



St. Anthony



Francis Patey St. Anthony



View of St. Anthony Harbour from Francis Patey's home at Lamage Point. Kathleen Tucker photo

Introduction

Francis grew up on the east side of St. Anthony and now lives at Lamage Point. His father was a fishⁱculler and worked for Pomeroy and Penny, previously owned by Moores of Carboneer.

When Pauline Thornhill of CBC Land & Sea met Francis, she referred to him as an author. He replied, "I'm not an author; I'm just a guy who writes things down so I don't forget them."

Mr. Patey says he would like to write a book about the American occupation in St. Anthony, calling it "When Uncle Sam Came Down." The book would address what St. Anthony was like before the Americans came, and what it was like after. His opinion is that it was better when the Americans were here, and people really felt it when they pulled out; but he doesn't think their leaving had as detrimental an effect on this area as the Moratorium did.

Francis Patey has just completed a manuscript, which he hopes to have published, entitled, "The Way it Was" about life on the tip of the northern peninsula from 100 years ago until the present.

Mr. Patey has had several books published:

- Veterans of the North
- A Battle Lost
- The Jolly Poker
- I Must Not Die
- The Grenfell Dock
- A Visit to Granny's House.

SPLITTIN' TABLE YARN

--by Francis Patey



Splitting table. Photo by Kathleen Tucker

A conversation between Bill and Jarge (George)

It's a normal early fall's day. Fishing is over for the season; it's a bit warm for this time of the year. It's now shortly after dinner (around twelve o'clock). Bill and Jarge (George) meet on the stage head, and leaning across the splittin' table, they begin the regular fall day's yarn. Don't forget this is in the forties. Let's listen in.

Pretty good day fer this time of year.
Yes, ol' man, but this ain't goin' to las' very long.
I don't say.
This marnin' when I looked out the holes of water was shished over.
Here you go; tha's a sign.
Pretty soon now you will be able to dart out and kill a meal of turrs or bull birds.
I guess I'd sooner have bull birds.
Me, too, boy.
We seen two or three the udder day up there off the island when we was up there to take up our moorin's.
I daresay they're pretty mootey yet.

Tha's for shore.

I was goin' to load a few shells, but there's not a peck of powder in the harbour.

Fred Bussey got some down St. Lenard's, but getting' it is somethin' else, tha's fer shore!

I was up the Shop this marnin' to get a bit of salt pork to make some brewis. Boy oh boy, the prices are gone to hell. Thirty cents fer a pound of pork.

Yes, b'y. I was up there the udder day. Shockin'. A gallon of kerase farty cents; a can of PET milk eighteen cents; pack of Solo butter twenty-two cents. Well, soon won't be able to buy anything.

I was over to Skipper Esau's on the Point. He just opened a barrel of apples; great big ones; big as turnips; not a bad price either. Three cents each. Great apples for snappin'.

Got all yer fish shipped yet?

We shipped the last ten cantles (quintals) yesterday up to Pomeroy's. Got ten dollars a cantle fer it.

We shipped all our dry stuff up at Pomeroy's too. Uncle Noar (Noah) Patey culled ours.

Uncle Noar is a good culler; if he throws a fish out in the West Indy pile, you can say he belongs there.

We shipped ours over to Strangemores. We got a good cull from Sid Pilgrim. They got two more cullers over there too. They're from up there around St. John's somewhere. They can cull fish, but they can also chew the baccy too, just like the goats.

Did you 'ear this is Paddy Johnson's last year here buying liver?

No, I didn't 'ear. By God, he bought a lot of cod liver in his day!

We only got ten cents a gallon.

Do you know where Paddy comes from?

No, boy, I don't know for sure; up there around St. John's some'ere I think.

It is a place called Wester' Bay. He got a brother named Frank who buys liver down in Carpoon (Quirpon). Two liver men; tha's fer shore.

Aunt Mary Ann is goin' to miss 'un when he goes; he lived there for a good many years. I guess he swallowed a few jugfuls in his day, that's fer shore.

I guess the Co-op will still buy liver if Frank Critch is well enough. Someone told me he is not very well; he's a hard, tough man.

We rendered some of our liver on the stage-head and sold oil to Elihu Strangemore for one dollar a gallon.

Did you ever have a sip of Aunt Mary Ann's beer?

I can't say I didn't. One day me and Fred took the punt and rolled over to Strangemores. Fred said he wanted to buy a few packs of Target and some papers, but he wanted more than baccy.

When we got over there he said, 'We'll drop in to Aunt Mary Ann's fer a glass of beer.' I think we had two glasses each; that was enuff; I could hardly see the paddles.

Must be a bit of a kick to it, that's fer shore.

When we was there the place was full of fellows; you couldn't understand one word they said. I s'pose they were off the Salt Steamer. There was also a few fellows there from here; I think it was a few home on leave from the war. I believe Free (Freeman) Green was there and Henry Winter.

Someone was telling me that Jack Pilgrim was walkin' around the Bight and seen a moose on Bosten's Mesh (marsh).

Yes! Now, that's something you don't see around here very much.

No, boy!

The only one I ever seen was in the school book.
They say there's plenty of them up there around Badger.
I s'pose Uncle Nick got it over with.
Why?
Didn't you hear? He died last night.
Boy, I tell you, he and Uncle Look guggled a few in their day, tha's fer shore!
I guess we won't have to listen to Jarge (George) swearin' anymore.
Why, did he die too?
No, didn't you hear? He got saved last night over in the Barracks.
Good for he. I hope he keeps it.
Did you 'ear what they're talkin' about now? They wants Newfoundland to join Canada.
You're jokin'!
No, that's right.
Well, Jarge, I tell ya now, I was born a Newfoundlander and I'll die a Newfoundlander!
Me, too!
I think we be okay like we are.
I don't know, boy. They're gettin' a lot more money than we: old age pension cheques, baby bonus cheques; they even get paid for not workin'. They call it Unemployment Insurance.
Sounds like good stuff.
They also say the 'merican's are comin' here and goin' to build a Base up on Starigan Hill.
If that is true we'll make plenty of money.
Oh, yes, did you hear Jack's wife is goin' to have another baby?
That Jack! He does more than work, accardin' to that.
I might go down the droke the mar and cut a few loads of grout and stick it up.
Me too!
By God, I better go home or I'll be killed; about three hours ago the wife told me to bring up some rounders to put in soak. I better go.
They say the Ranger left Conche this marnin'. I guess she'll be here after supper. Might take a dodge up.
Me too.

THE FISHERY THE WAY IT WAS

By Francis Patey

--Photos contributed by Francis Patey
(Unless otherwise stated)



View from Francis Patey's house at Lamage Point, St. Anthony. Kathleen Tucker photo.

The Invention of the cod trap

What can be more colourful in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador than the inshore fishery, from the days of the oars and paddles and hook and line, to the era of the make and break engine, to the introduction of the cod trap?

The invention of the cod trap revolutionized the inshore cod fishery, resulting in catching more fish in shorter periods of time; it was less time consuming and yielded a better quality of fish. As the inshore cod fishery became more organized new ways of harvesting was the name of the game. Rules were put in place by the local fishermen's committees, as the fishermen's union had not yet made an appearance in Newfoundland and Labrador. We say 'fishermen' because back then very few women went out in boat but stayed ashore and did the on-shore work such as cooking; looking after the children and spreading fish. But the women also helped put away the fish when the boats arrived; sometimes well into the night or early morning, which resulted in kerosene oil lamps or oil torches burning.

There were regulations for the inshore cod fishery, but the most important one was the drawing of berths, both for cod and salmon. Every fishing community scattered along the coast were allotted a number of berths with each community having as many as 20 berths, depending on how many trap crews there were. The berths were divided into two lots; half would be classed as Prime berths which meant they were supposed to be the best areas to trap cod; the other half

were known as second berths, which weren't supposed to be as good as the prime berths although there were times when this was not necessarily the case. As for the salmon berths, they were also classified in two categories: inner tare and offer tare, with the inner tare being the prime berth.

The drawing for berths usually took place in late May. Up until that time the fishermen were busy getting their boats, cod traps and salmon nets ready, giving their stages a good coat of lime (better known as white-wash), and getting their salt stored in. Then the news went out that there would be drawing for berths on a certain date at the school house. When that night arrived, all the fishermen and on-lookers would gather at the school house where the meeting was brought to order by the fishermen's committee members. First the prime berths were placed in someone's cap and the second berths were put into another cap. Now the drawing began: everything seemed to be going quite smoothly until one fisherman felt that he has being given a raw deal. That's when all hell broke loose: cursing, spitting, pushing and even a few punches thrown. That's when the peace-makers were called for; they consisted of probably the Ranger or Magistrate; even the Clergy, to try and settle things down. Soon things settled down and the drawing continued. When it was over but not every fisherman was happy. You'd hear remarks such as, 'How did you make out?' and the reply, 'Never got nothing, only a bunch of dirt.' Soon they'd patch up their hard feelings and head for home.

With the berth drawn there was still lots of work to be done before the fish struck; one being to make sure you had a full crew for the summer. Sometimes this would mean getting sharemen, who would come from as far away as Bay Roberts or Wesleyville. The word 'shareman' meant that this person would only get a half share of the profit instead of a full share; because he wouldn't have to pay for any of the expenses. In some crews the shareman was expected to do work other than fishing, such as cutting grass, setting potatoes, and a few others, but not all fishing skippers had their sharemen doing other work.

The fishing regulations stated that fishermen had to put their gear in the water a certain number of days after the draw; at least the moorings. If this was not done, they could risk having their berths taken by another fisherman, but there were exceptions such as icebergs in the berth, which prevented fishermen from putting any gear in the water.

Soon June would arrive and there was a sign of capelin over at Raleigh and up in Crémaillère, so it was time to put the trip in the water, although they may have to take it up several times because of icebergs.

The traps were now in the water and it was time for the first haul. About two hours later boats started returning and from the land you could hear people shout, 'The fish in in! Uncle Arthur is coming in with a full load, and some in the punt!' Some of the older folks would call it 'a full sapper.'

This meant that the kerosene oil lantern and the old cod oil torch would be burning late on the stagehead from here on in, and it would be up again early in the morning to start all over again.

There are three hauls a day: in the morning, near noon and in the evening. This will continue until the fishing season is over, sometime in early September. There is normally a break in August. During this time the fishermen will be busy washing out the fish and drying it on the flakes, which normally takes a week or two. With the fishing all but over for the season, the shipping of this year's catch begins; the dried cod is now loaded in the skiff and taken to the fish merchants, where it is graded by qualified graders, better known as fish cullers. These men have been certified by government. The dried cod is inspected one by one as it passes over the culling board. There are several grades: Large Madeira, which fetches the top price, while West India ends up on the lower part of the quality scale, thus fetching the lowest price. If the culler throws too much fish in the West India pile it sometimes makes the skipper upset and results in harsh language towards the culler.

With the fish shipped it's time to put things away for the season; storing the gear and pulling the boat up. Pulling the boat up is done by a group of fishermen, with one man singing the 'Jolly Poker'.

Now it's back to regular work outside of fishing: digging the vegetables, cutting firewood and, if not too busy, a little time for picking berries.

But for some of us there were more memories than harvesting the fish. For those of us who were fortunate enough to know the blessing of sea-sickness (when your world turns green and your fingers aren't long enough to reach way down) I recall very well as a boy, going out on the weekends with my father in his punt to jig fish at Fishing Point. My mother made me a suit of oil-skins from Robin Hood or Windsor Patent flour sacks soaked in linseed oil, which in itself was sufficient to make one sea sick. I remember this one particular day when the water was rough, for me at least, and the cod was jigging well and I felt it coming on. I couldn't take no more so I cuddled up in my oil-skins and lay down in the bottom of the punt. My father said to me to get up and jig a fish and you will get better. My reply, 'I don't want to get better.' There were the days before the sea sick pills. Back then they used to say drink the bilge water in the boat and you will feel better, but which was the worse? My father, the gentle man that he was, rowed all the way in and landed me on Lammie's (Lamage) Point and rowed back to fishing Point again. I tumbled all the way up, everything still green, with ups and downs. When I reached home Mother said, 'where's your father?' I said, 'he's still out fishing; he brought me in; I got sea sick.' Then, to bed, but out to Fishing Point jigging again the next day.

The Inshore Fishery

Following its development in the late 1860s, the cod trap remained unchanged for over a century. During the past two decades some important modifications have been made, and the cod trap remains one of the most labor and cost-effective methods of harvesting cod.

The First Cod Trap

The cod trap is probably the most labour and cost-efficient method ever designed for cod fishing. It was developed in the late 1860s by Captain William H. Whitely, a Newfoundland fishing

skipper operating off the coast of Labrador. The stationary, untended trap was devised as an alternative to the traditional cod seine, which had to be continuously fished by a crew of men.

Captain Whitely's new gear proved so successful that within a few decades it had become virtually indispensable to fishermen along the Labrador coast. It replaced the seine entirely and became one of the most important pieces of gear used by Newfoundland fishermen.

In 1911, just over 40 years after its invention, Canadian government inspectors recorded the use of 6530 cod traps in Labrador. By that time, too, the trap was being widely used around the coast of Newfoundland. The cod trap was so effective that Captain Whitely's original design continued in use virtually without change for a full century.

Construction of a Cod Trap

The cod trap is basically a room, with four walls and a floor, constructed of netting. Fish enter the trap through a doorway in the front wall. Extending outward from the center of the doorway is a long wall of netting which, because of its function of leading fish into the trap, came to be called the leader. The trap is kept upright in the water by floats placed along the top of the walls, and lead weights at the bottom. It is held on location by a system of corner ropes anchored to the sea bottom.

The leader, likewise buoyed and weighted, is tied to the trap at one end and made fast to the shore, or to shoal water rocks near the shore, by ropes and anchors at the other end.

When set, the bottom of the leader and the trap itself rest on the sea bottom; the top of the trap might be at the surface of the water or as much as four or five fathoms below the surface. All traditional cod traps were alike except in size. Size differences were developed by fishermen in response to local water depth, sea bottom, tide, and wind conditions.

The greatest differences are in the length of leaders, which generally range from 30 to 100 fathoms long. Leader length is determined by sea bottom slope. The gentler the slope, the longer the leader required to get the trap far enough off shore to sink it.

Most traps measure from 40 to 80 fathoms in circumference and eight to 15 fathoms in depth. In a typical trap the front wall is a fathom or more longer than the back wall.

The mesh size of the netting varies from about eight inches in the leader and front wall, down to a minimum of three inches at the back. The reason for the different mesh sizes lies in the method of hauling the trap. Hauling starts at the front and progresses toward the back, where the fish are brought up to the surface, or 'dried' up, and from there taken into the boat. The smaller mesh at the back keeps the tightly enclosed fish from escaping through the net.



Google Earth snapshot of a trap in the water. Kathleen Tucker

Cod traps are set in places where the cod are known to migrate to shore in large numbers year after year, and where water depth and bottom conditions are suitable. The bottom should be reasonably smooth and flat and the water from ten to 20 fathoms in depth. Most trap berths are located along the shoreline off cliffs or points of land but some are found around shoals off shore.

Cod Trap Season

The cod trap season is a short one, usually starting with a slow period of quite small catches in May or early June, peaking rapidly in June or July, and tapering off just as rapidly to another low catch period in August. The trap season occurs during the annual inshore cod migration. This migration is tied to a similar inshore migration of countless millions of smelt-like pelagic fish called capelin, which usually begins in early June. The capelin, a primary food fish for cod, comes ashore to spawn; the cod follow for the feast. Cod usually stay inshore a few weeks longer than the capelin, held there partly by another annual shoreward migration, squid.

The fishing operation of the cod trap is simple. Fish swimming along the shore or nearby rock shoals come up against the leader. Thus diverted, they turn seaward and follow the leader into a trap.

Boats and Methods

A typical trap crew consists of four to six men. The traditional vessel that evolved for use in the trap fishery, the trap boat, is an open boat powered at first by sail and oars, later by a small gas or diesel engine. It is usually supplemented by one or two smaller row boats of similar design, or by dories. In recent years another vessel has been developed for the trap fishery. This is the trap boat longliner, a 35' to 60' foot boat, decked and diesel-powered.

Hauling a Cod Trap

The cod trap is usually hauled during an ebb tide in the early morning or mid-afternoon, when the seaward flow of water helps keep the fish from leaving through the doorway. During the peak of the season a trap will be hauled two or three times a day if the catches are good.

The hauling of the trap starts at the front wall. The bottom of the doorway is pulled to the surface. As the doorway is being closed off, two ropes attached to the front bottom corners are pulled aboard, bringing up portions of the side walls and bottom.

Hauling then progresses from front to back with the sections first hauled being dropped back into the water as the haul approaches the back of the trap. The netting is then fastened to the trap boat and one or two smaller boats in position oat the back of the trap. The fish are then "brailed into the trap boat with long-handled dip nets. Once the trap has been emptied, the wall and the bottom are again let down into the water and the gear is ready to fish once again.

Probably the greatest attraction of the cod trap is the enormous amount of fish that can be taken in such a short time during the main inshore cod run. Also important is the fact that the cod trap, once set, can be left to fish on its own while the fishermen are doing other work, such as processing fish already caught.

Cod Trap Landings

During most of the first century of its use, trapping was the single most important method of catching cod fish in Newfoundland and Labrador. The 6500 cod traps fished in 1911 was a high point; by 1965 the figure was still as high as 4500. However, declining cod stocks, competition from offshore operations and a new type of inshore fishing gear reduced the number to less than 2500 by 1972. The development of the fisheries for other species also assisted in the decline of the cod trap fishery during the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. In 1969 trap landings accounted for 55 percent of the total inshore cod catch. That figure had dropped to 34 percent by 1975.

Gill Nets

For years and years, the main ways of catching fish inshore was the cod trap in the summer and, in the fall, by trawl, hook and line and the cod jigger.

In the '70s a new method of catching inshore cod was introduced into the fishing industry. This was the gill net, designed to catch more and larger cod in a shorter time span. When the gill net was introduced some fishermen shook their heads and said we'll curse the day we started using them. A few even refused to use the net. It didn't take long for the people to notice most cod the nets were catching were very large breeding fish. As time went by every one noticed that something was happening. A couple of years earlier it took only a few hours to catch a boat-load of fish; it now took a full day and finally no boat loads.

By the early '80s alarm bells began to ring indicating that something terrible was happening in the inshore cod fishery. Fingers began to be pointed at who was to blame for the disaster. Number one to be blamed went to the offshore draggers, mainly the foreign fleet. The curse of the gill net could loudly be heard.

By the early '90s catches of cod were at an all-time low. On July 2, 1992, John Crosby, then Federal Minister of Fisheries placed a ten-year moratorium on the northern cod, which brought the inshore fishery to a halt. It also brought every fishing community in Newfoundland and Labrador to its knees. A way of life was changed forever. People left the hundreds of small communities that dot the coast line and today many of those communities are practically ghost towns.

Today some 20 years later, the Moratorium is still in effect, except for a very limited food and test fishery.

Some fishermen continue to fish other species such as shrimp and crab, but these fisheries will never replace the cod fishery economically.

Pateyville and Salt Cod

How can one talk about, sing about, or write about salt cod on the Northern Peninsula without thinking about the trap crews from Pateyville; each stage only a 'cod's head throw' from the other. The stages were, in order from south to north: Skipper Zacharias 'Zack' Patey, Skipper Arthur Patey, Skipper Fred Slade, Sr., Skipper Harry Penney, Skipper William 'Billy' Patey, and only a two cod's head throw away, Skipper George Sulley. All six crews undoubtedly salted down more cod than any other six crews in Newfoundland.



Joseph 'Jose' Slade, son of Fred Slade, helps carry a handbarrow of dried, salted cod off the flake. Photo contributed by F. Patey.

I lived in Pateyville one summer as a shareman with Skipper Zack. I was still wet behind the ears, as far as fishing goes, and prone to sea sickness. What a skipper he was, and what a crew; they made me forget my sea sickness in a short time. That summer we salted down 2000 quintals. We sold it to C. Telley Ltd. of Elleston and got \$12 per quintal, which we shipped on board the *Maxine Johnson* under command of Captain

Clayton Johnson and his son Morrisey. Most of the Pateyville crews were family affairs: fathers, sons, grandsons; a tradition passed from generation to generation.



Another crew member of Skipper Fred Slade, Brantford Styles, picks up the dried cod for the day.

The Iron Monster

There was a time in rural Newfoundland when the fishery was carried out in boats with no motors, powered by muscle and brute strength, with as many as four sets of oars (paddles) across an 18' boat. But eventually the old make and break engine was introduced to the fishing industry. There were as many as ten or more of these old engines with different names: Lathrop, Acadia, Atlantic, Imperial, and so on. They were terribly heavy for their size and also costly; not every fisherman could afford one.

I am told of the first make and break engine to arrive in St. Anthony belonged to Skipper George Suley. The engine arrived on the coastal boat. Next was the task to install it in the boat, making sure it wouldn't shiver or shake.



8Hp make and break engine. Photo, Kathleen Tucker

This called for solid bedding; square timber was used for this purpose, with screw bolts going all the way down through the bottom of the boat. Next, three or four burly men had to put the engine down in the boat and fasten it to the bedding. Then it was time to hook her up to the gas tank and to connect up the batteries. No one knew what the iron monster would do.

When she started, no one had the qualifications to be the engineer; this was left up to Skipper George and, naturally, he thought he was most qualified. He ordered all the people off the wharf and into the stage where the sliding door was left open a wee bit so they could peak through the seam. With everyone out of the way, Skipper George turned on the oil in the tank, put the wire on the ignitor, put one hand over the carburetor, sucked oil in her, gave the fly-wheel a twist around, and she caught...bang, bang, bang...smoke shot up from her exhaust and there was a noise you could hear over to Uncle Luke

Biles' across the harbour. Finally the smoke disappeared and she began to put, put, put very fast. Skipper George pulled the wire to stop her.

The Skipper then decided to take her out and 'try her' for all the families that had gathered at the wharf—children, mothers, fathers, grandparents and friends—for two or three trips around the harbour.

Then Skipper George decided that was enough...too hard on gas...and he headed back to the stage. He shut her off a long way off from the wharf for fear she would not stop in time, and brought her to the wharf with the sculling oar. The crowd got out and the crew got the boat ready for fishing, making sure the sculling oar was aboard, as well as a set of paddles. Skipper George still didn't trust her and brought the oars just in case the make and break engine failed, but she proved very dependable. Soon most of the fishing crews had an engine, and thus began the era of motorized inshore fishing boats.

The Murray Premises

Today when we talk about the Murray Premises and its historic background we are talking about the Murray Premises on the waterfront in St. John's, but what many people didn't know was that there was once a Murray's Premises in rural Newfoundland. Unfortunately, like other historic sites in rural Newfoundland it was allowed to be destroyed.

The Murray Premises was located in St. Anthony in northern Newfoundland. For decades these premises operated as a salt cod drying operation. In late summer and early fall, hundreds of Newfoundland fishing schooners would return from the lucrative Labrador cod fishery. They would discharge their cod at the Murray Premises where it would be washed and dried. The initial drying would be done in mechanical dryers, after which it would be spread outdoors on wire flakes for further drying. There were as many as several hundred quintals (112 pounds each) out at one time, when the weather was suitable. A lot of the outdoor drying or spreading was done by female workers, for as low as ten cents an hour. After the fish was sufficiently dried for market, it would be packed in barrels while other quantities would be shipped loose. Most of which went to the West Indian markets.



The Murray Premises, St. Anthony

As a result of the salt trade, in the spring up to late summer the Murray Premises at St. Anthony was still a bee-hive of activity. Large cargo ships from Spain, Portugal and other countries would come to St. Anthony and discharge their cargo at the Murray Premises. The large ships would be brought into port by local fishermen as

pilots—people such as Percy Howell and Shem Cull, Jr. of St. Anthony; Richard Patey and

Gilbert Simms of St. Anthony Bight, as well as Roses and Richards from St. Carols. The salt would be stored in the salt storage sheds where later it would be loaded in small schooners and taken around the Newfoundland and Labrador coast for use by inshore fishermen.

It would take a considerable number of workers to offload these ships, probably taking a week to ten days to offload: workers would be offloading from four hatches at the same time and working around the clock.

The salt would be hoisted onto the tramway about 50' above the dock where it would be dumped into two hogshead carts (one hogshead was approximately 140 gallons). The carts, full of salt, would be wheeled in the tramway and dumped into the holding shed. This, too, was very hard work, with little pay. One man would be in front holding the stags (handles) while the second man would be at the back pushing. The men working in the ⁱⁱⁱholds of the ship also worked very hard, shoveling the salt into the salt tubs, and much of the salt would be in a state of hardness. One report had it that in one ship the salt had to be blasted because it was in the hold of the ship all during the war years.



E. Strangemore Ltd on the east side of St. Anthony

Up until confederation in 1949, and even thereafter, most rural Newfoundland and Labrador fishing communities had what they called Fish Merchants who bought fish from the fishermen; mostly salted dried cod. They also operated the local retail stores. There were several in St. Anthony, one being Pomeroy and Penney; another, Strangemores, seen in the picture above.

Bill Colbourne St. Anthony

*“Was there anything done fairly for the fishermen?”
--Bill Colbourne*



St. Anthony 1958. Photo by Alwyn Sansford

A Gardien from Twillingate

William (Bill) Colbourne’s grandfather, John T. Colbourne, came from Twillingate as a ^{iv}gardien for the French fishing rooms. John married a Pilgrim woman from St. Anthony Bight and they had William, Absalom, Gideon, Fred, Edward, and many girls. John moved to Fish Cove on the St. Anthony side of St. Lunaire Bay (Bill pronounces St. Lunaire, ‘Slenners’). As the family grew up and the young men were married they moved away. Bill’s father, Fred, was 28 years old when he moved to St. Anthony, where Bill was born August 11, 1933. Bill grew up, married, and took up the life of a fisherman. He and his wife Reta make their home on the East side of the harbour.

Bill shares his memories of the fishery in St. Anthony

Fish Flakes

“Most of the fish made in St. Anthony was dried on ^vflakes. People dried their fish on rocks, but there were a lot of hand flakes and ^{vi}lunger flakes all over St. Anthony. The lunger flakes rattled when we walked on them; most weren’t nailed down. Sometimes your leg would go right through. We’d nail every fifth lunger down so the rest would stay in place. Lungers were laid consecutively butt to top.”

Barking manila ropes and cod traps

“Every year we filled a barrel or a tub half full of tar and added either seal oil or cod oil. The tar and oil would be boiled and the rope would be dipped in the tar and oil mixture, then fed through a knot-hole which was just wide enough for the rope to pass through. That way the excess tar and oil would be squeezed out of the rope but there would be enough of the tar/oil mixture to preserve it. We did much the same thing with the cod traps to preserve them.”



Men barking twine. Photo by Martin Friesen, contributed by Alonzo Pilgrim.

A Blank Summer

“At one time St. Anthony had no roads, just cow paths. My father had fished to the first part of August one year and all they had to show for it was seven^{vii} quintals a man. There were five or six men in his crew. That was called a blank summer. So that’s when my father went to work building roads for the town council; his job was loading rocks on a bar tub.”

George Patey and the berth at Fish House

Bill recalls that George Patey and his crew fished at Fish House, which was a good^{viii} berth. Sometimes George Patey called other, smaller boats to help take the fish from the^{ix} trap; oftentimes there would be five or six 21-foot boats, flattened right out they were so full of fish.

George had a big^x sculling oar, and he’d drive the oar down till he’d strike bottom, and that’s how he’d measure how big a catch he had.

Bill remembers that when they had the fish all^{xi} dried up in the trap, George would dip the fish out of the trap and fill the smaller boats first. Patey had a 25 quintal boat (28’-30’ boat).

When the smaller boats were full, Patey would put on a mitt, reach down, and grab the fish by the tail and haul them aboard the boat.

“And he’d do that because the fish were too big for a dip net. They called that ‘cuffin’ ‘em aboard.’ In other words, George Patey was cuffin’ aboard the fish. “And that might happen two to three times a day,” remembers Bill.

“But there were times they had ‘water-hauls’ too.”



George Patey’s crew putting away the catch. Photo by Alwyn Sansford.



At the splitting table. Photo by Alwyn Sansford

Trap berth fishing crews

- The Pateys: George, Zach, and Bill
- Slades
- Sulleys
- Bob Johnson
- Joe Burt

- Penneys
- Bill Colbourne's crew: Bill Colbourne, Gerry Byrne (Croque), and Will-Joe Simmonds

Some expressions used by old fishermen

“Cuff ‘em aboard”: hauling fish aboard with a mitt

“Scrooped”: scraped

“Bass rope”: tar-treated rope

“Water haul”: more water than fish in the trap

“Blank summer”: very little, or no fish

“He was gone amazed”: meaning he was off his head

“Lugging rocks in a bar tub”: also referred to as a hand tub, tub barrow, barrow tub, or tub bar

Local Names

Savage Cove on the map was named ‘the Big Beach’ by local fishers, and this is where the capelin always came in.

Wolf Point on the map was named ‘The Pig’ by local fishers because the water made a sound like a pig grunting.

Vierge Point on the map was named ‘Cox’s Point’ by local fishers.

Lobster Point on the map was named ‘Gun Point’ by local fishers (St. Anthony fishermen were not allowed to fish past this point).

The Grotto on the map was named ‘The Oven’ by local fishers.

Vierge Cove on the map was called ‘Big Back Cove’ by local fishers.

Three Mountain Harbour on the map was called ‘Little Back Cove’ by local fishers.

French and English fought over fishing grounds

Battle Cove (on Penney’s Point) was where the French and English fought over fishing grounds. This was before Bill’s time. According to Bill, the French fired cannonballs at the English settlers.

St. Anthony merchants

- Strangemores
- Murrays
- Pomeroy & Penney



Murray Premises



E. Strangemore Ltd. St. Anthony

All shore fast berths. All Prime Berths.

1. Fishing Point Cove.
2. Highland.
3. Deep Water Point.
4. L'Anse a Jean. Prime (pronounced Lancey John) was one of the best berths.
5. Crowsnest.
6. Fish House (prime) Arthur Patey worked this trap berth. There were times, says Bill, who helped fish this berth, when there were barrels and barrels of fish...so many the boats were full and they couldn't take any more fish.
7. Sinker (implies a rock that lies just below the surface of the water—a breaking rock)
8. Middle Berth.
9. The Inside Berth. Anchor Point Shoal.

The (Notre Dame) Island berths

10. Rice's berth. Crémaillère Island (Notre Dame Island)
11. Uncle Joe Burt's berth (called Middle Berth by some local fishers)
12. Zach Patey's berth (called the Outside Berth by some local fishers)
13. Biles's berth (at Big Cove)
14. Anchor Point Shoal
15. Battle Cove berth at Penney's Point, 2nd draw.
16. Wild Cove Shoal.
17. Black Head (Rice's 2nd berth). Local fishers called the point at Black Head 'Shallamou Cove'.
18. Little Oven. 2nd draw.

St. Anthony Bight Trap Berths

1. Partridge Point
2. Cranky Point (called Cranny Point by local fishermen)
3. Old Man's Neck Shoal. 2nd berth.
4. Lower Berth
5. Upper Cranky Point. This berth was also used by St. Anthony Bight fishermen.....fished by Thomas Pilgrim

All shore fast berths. All Prime Berths.

1. Fishing Point Cove.
2. Highland.
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4. L'Anse a Jean. Prime (pronounced Lancey John) was one of the best berths.
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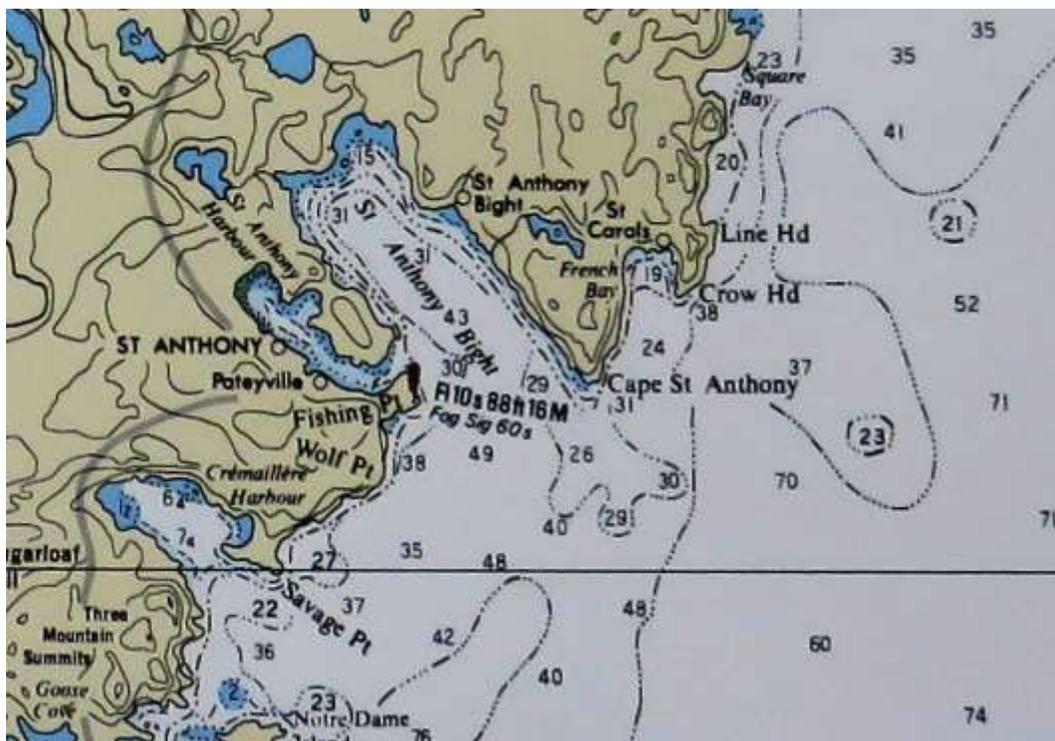


Figure 1 St. Anthony nautical chart

ⁱ Fish culler: One employed to sort dried and salted cod-fish into grades by quality, size and 'cure'.

ⁱⁱ Brail v: to transfer fish from a seine or cod-trap to a boat using a 'dip-net.'

1984 Evening Telegram 22 Mar, p. 5A the netting is then fastened to the trap boat and to one of the smaller boats in position at the back of the trap. The fish are then brailed into the trap boat with long-handled dipnets.

ⁱⁱⁱ A ship's hold is a space for carrying cargo. Cargo in holds may be either packaged in crates, bales, etc., or unpackaged (bulk cargo). Access to holds is by a large hatch at the top. Ships have had holds for centuries.

^{iv} Gardien: In the French-Newfoundland migratory fishery, a resident placed in charge of fishing gear and premises during the winter.

^v Flake: A platform built on poles and spread with boughs for drying cod-fish on the foreshore; FISH-FLAKE.

^{vi} Lunger: A long tapering pole, usually a conifer with bark left on, used in constructing roofs, floors, surfaces of stages and flakes.

^{vii} Quintal: A measure of dried and salted cod-fish ready for the market; 112 lbs.

^{viii} Berth: A particular station on fishing grounds, and in netting seals in coastal waters, assigned by custom or lot to a vessel, boat, crew or family.

^{ix} Cod trap: A type of fixed fishing-gear used in inshore waters, box-shaped with a length of net stretching from shore to entrance through which cod enter and are trapped.

^x Sculling oar: long oar used to steer or propel a boat.

^{xi} Dried up: drawn up.