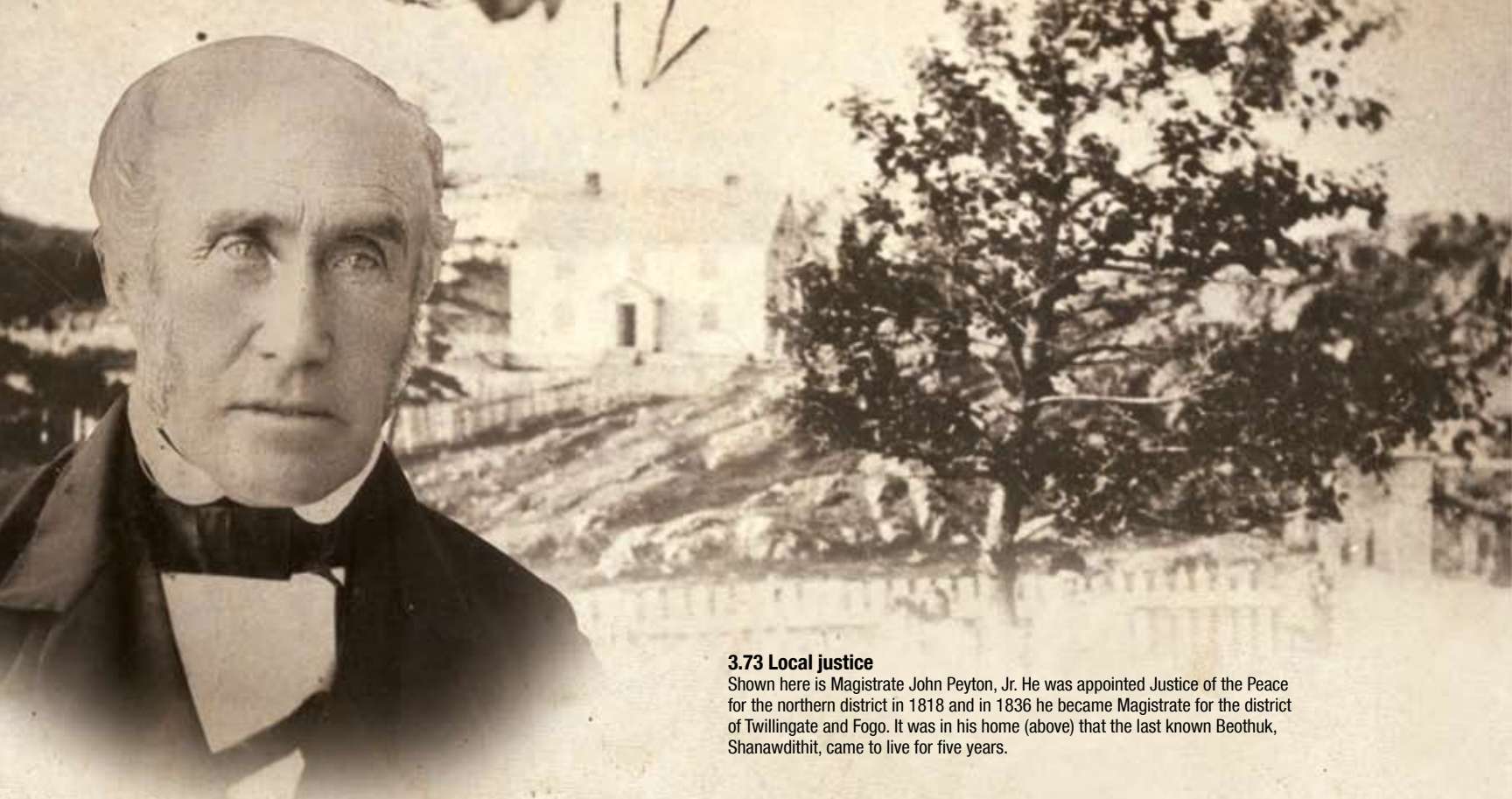
Life was very labour-intensive for fishers in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1700s and 1800s. This excerpt from William Harding's life story gives an idea of what life was like. Harding, a blacksmith by trade, shipped as a youngster from Devon in 1819 at a wage of £25 for two summers and a winter in the fishery. Although he began his life in Newfoundland and Labrador in the migratory fishery, he permanently settled in Burin where he later wrote his life story.

Upon Harding's arrival

We were soon sent from the vessel to the cook-room, with a set of Irishmen, and we soon found that we were not in old England enjoying the liberty we were used to, for we had to work from the dawn of the day to dark night about the fishery, as well as in the shop & at all calls. This we did not like! But even Sundays we had to work also, spreading fish on the Sunday morning and taking it up again in the evening.

I was not more than a fortnight in this place when I and seven men more was [sic] sent in a cod seine skiff hauling codfish. We were sent off Sunday after dinner and not to return to the cook-room until Saturday evening. No place to sleep only take a nap in the skiff, while one would be watching for a haul of fish, and only one meal of victuals cooked in twenty-four hours. If we wanted more there was bread and butter & water in the skiff. Saturday evening we went to the cook-room, put the seine on shore and spread to dry, and Sunday after dinner take it in with our week's allowance (of rum) and be off again, so we had only one night in the week to sleep in our bed. This continued six weeks and in that time we hauled six hundred quintals of codfish.

3.72 An excerpt from Harding's journal



3.73 Local justice

Shown here is Magistrate John Peyton, Jr. He was appointed Justice of the Peace for the northern district in 1818 and in 1836 he became Magistrate for the district of Twillingate and Fogo. It was in his home (above) that the last known Beothuk, Shanawdithit, came to live for five years.

Local Government and Justice

The system of using a **naval governor**, appointed by the British government, to handle matters related to civil justice continued in the latter part of the eighteenth century. To administer these affairs more effectively, the island of Newfoundland was divided into districts and zones in the mid-1760s. Nine districts were managed by **civil magistrates** and overlapped with five maritime zones looked after by naval officers commissioned as **surrogate magistrates**.

In each of the districts, a magistrate (also known as a Justice of the Peace) took **depositions**, held **petty sessions**, and organized **quarter sessions** for more serious matters of justice. At these quarter sessions, civil magistrates worked with naval surrogates.

Although governors worked to standardize the system, in reality, the operation of districts and zones varied considerably according to regional customs and available resources. In addition, although not part of the formal system, fish merchants often used their considerable influence to settle matters that directly affected them.

Improvements in this system of civil government and justice continued over the years, including the appointment of a chief justice in 1791, and the establishment of a supreme court in the following year. When Newfoundland was granted colonial status in 1825, a civil (rather than naval) governor was appointed to administer the affairs of local government.

“The vast wealth realized by the fisheries all went to enrich other lands. None of it was spent in the improvement of Newfoundland, or in the promotion of civilization among the resident population.”

— From *Newfoundland: The Oldest British Colony* (1883) by Joseph Hatton and Rev. Moses Harvey

Experiencing The Arts

Using the information in this section, create a piece of comic art that explores the lifestyle and culture of

European settlers during this time period. Your work should be 6-10 frames long. Add this to your portfolio.

Some historians claim this is an exaggeration. Does the evidence in this section support or refute this claim?



3.74 The Harbour Grace Affray

One of the worst incidents related to religious tensions in Newfoundland and Labrador occurred in Harbour Grace on Boxing Day (St. Stephen's Day) in 1883. "The Harbour Grace Affray," as it is now known, began when approximately 450 Protestant members of the Loyal Orange Association held their annual parade through town. During their march, they encountered a group of approximately 125 men from Riverhead, who felt the marchers were intruding on a Roman Catholic part of the town. A violent confrontation ensued. Five men were killed and 17 were injured.

Religion

As permanent settlement by Europeans became more widespread in Newfoundland and Labrador, so did the institutions of organized religion. The original distribution of religious denominations was largely determined by early immigration patterns. Thus, most English immigrants were members of the Church of England (now Anglican) although some were Methodists and Congregationalists (now United Church) and most Irish immigrants were Roman Catholics. Lowland Scots settling in St. John's were mostly Presbyterians, but Highland Scots who moved to the Codroy Valley from Cape Breton were typically Roman Catholics. Most French settlers were also Roman Catholic.

Some changes to this distribution pattern occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a result of the efforts of some denominations to gain converts. For instance, Methodist preachers sent as missionaries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had some success in converting many of the English settlers to their teachings. Later, the Salvation Army and Pentecostal movements were able to establish strong congregations through conversions mainly among the Protestant denominations. Other smaller religious groups and denominations also arrived later – such as Seventh-Day Adventism, which was introduced to Newfoundland in 1893.



3.75 Congregational Church, St. John's, prior to 1906

Unfortunately, as in many parts of British North America, the growth of permanent settlement also brought with it some of the religious tensions and ethnic prejudices that immigrants had experienced in their European homelands. As one historian noted: "Old jealousies and distrusts were revived. The memory of ancient wrongs and grievances awoke. Each dreaded the political ascendancy of the other, and strove to gain the controlling power." In addition, as churches began to take responsibility for the education of their members, people socialized almost entirely within their denomination. Because of this, there has been a close association between religion and politics, education, and ethnicity in Newfoundland and Labrador.

*Wiltred Grenfell opened a hospital in Battle Harbour in 1893.

Health

Even with an increase of permanent settlement, at the end of the eighteenth century there were few social services for residents. Health care services were non-existent for most – although there were naval surgeons aboard British military vessels patrolling the fishery, who sometimes treated local residents. There were also a few military infirmaries in St. John's, which treated civilian patients when their resources allowed. In Northern Labrador, Moravian missionaries provided some health-care services, but could only reach a fraction of the region's scattered population. Resident doctors were rare, especially outside St. John's, and physicians who did service outport communities had to travel long distances by snowshoe, horseback, or boat to examine patients who often could not afford to pay for treatment.

The first civilian hospital in Newfoundland and Labrador was the Riverhead Hospital established in St. John's in 1814. This was mainly thanks to a widespread public movement for better health care, led by Scottish reformer William Carson. Although the government was involved in the construction of the new hospital, the facility ran largely on public donations and struggled to provide adequate care because of the huge demands placed on it. Three more civilian hospitals were opened in St. John's by the end of the nineteenth century but, for the most part, the rest of the colony remained without health facilities and residents were left to depend on folk medicine and the skills of midwives.*



3.77 Caring for the sick, c. 1880

The General Hospital served as a military institution until 1870, when Britain transferred its garrison from St. John's to Halifax. The facility reopened a year later as the Forest Road Hospital and became the General Hospital in 1880.

3.76 Cholera Proclamation

PROCLAMATION.

By His Honor **RICHARD ALEXANDER TUCKER,**
Esquire, President of His Majesty's Council of New-
foundland, Administering the Government of the said
Island of Newfoundland and its Dependencies, &c.

L. S.
R. A. TUCKER,
President & Acting Governor.

WHEREAS the disease termed **ASIATIC CHOLERA**, which had spread
in the course of the last year with desolating violence through various parts of Asia, and of Europe, has lately manifested itself under an equally or even more terrific form in the *Canadas*;
AND WHEREAS the approach of this awful scourge to the shores of America renders the adoption of some stricter measures of precaution to prevent its introduction into this Colony than have
yet been adopted indispensably necessary: **I, THE PRESIDENT AND ACTING GOVERNOR**, do therefore, by and with the advice of His Majesty's Council, hereby most earnestly
enjoin and command all persons most carefully to avoid any communication with any and every Ship, or Vessel that shall arrive here from any Country, Port or Place whatever (except from the
Coasts of this Island,) or with any boat or person therein, coming from, or having been on board any such Ship or Vessel, until such Ship, Vessel, or Boat, with the crews or persons on board the
same, and the Goods, Wares, and Merchandise therein, shall have performed **QUARANTINE**, or have been duly discharged therefrom: And I do further most strictly enjoin and command the
Masters or Commanders, and the Crews and all Persons on board all Ships and Vessels, arriving in this Colony, to maintain the most exact observance of the Rules and Regulations prescribed
by this my Proclamation, as they will answer their neglect or non-observance of the same at their peril of the law: And I do likewise direct and command all **PILOTS** who shall proceed
to Vessels at Sea, being bound to the port of St. John's, NOT to board the same or any of them (unless the Vessel shall be in danger, and her safety shall imperatively require such
Pilot's assistance on board) nor suffer any person to board his boat from such Vessel, nor receive from the same any letter or package, or other article whatsoever: but such Pilot shall remain
in his boat, and keeping at a convenient distance from the said Vessel, shall direct her course into the Narrows at the port of St. John's, and having conducted her to the first Buoy within Chain-
Rock, shall there cause her to come to anchor; and then strictly enjoin the Master of such Vessel not to proceed further into the Port, nor suffer any boat or person to quit his Vessel,
or any boat to board the same, until written permission so to do shall have been first given him: That if in consequence of the dangerous situation of any Vessel, the Pilot shall have
boarded her, he must not presume to quit her again, but must, together with the crew of his boat, remain on board of her, subject to the same restraints with regard
to the said Vessel, as the Master, Passengers and Crew belonging to her: That so soon as any Vessel shall have been brought to anchor at the
Chain-Rock, and having committed to writing the answers thereto, shall propose such questions to her Master
as shall be necessary for the purpose of ascertaining the state of her health, and shall proceed towards her, keeping at a proper distance from her to windward, shall positively enjoin the Master
to remain on board of her, and with all Boats therefrom, until written permission
shall have been brought to anchor at the

*One reason for this was that the educational system was not well integrated with the economic system. In Denmark, for instance, schools teaching agricultural skills were established very early on. However, Newfoundland and Labrador did not get a fisheries college until 1964.



3.78 Typical one-room school
Built around 1820, this school house in Mosquito (now Bristol's Hope) is an example of typical wooden schools in outport communities in the 1800s. It still stands as a heritage structure.

3.79 Making the grade
A few private schools existed in the mid-1800s, such as Jersey Lodge, an "Establishment for Young Ladies" in St. John's. As indicated in this 1869 grade book from Jersey Lodge, the curriculum was tailored for girls from the upper class, who did not need to learn the same kind of practical skills that children in working class families learned at home.

1869	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
English Lessons.	h			h			
Spelling.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
Scriptural Studies.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
History.							
Catechism.							
Poetry.							
Chronology.							
Mythology.							
Geog. & Astron.	h						
English Exercises.							
Dictation.	h						
English Reading.		h	h	h	h	h	
Parsing.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
English Grammar.							
Science.							
Music.	h						
Pianoforte.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
French Lessons.							
French Exercises.							
French Reading & Translation.							
French Grammar.							
Writing.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
Arithmetic.							
Work.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
Neatness.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
Punctuality.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
General Good Behaviour.	h	h	h	h	h	h	
REMARK.	70 Good. 3 Bad.						

Education

Formal education was slow to develop in Newfoundland and Labrador. During the time of migration and settlement – the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – the typical community was mainly pragmatic in its values and outlooks. The main objective for every family was to make a living, mostly in the fishery. Thus, the primary goals of instruction were to train boys as fishers and to teach girls practical skills that contributed directly to household production.

Although merchants and traders did need some formal education to be successful, most did not see the necessity or desirability of schools for the working population. Some religious groups, however, did put a premium value on literacy as a means to enhance public worship and to read the Bible. The first school on the island of Newfoundland was established in Bonavista in 1726 by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Other schools followed through the work of various societies and churches, such as the Newfoundland School Society, which opened a school in St. John's in 1823, and the Benevolent Irish Society, which opened the Orphan Asylum School in St. John's in 1827. A few privately operated schools, or academies, run by individuals were also established. Although many of these early schools were influenced by church involvement, they were officially non-denominational as they were open to all.

In 1836, four years after representative government was established in Newfoundland, the first Education Act was passed. The Committee appointed to review education in the colony recommended that "since the voluntary system works advantageously, assistance be given by the legislature to the several societies who direct the gratuitous education of the poor classes ..." To do this, the act created school boards to administer grants to existing schools. For the most part, churches were in favour of continuing to be responsible for the education of their members. It gave them strong control over their congregations and over what values were imparted to children.

The Education Act of 1843 stipulated that educational grants be divided equally between Protestants and Catholics, a first step towards a denominational education system. In 1874, an act was passed to make the educational system completely denominational, and three government inspectors were appointed, one each for Roman Catholic, Church of England, and Methodist schools. Despite these advances in the education system, there were still many children in Newfoundland that did not have access to formal schooling or were not able to go because they needed to work with the family. In 1900, less than 50%* of children between the ages of five and fifteen were attending elementary school.



3.80 Leisure and reflection

A view of the seven islands in the harbour of Placentia

Social Class

In the early 1800s there were two main classes – wealthy merchants and planters, and poor fishers. However, a rural middle class emerged towards the end of the century. Fishers who utilized cod traps to obtain higher catches began to accumulate capital. Likewise, local men who found employment in the civil service became members of the middle class. Fishers who owned little gear, as well as sharemen, who owned none, formed the lower class.

Communication and Culture

There are signs that distinctive regional subcultures emerged during the nineteenth century in some areas, incorporating elements from countries of origin and distinctly local elements. Language is a good example; sometimes communities just a few kilometres apart had distinctive dialects and different terms for the same objects. Other differences between communities in the same region can be explained due to variation in local economies.

Part of the reason for this phenomenon was the isolation that most outport residents experienced. While there were often paths between communities, there were no roads across the interiors of Newfoundland and Labrador, and most communities could only be reached by boat. As a



3.81 Family life in the 1800s

Lifestyles of families varied based on class.



3.82 SS *Great Eastern* at Heart's Content, July 1866

The SS *Great Eastern* was the world's largest ship when it was launched in 1858. This ship brought the first transatlantic cable from Ireland to Heart's Content in 1866.

consequence, there was little opportunity for extensive interaction between communities. The first postal service in Newfoundland and Labrador began in 1805 when the Governor established a postmaster in St. John's to handle letters to and from London. However, mail service to the rest of the island had to wait until the Colony took over the operation of the post office in 1851 and began to subsidize **packet boats** to deliver mail along the coast.

Telegraph in Newfoundland did not become operational until 1852 when lines were established between St. John's and Trepassy and St. John's and Carbonear. Additional lines were laid in 1867 to Old Perlican, Placentia, and Heart's Content – the latter being the site of the first transatlantic cable. More lines were built in the 1870s and 1880s, but it wasn't until the railway telegraph lines were built in the 1890s that the western and northern coasts received telegraph service.

Some international news began to reach St. John's when Newfoundland and Labrador's first newspaper, *The Royal Gazette*, began as a weekly publication in 1807. However, local news was subject to government scrutiny before publication to ensure the paper did not print anything that "may tend to disturb the peace of His Majesty's subjects." The first daily newspaper, *The Evening Telegram*, started in St. John's in 1879. Harbour Grace, Carbonear, and Twillingate also had newspapers by the end of the 1800s.

As parts of Newfoundland and Labrador slowly became more connected, regional subcultures began to develop into a "national culture." One indication that Newfoundlanders were beginning to think of themselves as a distinct group came with the creation of the Natives' Society in St. John's in 1836. The goal of this society was to advance the careers and interests of "native-born Newfoundlanders." The society even developed its own flag – an early symbol of identity for Newfoundlanders.

3.83 Locals only

The Natives' Society did not last long; it was, however, an expression of the tension that existed between Newfoundland-born and those born elsewhere.



Questions:

- "The resident fisher's life was a hard life."
 - What evidence in the text supports this statement?
 - Compared to the life of a migratory fisher, was the resident fisher's life any easier?
- Examine the visuals in fig. 3.80 and 3.81. Speculate as to which social class is represented in each visual. What evidence did you use to determine this?
- What aspects of present-day Newfoundland and Labrador culture and identity have their roots in this time period?