

# *Big Brook*



## Noah Diamond Big Brook

Noah Diamond was born at Big Brook in 1944, one of 15 children. Noah remembers a small school in the community but the nearest merchant was at Cook's Harbour some 30 kilometers away. Fishermen sold their catch to the merchant, or a schooner sailed into Big Brook in the fall and bought their fish.



Photo of Big Brook by Jean Bouchard (<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/37818303>)

Possibly, at any given time, the largest population in Big Brook was 30 because there were only three families. Noah and his wife Laura were the last to move away from Big Brook, under the resettlement program in 2004.

### A long walk to the merchant's store A recollection by Noah Diamond

“When he was a young man, Earnest Hill (In the 1921 census Earnest Hill is listed as an orphan at the St. Anthony orphanage) stayed with my uncle in Big Brook.

“The distance from Big Brook to Cook's Harbour, overland, was about 30 kilometers. Earnest walked to the merchants at Cook's Harbour early in the day, but when he got back to Big Brook

the fish struck and he had no jigger. He 'slewed right around and walked back to Cook's Harbour, picked up a jigger and walked back home, and thought nothing of it."

### A storm ruined our traps...

By Noah Diamond

Noah remembers a storm that ruined their fishing traps. "One year we lost two cod traps in one smack. With one cod trap we lost a week's fishing. When we went down to Lower Cove we figured the trap had gone adrift, but when we got hold of the floats, there was just that...only floats...all the twine had been ripped off. We eventually found it rolled up in a ball with the anchor in it, so we carried it up and my uncle Aaron McLean said 'why don't we haul it out and look at it?' Once we hauled it out, we could see that it could be salvaged, so we started at it and repaired the net, but we lost a week of fishing. The other net, the one on the Bight, washed ashore on the cliff and it was completely gone; everything tangled up and torn to pieces.

"In Big Brook the worst wind was always a nor'easter. I remember once there were two days we couldn't get out of the harbour, even though the storm was over. The sea was breaking from one end to the other."

### Trap Berths

1. The Point. Tom Diamond fished this berth. This berth was sometimes referred to as The Graveyard, because there was a graveyard out on the point.
2. Jim Diamond's berth. When the Empire Energy ran aground, she ploughed right through Jim Diamond's berth, destroying it. Noah remarks, "We tried to put the trap back down but there was steel from the ship and those pieces of steel might have snagged on the net and torn it to pieces."

### The SS Empire Energy



The SS Empire Energy ran aground at Big Brook in November 1941

Empire Energy was a 6,548 GRT cargo ship that was built in 1923 in Germany. She was sold to an Italian firm in 1932 and renamed Gabbiano. She was seized by the United Kingdom in 1940, passed to the Ministry of War Transport and renamed Empire Energy. She served until 5 November 1941 when she ran aground off Cape Norman,

at Unfortunate Cove, Newfoundland and was wrecked (wikipedia).

Their loss was our gain...Salvaging supplies from the Empire Energy

Noah remarks, “What we lost in the way of a trap berth we gained in corn, because she was carrying a load of corn; and she was also carrying a load of coal, as fuel. After she ran aground my uncle had enough coal to burn for at least 20 years.

“When the Empire Energy ran aground people from Cook’s Harbour and up the Straits tried to climb aboard and salvage what they could. I remember a story about Jim Field, he went up over the side of her, and when he went up over the side of her, he was warned him not to come aboard. Next time he went up over the side, a crew member pointed a gun at him. Field says he let go, and when he let go, he landed fair in the middle of the boat. He never struck the gunnel; he fell right into the middle of the boat.

“A fellow named George Anderson came up from the Joe-Batts Arm area—stayed about three months—and took a schooner-load of brass back with him. I was about 16 years old; so that was around 1960. My father salvaged five <sup>ii</sup>blades from the deck of the Empire Energy. He took all five and laid them on the deck. And George Anderson took a prop that was on her; it was 24’ across, both ways. Anderson had two or three young fellows with him—so he left the young men aboard and went ashore for the evening, as he usually did. Suddenly he heard the horn blow and hurried back to the schooner. The deck of the schooner was buckling under the weight; the propellers were so heavy that they had to shore the deck up with <sup>iii</sup>sticks.”

Trap Berths, continued...

3. Four Mile Cove 1: John-Dan Diamond fished this berth, but he moved to Cook’s Harbour before Noah was even born. Jim Diamond took over the berths, and Noah’s father succeeded him and, finally, Noah fished this berth.
4. Four Mile Cove 2: fished by Jim Diamond and Will Bailey.
5. Mile Brook: Fishermen used a longshore trap at this berth. This was where there was a ‘big haul’ of 30 barrels, or 25,000 pounds of cod at this location one summer. This translated to approximately 30 quintals of <sup>iv</sup>‘made’ fish.
6. Lower Cove Point: fished by Aaron McLean, son of Ben McLean (Ben was a hook-and-line fisherman). Aaron also fished with the Baileys at Four Mile Cove.
7. Below Lower Cove
8. Dry Brook: fished by Whyman Diamond.
9. Capelin Cove Brook

Draw System

There was no Draw System at Big Brook because there were only a few families.

Big Brook Fishing crews...

- Diamond fishing crew: all brothers....Noah, Herb, Isaac, Levi, and Roland (nicknamed Gil).

- Diamond fishing crew: Jim (Noah's grandfather), and his sons Stewart & Whyman. Whyman eventually got his own trap and fished at Dry Brook, while Stewart, the youngest, stayed with his father.
- Diamond: Tom & James
- Bailey fishing crew: William (his father was Albert) and Aaron McLean (as a shareman). The McLeans eventually moved to Pines Cove.

**Photo Essay**  
**Big Brook**  
*A Resettled Community*  
--by Paul Dunphy



Sunset at Big Brook



Outbuildings



Houses



Relics of Resettlement



A skeletal wharf falling into ruin



**Photo Essay**  
**Big Brook**  
*A Resettled Community*  
--all photos contributed by Sharon Bailey



The wharf at Big Brook



Big Brook



The wreck of the Empire Energy



Big Brook coastline in winter



Tempestuous seas



The Bailey home



William Bailey digging potatoes with granddaughters Jessica and Stephanie



William Bailey at the splitting table and  
Fish drying on the flake

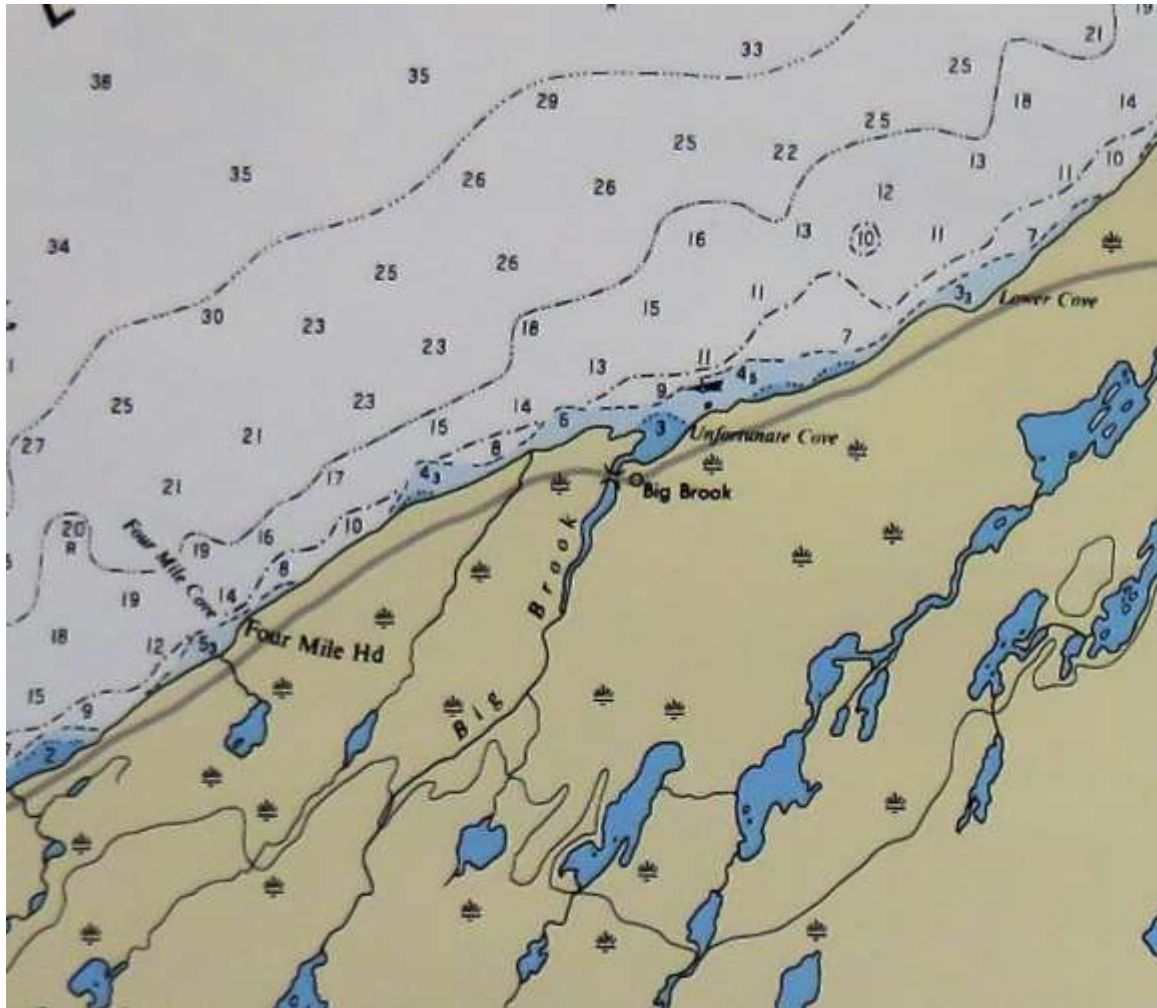


Figure 1 Big Brook nautical chart

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<sup>i</sup> Slew: to turn around.

<sup>ii</sup> Blades: Propeller blades

<sup>iii</sup> Sticks: the trunk of a tree used for various building purposes, eg. a stick of wood, and with defining words plank, wharf, and so on.

<sup>iv</sup> Made fish: dried