

GREAT NORTHERN PENINSULA



Canada



Newfoundland
Labrador



Goose Cove

A People of Spirit, Courage and Resourcefulness

PREFACE

With them the seed of wisdom did I sow
And with mine own hand laboured it to grow
And this was all the harvest that I reaped
“I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

- *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

What do the people of northern Newfoundland have in common with a poet by the name of Omar Khayyam? At first glance, nothing, except that this obscure piece of Persian poetry captures the essence of what this year-long Community History Project has taught me.

In the past year I ventured into sixteen communities: telephoning, knocking on doors, and sitting at kitchen tables drinking endless cups of tea, trying to learn customs, traditions, and wisdom from the older people in northern Newfoundland so that the stories could be set down in writing and preserved for future generations. *With them the seed of wisdom did I sow...*

Back at the office, after each interview, I would review the outcome of each story and try to write in a format that would satisfy not only the person interviewed, but the people who would read the stories at some future date. *And with my own hand laboured it to grow...*

By year's end there were stacks of photographs, pages of typewritten interviews, maps criss-crossed with names and dates, and hand-drawn pictures submitted by enthusiastic contributors. In people's homes there were interviews where we laughed, cried, walked over hills to the back of land, walked along winding pathways to graveyards, ventured out on the high seas in boats enjoying boil-ups with scalding tea, fisherman's brewis, beans and bread, and still more stories.

In these interviews, I was often perplexed by words and expressions totally unfamiliar to me and, without

the assistance of my husband, Len Tucker, I suspect the dialect would have defeated me utterly. Yet it is the words and expressions of northern Newfoundland that are, and were, the lifeblood of communication in a time when modern technology was unheard of. I learned that, while there are official names on Newfoundland maps, local fishermen have their own names for islands, bays and coves. I learned that the people who settled this wonderful, terrible place have an intimate relationship with the sea and the land that no tourist or outsider can truly fathom or appreciate. And at the end of the year, I knew that I had only managed to collect a few small pieces of the puzzle that make up a larger picture of hardships endured, joys celebrated, and lives lived to the fullest. *And this was all the harvest that I reaped...*

I came like water and like wind I go...

This precious generation of people you will read about in these pages were born, lived, and will, one day, pass on. In writing their stories I have attempted to grasp the 'wind and water' of their lives – as well as their customs and traditions – which are fast slipping away into obscurity.

This is not so much a historical document as it is an opportunity for these people – in their own time and in their own way – to tell the stories that were nearest and dearest to their hearts. Whether you are a student, a come from away, or a Newfoundlander, you may find in these pages the heart and soul of the people of Newfoundland.

Teacher and Merchant

MAURICE McDONALD

By Evangeline Drudge

My grandfather, Maurice Joseph McDonald came to Goose Cove in 1905 from Colliers in Conception Bay and arrived with five cents in his pocket. I think he was the first teacher in the community, I know that he taught his wife and all of her siblings. He married Ellen Reardon from Goose Cove, and anyone named Ellen at that time was always called Nellie. They had five children; two boys and three girls. Nellie died in childbirth.

Every fall, merchants would go into St. John's to pay for the previous year's supplies and order supplies for the year ahead. He was the only business man in the community; and on his way to St. John's he met a widow in Fleur-de-Lys; she had three children from her previous marriage; her name was Sarah. Together, they had five more children and, in all, they raised thirteen children. One of her sons by the previous marriage died as a young man. So that left her with two girls from the previous marriage. Then she had five from my grandfather, and two of them died.

Sarah died as a result of childbirth. They used to keep women in bed nine days; she got out of bed to get ready to go home, had a blood clot, fell back and died. Meanwhile, William, one of the children from my grandfather's first marriage, was getting the boat ready to come down to pick her up to bring her home. Mr. Herb Simms walked up from St. Anthony and came down to the bottom of the harbour and shouted up the harbour (when

they were pulling off the boat to come down to get her) to tell Maurice his wife had died. Now, that's how he found out his wife had died.

The baby, Vincent, was nine days old. My mother's mother, Bridget Fitzpatrick, took him and raised him up till he was nine years old, then she died suddenly of a lung condition. After that, her daughter, Anastasia (my mother) who was there in the house, raised him up until he was fourteen. When Anastasia married his older brother, William, Vincent went back with his father's family.



Figure 1 a painting of McDonald & Sons Goose Cove

McDonald & Sons

My grandfather, Maurice McDonald, was a teacher, but he decided to go into business, mainly because when he came to the Goose Cove there was no store, no businessmen, and no dealers. He taught all the ancestors from Goose Cove, and he worked in his store; he did both. As his children got older, they

worked in the store, too. He started the store in his home, and from there he built the business, which he ran till 1951. The business itself lasted until 1985. The structure is still standing today, though it's run down. When you come up around the community, you can't miss it; it's by the water. Back then, when you went to the store there was no road; you went by dog team, you walked, or you went by boat. The roads didn't open in Goose Cove until 1966.

The store passed from Maurice, to William, and finally to William's sons.

Grandfather's store was a general store, and you could get everything from a nail to a coal shuttle, and it was the only store in the commu-

nity. The people came from the Fichot Islands, St. Julien's, Croque, Grandois, and they all came by boat. Lots of times in winter when provisions were low, other stores – keepers might come from St. Anthony, St. Anthony Bight, Cook's Harbour, or Raleigh. Everything was in bulk then: a sack of flour, a sack of sugar, a case of milk; I wish we could do it today. Then, you

didn't run out in the middle of the afternoon to get something at the store on the way home from work. You bought it in the fall for the winter, and that was it. We always had the staples, and I think we did very well, to tell you the truth. I think Newfoundlanders as a rule did very well; they had their own gardens, there was wild game, my mother kept hens, we always had eggs, and she kept goats so we always had milk. She'd go out on Saturday evening and kill one of our hens and that would be our Sunday dinner.

I can remember the first turkey that came to Goose Cove; it might have been around 1960. My father went to St. John's and he brought a turkey with him; my mother cooked it for Christmas dinner and everybody in Goose Cove had a piece of that turkey.

Evangeline: Memories of Goose Cove

I was born and raised in Goose Cove, but when I turned sixteen I attended boarding school at St. John's to complete grade 11 at Holy Heart of Mary School. I came home the following spring, and in the fall I went into nursing at St. Clare's in St. John's. Most of the young women from Goose Cove grew up and had careers. As far as I know, I was the first nurse to come out of Goose Cove.

I remember growing up, Goose Cove was always a lively place; there was a good atmosphere. There were eleven of us in our family, eight in my uncle's next door; there were three Reardon families, and every one of them had eight children. One family had no more



Figure 2 the community of Goose Cove from the boardwalk 2009

than another. Our family, because of the business, were considered to be well-to-do, but we never knew that growing up. I never had any more than the girl next door. When I grew up I had three outfits: one for Sunday, one for this week, and one for next week, and I traded them around. We just didn't care who had what.



Figure 3 Killicks are a relic of the past

We randied together, we skated together, and we had football games together, and it wasn't just the men that played football, either; the girls did, too. As kids growing up, we all played football. We played together, we lived together, and we studied together. There were two sides to the harbour; the Protestant side and the Catholic side; we played with the Protestants, we played with the Catholics, and we buried each other's dead. We supported each other; lots of times football games would be one side



Figure 4 Beef Iron Wine was a popular remedy for anaemia

against the other, and if the other team didn't have enough players, we'd play on the opposing team.

I mean, what kind of Christianity would that be, if you couldn't care about your neighbour? The Orangemen had their day, and we respected that; they respected our faith and we respected theirs. If we had a dance, the Protestants always attended, but, supposing we were in the middle of a square dance, at twelve o'clock the Protestants left us standing on the floor and disappeared. You see, they weren't allowed to dance on Sunday. I remember once, up to a square dance, we had just finished the third bar of the set, and I was swinging around, and somebody sang out, "Twelve o'clock!" And my partner just left me there.

My mother, Anastasia, ran the post office. In all Catholic homes at that time, the Rosary was said every day. We had supper in the evening time, and we'd eat our supper as quickly as we could because we'd want to get out and kick the ball. We'd kick the ball before dark, then come in and do the dishes and our lessons. Then the time came for the Rosary, and everyone had to come in and say

the Rosary. And the next thing, open comes the door and that'd be the boys from across the harbour coming for the mail (there was no such thing as nine to five o'clock for the mail), so my mother would say, "Come on in." They'd come in and sit down or kneel down, and they knew as much about the Rosary as we did. Growing up, the only thing that we knew that was different was that they lived on the other side of the harbour.

The house I was raised in was separate from the store, and it is still

standing today. McDonald & Sons had satellite stores in Croque and some of the Fishot Islands used to sell some of our goods as well. As well as operating the stores, my grandfather taught for at least forty years. He also buried the dead because we had no clergy in Goose Cove, and he tended the sick. He was known as the Master, and the Master did it all.

I married John Drudge in 1970. We had three children; one died and two lived. Both children grew up here in Goose Cove. The surname

Drudge comes from northern England, and there are two other spellings of that name: Drodge and Dredge. Three Drudge brothers came over from England: one settled in St. John's and he came down to Grandois and St. Julien's, fishing. Another settled in the Blanc Sablon area, but when he married a girl up the Straits – because of religion – he changed his name to Dredge. However, in St. John's they don't say Drudge or Dredge; they say Drodge because of their grandness!



Figure 5 Capelin drying outside John Drudge's storage shed



Figure 6 a snapshot of Goose Cove on a grey foggy day 2009



Figure 7 a nice place to 'take a blow' in summer

Businessman and entrepreneur

MAURICE SIMMONDS



Figure 1 Maurice Simmonds

We have a ‘Come Home Year’ every ten years; that’s how we keep up to date on all the people who used to live in Goose Cove.

Maurice Simmonds’ life is a kaleidoscope of family, business ventures, past experiences and future expectations. He’s battled disease and heart attacks, narrowly missed being shot while at his grandfather’s funeral, and he’s masqueraded as Santa Claus, creating a family upset on Christmas Eve. As a boy he was confronted by a bear and lived to tell about it and, in his late teens he overcame limited finances to obtain a university degree.

The individual threads that have woven all these experiences into one strong cord have been a deep love for family, perseverance that never accepts defeat, and the ability to laugh at his own faults and mistakes.

In his own words, Maurice says, “I can’t quit. I don’t know if that’s weakness or strength. When I set

out to do something, if it’s do-able, then it’s going to be done.”

One of the stories Maurice remembers from his childhood involved a confrontation on the Goose Cove road when he was about ten years old.

Bear!

As a kid growing up in Goose Cove there weren’t a whole lot of things to do, not like today’s generation. Goose Cove was isolated, but it seems as if people were probably closer to their parents back then than that they are today. I was very



Figure 2 Elizabeth and Mike Simmonds at Goose Cove

close to my father; he was a very smart, intelligent man who could turn his hand to almost any kind of work. Looking back, I think he was an exceptional mentor to me.

Back in 1963 or 1964, my father started working in St. Anthony. That’s just about the time when the road came through to Goose Cove. Getting a ride in a vehicle was total excitement for not just me, but for

all kids back then. I was so caught up with riding in a vehicle and, being so close to my father, I’d get out of school in Goose Cove in the evenings and walk to St. Anthony just for the sake of getting a ride back with him.

One fall day, Maurice finished school and dropped his school books at the house as usual, then headed down the Goose Cove road towards St. Anthony, seven miles – about ten kilometers-away. The sun’s bright light was waning as it descended in the west, dry and brittle grasses whispered as the breezes passed by, and the ponds were deepest blue. Maurice walked up and down the hills, rounded the bends in the road, and looked forward to meeting his father.

There were no moose on the northern peninsula in those days, so Maurice didn’t expect to encounter any animals, or any traffic for that matter, for there were still very few vehicles on the roads in the early 1960s. The sun sank below the horizon of trees and

hills, the gloom deepened, and Maurice zipped up his jacket. A chill breeze sprang up, stirring the grasses. Maurice looked up as he rounded a bend in the road and stopped dead in his tracks. A bear!

He was huge! I came around a turn in the road; I must have been three parts of the way to St. Anthony, and there was a big black bear right in the middle of the road. When he saw me he stood right up

on his hind legs and faced me.

Maurice froze. He stood rooted to the road, his face drained of all colour. He fixed his eyes on the bear, something he didn't want to do – and waited. The bear, likewise, waited, sniffing the air. Maurice felt his hands begin to perspire. His heart thudded in his chest. His breath came in short, quick gasps.

“I had never been told what to do if you encountered a bear, or what not to do,” says Maurice.

His heart was urging him to turn tail and run, but instinct overruled panic. Maurice, ever so slowly, ever so softly, took a step backward, barely breathing. His heart still thudded in his small chest, and the desire to close his eyes so he couldn't see the mammoth creature in his path was overpowering, yet stronger still was the impulse which cautioned him to fix his eyes, unblinking, on the bear in the middle of the road.

Very, very softly I backed up, until I had gone around the turn in the road and lost sight of him. Last time I saw him he was still up on his two hind legs, sniffing the air. I moved so quiet that I guess I didn't scare him. As soon as I closed him out, I turned around and ran as fast as ever my little legs could run, back down the road to Goose Cove.

Maurice knew the bear could outrun him, so he looked back over his shoulder as he pelted down the road, but the bear wasn't following.

Just ahead of me there were a lot of culverts on the side of the road, left over from construction. I thought to myself that I was a lot smaller than the bear, and if I could

just reach those culverts, I'd crawl into one and somebody would find me eventually. But, by the time I



Figure 3
Elizabeth and son, Maurice 2009

got to the culverts, there was still no sign of the bear, so I just kept running.

But Mother Nature hadn't finished toying with the young boy's emotions, and this time the terror came from above, without warning.

I ran until I was beat out, then slowed to a fast-paced walk. It was almost dark, and all I could think about was getting home before dark. I walked through the rock cut by the edge of the road, when suddenly a big bird swooped out of the bushes – it could have been a hawk or an eagle – and startled me, and well, that just about scared the life clean out of me!

Adrenaline surged through young Maurice again, giving him energy he never knew he had. He ran flat out until he reached his house, utterly spent and without breath, and burst through the door, all blood drained away from his face, trying to catch his breath.

My mother, Elizabeth, figured there had been an accident. Over a

period of time she managed to calm me down and I told her that no, there was no accident. I told her about the bear, and how the bird had frightened me, and that Dad should be home any minute.

Maurice says, in retrospect, that the story of the encounter with a bear has provided a few laughs.

It was a little while before I left to walk to St. Anthony in the evenings again, just for the sake of getting a ride home with my dad!

Christmas upset

Maurice was the third child in a large family and, as much as he loved and respected his parents, his own penchant for getting involved in scrapes ensured that the family spotlight sometimes fell on him. He was involved in some memorable adventures: one such adventure was the Christmas Eve in the early 1960s, when he decided, with the very best of intentions, to help his parents get his younger brothers settled into bed for Santa's arrival.

It was the first Christmas young Maurice was allowed to stay up a little longer than his four younger siblings. The younger children had been sent to bed but, as Maurice said, “They were going their length,” rampaging around the room and not settling down at all. Downstairs, Elizabeth and two of the older children decorated the house for Christmas, and Maurice wandered from room to room looking up at the crepe bells suspended from the ceiling and the Christmas tree sparkling in the corner. Maurice's father, Mike, whom he loved

dearly, called up to the children a few times to settle down and go to sleep, but the children paid him no heed.

Suddenly, Maurice thought of a way to help. “I was known for my ingenuity,” laughs Maurice, “So I decided to give my brothers the scare of their lives. My younger brothers let on they weren’t afraid of the Big Guy – Santa Claus – but to my way of thinking, coming face-to-face with him was sure to make an impression.”

Maurice found some things around the house and made himself up to look like Santa. He wrapped some white cotton around his chin so he looked like he had a beard, pulled a red stocking cap over his head, then quietly slipped outdoors. He found a ladder, propped it against the roof of the house, and crept up. Carefully, he crawled across the shingles beneath the bedroom window and peeked inside. Sure enough, two of his brothers were tumbling and wrestling on the bed, and two were out of sight. Maurice tapped on the window pane and yelled, “Ho! Ho! Ho! This is Santa!”

“There was one mad dash for the bed,” remembers Maurice, “And those already in the bed pulled the covers up over their heads.” However, in his haste to frighten his brothers back into their beds, Maurice hadn’t taken the time to see what else was happening in the room. Too late, he heard a loud clattering noise and peered inside to see that one of the boys had been sitting on the slop pail and, in his

haste to get into bed, had overturned the full bucket, spilling its contents all over the canvas floor!

“I knew I was in trouble then,”

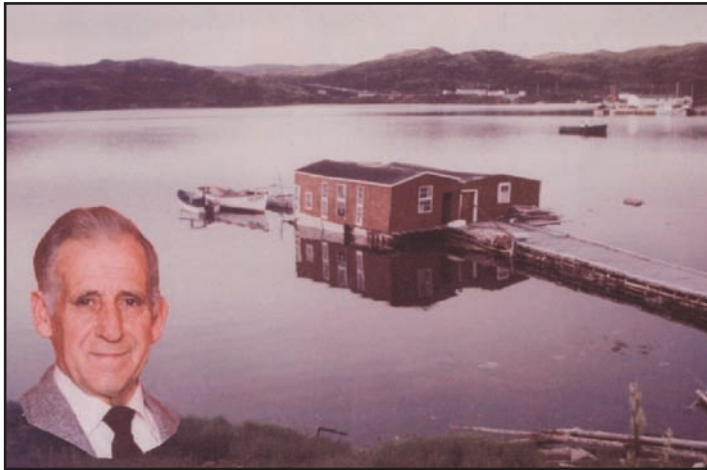


Figure 4 Mike Simmonds, inset, “He was an exceptional mentor to me.”

said Maurice. Back down the ladder and into the house he went. As he crept in through the door, one look at the kitchen ceiling with its gaily decorated crepe bells gave him some idea of just how much damage his little prank had cost. The boy’s room was just above the kitchen and the contents of the three gallon slop pail had oozed down through the cracks in the ceiling onto the Christmas bells below, and the smell was awful!

Maurice knew, with a sinking heart, where he would find everybody, and sure enough, they were on their knees on the bedroom floor trying to clean up the mess. The small boys in their beds were unnaturally quiet; the fright of seeing Santa had not sobered them up nearly as much as the awful consequences that followed.

“We all look back on that Christmas Eve and laugh now,” recalls Maurice, “but it wasn’t very funny then!”

School days

Maurice attended the Goose Cove School till grade eleven. Up till grade nine he had been an A student, but in grade nine he failed miserably. Though she said nothing, the expression on his mother’s face when she read his report card was all it took for young Maurice to resolve, “This is never going to happen again!” He went on to complete grades nine and ten, but when the grade eleven year came around there was a major shortage of teachers and the only teacher available at the Goose Cove School was a

grade eleven student that had just graduated. Maurice knew he had very little chance of passing the year in that classroom, so he began to lobby for a bus to St. Anthony.

“Ed Roberts was the member for this district at that time. We got in touch with him and whoever else we thought might have influence, and started to lobby to get a bus to St. Anthony.” About a month later Maurice got word that a larger bus would be provided to carry the grade nine, ten and eleven students to St. Anthony. “That was in 1968, and that’s been going on ever since,” he remarks.

Solving the bussing situation wasn’t the end of his problems, however. Once he graduated, he planned to attend university to become a mechanical engineer. “I just loved mechanics,” he said. But with no prospect of money to pay his tuition, Maurice made the decision to go to work to pay his way. He taught school for a year, and,

“Night time, for a full year, I’d come to St. Anthony at four o’clock in the evening, taxi driving till midnight, and every weekend, saving enough money to go to university.” He got a degree in Education and taught at the Goose Cove School eight years.

“Then I decided to pursue the career I’d always dreamed of,” says Maurice. “I started out in the basement of my house, working with mechanical equipment, and I’ve progressed to where I am today.”

Today, Maurice says it might be easier to decide what he is not involved in. He and his staff run a construction company which does landscaping, minor road construction, and minor water and sewer projects. As well, they provide all kinds of aggregates: top soil, class A, up to blast rock for various projects they are involved in. They run a garage for automotive and heavy equipment repair, and an Arctic Cat dealership. They have a gift shop

which sells snowmobile clothing as well as gifts and flowers. The biggest part of his business is a fuel distributorship with Ultramar Canada; they have branch offices in Roddickton, Hawkes Bay, St. Barbe and St. Anthony. His business operates a 24-hour roadside assistance towing service, and Maurice’s Service Center offers home heat installation and repair.

Mr. Simmonds says he served fourteen years on the Goose Cove School Board as well as serving on the Goose Cove council. He was a former member of the Lion’s Club and the Kinsmen Club, and currently, he’s president of the St. Anthony Chamber of Commerce.

While it may seem as if Mr. Simmonds has had his fair share of luck, he’s built his business through sheer determination and persistence and he’s had some major setbacks, too. “I’ve defied the odds from a health perspective,” he says, having come close to death more than a

few times due to bowel disease, a heart attack, and cancer.

If I’d been killed...well that would have been another story!

But nowhere did he so narrowly escape death as he did at his grandfather’s funeral in Conche when he was ten years old. “Boys will be boys,” he says. “There was a bunch of us, down at the wharf fooling around, and a young fellow accidentally set off a 30-30 gun that was in on a splitting table in the stage. The bullet came out through the end of the stage just as I was bending over to untie a boat, and it passed through my hair. That was a very close call! If that were today, somebody would be in a lot of trouble, but back then there wasn’t much importance attached to it. Of course, if I’d been killed, well, that would have been another story!



Figure 5
the community of Goose Cove