

# Ship Cove- Cape Onion

Canada



Newfoundland  
Labrador



*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.

# Memorable Characters

HUBERT TUCKER

*Hubert Tucker grew up in Ship Cove, Cape Onion, and reminisces about those early years. He and his friend, Valen Tucker, left Ship Cove and went to work driving spikes for the railway in St. John's. He recalls that Valen was taller, bigger and looked more like a man than he did. At the time of this interview, Hubert is seventy-seven years old. He lives in St. John's and has worked in construction and carpentry most of his life.*

## Ship Cove

There were actually four different settlements in Ship Cove: there was The Point, Western Head, Ship Cove and Tuckers Cove. Down at Cape Onion, there were quite a few more houses than there are now. There was the Anstey house, and the Adam's House, which is now the Tickle Inn. There were houses owned by Charles Bessey, Ches Bessey, and John Decker, and they were all kinfolk.

## Jenny Anstey A big woman

The capelin always came in at Cape Onion, always. And all that part of the beach was Jenny Anstey's. She always split her capelin there; she was a woman who worked hard all her life. She'd bring it up, wash it in salt water, spread it out to dry, and it would be for the dogs. So, one time, Sadie Bessey got to the capelin first, and spread her capelin on the shore, but

she spread it where Aunt Jenny usually spread her catch. Well, they got into it. Aunt Jenny give her a smack and knocked the cap right off her head, and that's why you wouldn't go on Jenny's marsh if she was alive. See, she was a very big woman, a tallish woman, not over-fat, just big.

## Uncle Will John A man idling for trouble

Most people in those days were gentle, but there were a few you didn't want to stir up. Grandfather Andrews, you didn't want to stir him up too much. He was a nice man, but you wouldn't want to cross him. Then there was William John Tucker, known to everybody as Will John. He was a man idling for trouble. Whenever he'd meet up with William Beaufield, they'd be into it.

Then there was John Tucker, up on the point. Sunday morning Will John would go up through the cove and go up the bottom to have a look around. John Tucker would come around the bottom to have a look around, and they'd meet up and get into it. Uncle John Tucker was no slouch; he'd take on Will John, I guarantee you. He was a big man.

But Uncle Will John wasn't all that big; he might have been sort of tall, but he thought he was bigger than he was. He ruled the cove with an iron fist. His attitude was, I'm here, I was here first, you were all descendants of me, and as long as I'm breathing, I make the decisions. Even years after, when his sons went out on their own, Will John would impose his will on them. One of his grandsons couldn't take his father's punt and row down to

Ship Cove without Will John's permission. He'd say, "You get up out of that boat!" And they would.

## Ship Cove School Ma'am

IRIS DECKER

*This is the story of Iris Decker, who was a teacher for twenty-five years. In Iris' story you will learn how it felt for a young girl of seventeen to leave home and make a life for herself in a fishing village, and what school was like for both teachers and students in those days. Iris Pike married Ross Decker, the son of a local merchant, and they had four children. Today, Ross and Iris Decker are retired and living in Ship Cove.*



Figure 1 Iris at Light of the North School in Ship Cove

## New beginnings in Ship Cove

Iris Pike was studying to be a teacher in St. John's when she was offered a teaching position at Englee, La Scie, or Ship Cove. At seventeen, in the late 1950s, she didn't want to be too far from her home in

Red Bay, Labrador, so she chose Ship Cove. Once she made that decision, she only had time to go home and pack her bags before she was on the *Northern Ranger* and bound for her new teaching post. “I was sick as a dog. The *Ranger* went from Red Bay down to Henley Harbour to Cook’s Harbour, then Raleigh and, finally, Ship Cove.”

When Iris got off the *Northern Ranger* at Ship Cove, it was night, and everything was in darkness. “I remember coming over the hill at High Point, and there was only a goat path, it seemed. Maysie Decker met me and held me by the hand and guided me home. I was climbing up over the rocks and going down over the rocks and I said, where in the name of the world am I?” To Iris, Ship Cove wasn’t any less isolated than Red Bay, and she recalls the only difference between living in Red Bay and coming to Ship Cove was that people viewed her with more respect at Ship Cove. “I automatically became the Sunday school superintendent, secretary in the UCW, a lay reader in the church and a teacher. Those were the four jobs I took in the first week after my arrival.”

Iris boarded with Uncle Reg and Aunt Bertha Decker. They had a son, Raymond, and a daughter, Maysie. Ray was already married to Ruby (Holmes) Decker, who had arrived at Ship Cove in 1948, and Maysie was a little older than Iris. About a hundred feet away was the home of James and Effie Decker and they had a son, Ross, whom Iris later married. Reg and James owned and operated J&R Decker & Sons store.

The name of the school at Ship Cove was *Light of the North*, and in

Miss Pike’s class there were forty students. Mrs. Ruby Decker, who had arrived in 1948, taught middle and high school, while Iris taught kindergarten to grade four. She soon discovered that, as a teacher, she had to be innovative; the only learning kids had access to at home was the radio, and it wasn’t until the early 1970s that people began to watch television. So, basically, what the students learned in the early years they learned from a teacher.

Not only did Iris teach all day, but many times after the school day had ended, she spent all evening preparing for the next day’s lessons, as well as the added responsibilities as superintendant of the Sunday school, secretary in the UCW, and helping ‘keep church’ if there was no minister.

### **The school was heated by woodstove and lit by kerosene**

The school had a woodstove; and the tradition in those days was that each child brought a chunk of wood, although some parents brought extra, so there was always wood in a little porch. There were no electric lights, so it was very difficult to see sometimes, but there was a kerosene lamp and smaller lamps around the school. Most of Iris’ work was done at home because the light at school wasn’t really adequate. She might put the lamp on the desk at school to correct work but, for the most part, it was done at home.

Local men took turns in the morning lighting the fire for the school; it didn’t matter how cold it was, they would be there. Whoever was responsible for lighting the fire that day would stay at the school until the teacher got there, and then they’d leave. Then the teacher was responsible the rest of the day for keeping the fire going, and making sure the fire was out when he or she left in the evening.

### **The school bell**



Figure 2 The school bell rang three times a day

The school bell was a hand bell, and it rang in the morning, at recess time, and at dinner time: three times a day. School started at 9:00 o’clock and finished at four o’clock. Kindergarten and grade ones left at 3:00 o’clock. At recess time children might have an apple, because J&R Decker store would always bring in barrels of apples in the fall so the kids would have an apple to bring to school. Also, the government provided tins of coco malt and it was boiled on the woodstove and served to the kids at recess time. Children ate their noon meal at home.



## The first duplicating machine

If there were any tests, Iris would have to write them out by hand. “The first duplicator I had, we melted the gel and put it in a little pan and put ink on it, and I’d write what my test was going to be and lay it down in the pan and pull it up and I’d have a copy. My copy – what I wrote – would be there and I’d be able to copy it off. The *Gestetner* came after.”



Figure 3  
Gestetner and projector used at the school

Iris remembers one time, she brought the copier down to Aunt Bertha’s and, when she took it up,



Figure 4  
The Dick and Jane readers

she upset it all over Aunt Bertha’s chrome set and on the floor, and no amount of scrubbing could get it out. Iris never forgot that incident, and neither did Aunt Bertha!

The teacher had a blackboard and flashcards for the alphabet and numbers. Students had all their text books provided by the school board, and wrote in a Scribbler. Students also bought their own pens and pencils, and everything they did in the way of work had to be copied into that scribbler. Each child sat in a wooden desk with a fold-up chair.

Children were taught Cursive Writing and Phonics, and every Friday there were Spelling Bees. If a child went home without 100 percent in Spelling, he or she would have to write the words out for Monday. The first readers Iris taught from were the *Dick and Jane* series but she, herself, learned to read from the *Jerry and Jane* series.

## Bad weather

In bad weather, the parents walked to and from school with their children and, after school, the parents would come to the porch and bundle the kids up, then go out the door. The school was almost on the road, yet when the weather was bad, Iris remembers parents and children would hardly be out the door before they were swallowed up in the snow. Iris used to put creepers on her boots to get up the hill in winter.

## Christmas concerts

At Christmas time, Iris would have the children get up a concert. “We’d spell C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S, and we’d make a little rhyme about it, and the kids would hold up their letter. And in the skits we’d all have costumes, and either we would make the costumes, or the parents would help make the costumes. Parents would also build the stages and make something to eat or drink: cakes, cookies or syrup. That was a big event.”

Santa Claus would come and visit the school on Christmas Eve, although in later years it was changed to Christmas Day after dinner. “Just imagine, we’d have families with six to eight children, get them all ready and bring them to the school on Christmas Day to see Santa Claus. The whole community would turn out, every child. You never had any problem with kids in December, because they knew if they didn’t behave in school they wouldn’t get any gifts. What a going on! Poor little kids, they loved it. It was the highlight of the year. And then, not only would teachers prepare a concert; there was a church program, too. And the highlight of Christmas was the nativity, the Christmas Pageant.”

## The school closes its door

*Light of the North School* closed its doors in 1965 and a new, three-room school was built in Ship Cove. The *Ship Cove School* closed in 1991 due to declining enrolments, and the School Board decided at that time to combine the *Ship Cove School* with Raleigh. *Pistolet Bay School* in Raleigh

closed its doors in 2007, and the children are now bussed to St. Anthony.

“It had an awful adverse affect on the community when we lost the school. It took the heart right out of the community, no joke about it. I remember people living around the school would hear the kids playing at recess time, and Aunt Ella—in the morning, before we’d go in school—she used to say, ‘My, when I was putting out my clothes Monday morning, to hear the kids laughing, that used to make my day.’ Everything is silent now; we don’t see any kids around. When you take the school out of a community, the heart stops.”

## Glossary

### Dictionary of Newfoundland English

1. Creepers: Metal device with sharp points, fastened to boot for walking on ice.
2. Syrup: A sweet, fruit-flavoured commercial cordial; a drink prepared from such a cordial diluted with water.

## J&R Decker Store

ROSS DECKER WITH IRIS DECKER

*One of Ross Decker’s earliest memories is of being taken out of bed in the morning when he was thirteen. “I can remember my older brother, Guy; he’d take me out of bed and stand me on the floor. I found it hard waking in the morning, but being stood on my feet usually worked.” Young Ross was the son of Ship Cove merchant James (Jim) Decker but, rather than work*

*in the store, Ross chose to fish with his brothers.*



Figure 1 A replica of the J&R Decker store made by Brian Decker

### Opening the J&R Decker store

My father, James (Jim), and my uncle Reginald (Reg) started the J&R Decker store when they were young men. They opened the store in the early 1900s, and it was a small store then. The Adams family a t



Figure 2 Uncle Reg Decker

Cape Onion had a store, but ours was the first store to open in Ship Cove proper. So, Jim and Reg ran the store, and we boys carried on

fishing. J&R Deckers were fish merchants as well as storekeepers.

*Ross remembers his father and uncle were good at running the store, and says if they’d had schooling they probably wouldn’t have been as smart as they were.*

Uncle Reg kept the books and Uncle Jim ordered supplies. Sometimes Uncle Reg didn’t approve of what Uncle Jim would order, and he’d make comments he really



Figure 3 Uncle Jim Decker

should have kept to himself. The first time J&R Deckers had baker’s bread, Aunt Myrt came in and saw the baker’s bread and she said, “My! Look, bread!” And she took two or three loaves. Uncle Reg said, “What’s wrong with you, Myrt, can’t make your own bread?” And he was supposed to be selling it!

*The first store was built farther back and was very small. Jim and Reg Decker built a second store later, and this is the store that Ross remembers. Residents of Ship Cove could buy everything from nails to tar to lime to paint. On top of that, if customers needed machinery,*



lumber, and motors, J&R Deckers would order it in. Coal was stored on site and people could buy coal buckets and shovels; in fact, just about anything and everything.

Ross recollects that the outside of the store was painted yellow, while on the inside the floors were brown masonite, which was worn hard and smooth. From inside the store the front door looked out on the water and, if you came in from outside, you would go through the main door, and on the right there was a counter, almost the whole length of the store, and behind the counter was a cashier and a weigh scale. On the wall behind the counter were all the shelves with canned goods, dry goods, and glass. On the left was a counter and behind that, clothing, wool, and fishermen's supplies. J&R Deckers sold clothing on racks as well as



Figure 4 A weigh scale used in the store

broadcloth and stacks of material. There were rubber clothes (oilskins and Cape Ann's) and rubber boots, work clothes and men's shirts. A lot of things, even then, could be ordered from the Simpson-Sears and

Eaton's catalogues, so they didn't have to stock all the latest fashions.

Customers came from other communities, not just Ship Cove. Ross remembers Harvey Colbourne from L'Anse aux Meadows—a man with a very large family—would come across the bay with his komatik and, when he left, it'd be loaded right up with big boxes. There were no parking lots back then but in the winter the ice along the bay made one very large parking lot.

I can remember Aunt Myrt going up over the hill with her packages; her arms full of paper bags. It was all in paper bags then, and she had the kids, and each kid would have a box to carry. Before paper bags, whatever the customer purchased was wrapped in brown paper, which was on a roll. Uncle Jim would look at what the customer had on the counter, tear off a piece of brown paper, wrap it up, and tie it up with shopping line. Shopping line was on a spool, which was overhead. Probably he'd give you two parcels



Figure 5 Brown paper dispenser for wrapping merchandise

rather than one, because you had to lug them home.

And when the boat came in with supplies and unloaded its freight, guaranteed people would be down over the hill for their Maple Leaf

bologna. And they'd be going up with their bologna slinging back and forth, and it would be bigger even than the bulk bologna you see in stores today. Some of the young fellows liked bologna so much it might be almost gone before they got home.

Apples were a treat. One fellow, his father had the apples in a barrel in the root cellar, and he took a board off the bottom of the barrel and used to sneak them out of the bottom. His father went in and said, "I'll open up the apples now," and when he opened up the apples there was only three quarters of a barrel and he said, "I got to go back to the store, I haven't even got a full barrel!"

Boy, when we were young we'd sneak apples whenever we got the chance because, back then, they were a delicacy. We had prunes, too. I think, in a sense, we were better nourished then than children are now. There was no junk, no preservatives; the foods were all natural.

The store sold salt, flour in 100-pound sacks, sugar in 100-pound sacks, and yeast. But I can remember a time when we had flour – Cream of the West and Robin Hood – in barrels. And apples came in barrels, too, of course. J&R Deckers kept a flour store out near the wharf, and kept sugar in there, too, packed in tight.

And on the other side, we had a 'grub store', and in there we kept salt beef and salt pork in barrels, and molasses in casks, or puncheons. When we sold molasses, the customers brought their jars and we'd sell it by the half gal-

lon or the gallon. Loose tea was sold in paper bags; I can remember the Ceylon boxes. Canadian Cheddar came in big round wheels; a wedge of cheese would be cut off the wheel and weighed on the scale and sold to the customer. There was one kind of cheese and one kind only: there was no such thing as medium, mild, aged or 'light' cheese then!

*J&R Deckers sold Good Luck and Eversweet margarine, and soda biscuits in wooden containers. Not many people kept cows, so they didn't make their own butter, although Joe and Theophilus Pynn in Raleigh made real butter.*

## Lunch with Lavinia Pynn

### A recollection by Iris Decker

Maysie (Decker) Scott and I used to get butter in Raleigh. Lavinia Pynn would take a big blob, she'd put the spoon in and plop it on a piece of paper and give it to us. Sometimes, we used to go up there and have lunch. There would be fresh cream, jam, and scones just coming out of the oven. We'd put butter on the scones and sit to the table forever and eat. Lavinia didn't have a bakery; that was just her making her pies and her scones and giving you lunch. And I guarantee



Figure 6 J&R Decker store, on left. The Deckers were fish merchants as well as proprietors

you; it was all mouth-watering, too."

### In operation almost ninety-three years

*The store was a fixture in the community for a long time – close to ninety-three years – but, like many merchants before them, the Deckers locked up their business for the last time in 1993, and there are only a few reminders left of a bygone era.*

## Glossary

### Dictionary of Newfoundland English

1. Komatik: long sled, adopted in northern Newfoundland for winter travel and hauled by dogs or sometimes men; sledge for hauling wood.
2. Puncheons: the largest of the wooden casks used as containers in the fisheries; a molasses cask with a capacity of 44-140 gallons.

## Ship Cove, Early French Presence

LANCE TAYLOR

*Lance Taylor was born in 1927 and is eighty-one years old. There were eight boys and one girl in his family, and he was the seventh son. There is a belief, or a superstition, in these communities, that the seventh son has healing powers and, if that seventh son is the son of a seventh son, then those powers are en-*

*hanced. Lance Taylor says he doesn't put much credence in that belief, but declares that the people who come to him, do. His story is mostly about growing up in the community of Ship Cove; his early years living in a winter tilt; his membership*



Figure 1 Lance Taylor's property is built over what was once a French Fishing room

*with the Orange Lodge; and recollections of the French presence in Ship Cove.*

### Born and raised in Ship Cove

It was pretty tough when I was going around. I went around in bare feet; you couldn't afford to get a boot on your foot, sure. I can hardly walk on the rocks outdoors with a boot on now, my feet is just that tender, but then, we'd go around in our naked feet. In the sun, after so many days, our feet would crack up with the heat, but we didn't mind a bit.

We used to keep sheep and goats. As boys, we used to go up around the bay to drive the sheep. In the summertime, we'd cuff up our pant legs and we'd have naked feet; crowds of us. Boys, I can remember the first ever pair of rubber boots ever Father got for me. I don't know how he could afford to give them; little black rubber boots with the red trim; I was so proud. I was seven or eight years old then. Most of the people was in the same situ-

ation at them times; that's what they called the Great Depression, but we was happy-go-lucky.

### **Winter tilt**

When I was a boy, we'd fish summertime, but come October, before the snow, we'd move to our winter tilt. The tilt was made mostly of studs and sticks, and it wasn't cold inside because we had thousands of wood, and the seams were corked with moss.

We lived on this side of The Dock. My great grandfather, Harry Tucker – Henry, we called him – he built a fishing schooner. I don't know how big she was, but she was called a schooner at that time. These days, you might call her a long liner. He built The Dock and launched the schooner up there, but that was before my day.

At the winter tilt, we had our sheep and cattle and we had a stable and a cellar. Wintertime, us boys would cut boughs and put them in the sheep pound; they'd eat that, you know. In spring, as soon as there was enough snow gone, we'd put them out and drive them down to the Album; that was the first place to be clear. But we'd move down before the bay would thaw out. We'd haul everything down on a komatik, usually around the latter part of April.

We had a fishing room at the Point, out on the island, and they'd fish all summer long, and when the fish was gone, they'd move back to the tilt. But it was warmer, better, lunner back there. There was a lot of woods there then, and the trees were bigger; it was a lot different than it is now. In the winter, we'd

go randying on a big old komatik, in on the hills and out on the ice.

### **Cutting wood at Main Brook**

As a young man, I split lumber. If the fish was gone, I'd go in cutting wood. Those who worked there slept in a big, long bunkhouse; there were twenty or twenty-five people in a bunkhouse.

Ever since I was old enough to go in the woods, I'd go in with a bucksaw. We'd go in for a couple months, two or three of us, because fish wasn't much of a price then. A dog team took us up to Northwest Marsh, and we'd walk from there straight to Hare Bay with our pack sacks on our backs; right to the bottom of Hare Bay. That's about one hundred kilometres.

And when all the work was done for the year, we walked home. It was good to get a bit of cash to help you along, because you might get a lot of fish but you wouldn't get any money for it. We'd go in cutting wood for perhaps two to three months; then we'd come out and we'd be out for the winter.

### **The Badger Drive**

Some more times we'd go up in the spring and go out on a pulpwood drive down at Bowaters, Main Brook. There's a big bridge there; that's where we drove out all the wood. They had a song made up about the Badger Drive one time:

### **Lyrics**

[http://www.google.ca/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4TSHC\\_enCA296CA297&q=the+badger+drive](http://www.google.ca/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4TSHC_enCA296CA297&q=the+badger+drive)

### **Song**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Cz9Tk\\_eZek](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Cz9Tk_eZek)

Well, we used to be on the drive, and it was pretty risky, too. There might be a big force of water somewhere and the pulpwood would get jammed and we had to clear it up. When she blocked up, you'd have to get out with your pick poles and fix it, and clear it up, and once she started to go, you had to scramble for the land again; quick as ever you possibly could. I was pretty slippery then, but I wouldn't want to try it now! All we had to wear on our feet were logans; you'd lace them up your leg. But we were supposed to have safety boots, and in the bigger places they did. That was dangerous work; the most dangerous kind. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed everything back then. We were young.

There was no money in nothing then. In the 1940s, when I was a young man, for a cord of wood – we had to cut that with a bucksaw and pack it – we'd get four dollars.

### **A seventh son and superstitions**

I was the seventh son, and some people back then were superstitious. They put some faith in me – to charm teeth – but I thought it was silly. I'd put my finger on their tooth, but I'd do it just to please them; I'd just rub the tooth. And they weren't supposed to thank me for it, according to local beliefs, so they'd go away without a word.

That was a belief, a superstition. There was a lot of that back then. My mother was so superstitious it was unbelievable. When she was a



young girl, she used to babysit at night, and one night she looked out the window, and it was raining and she seen a man going down the cove with n'er head, and she believed it was a headless man. I said, Mother, don't be so foolish, it was a man with his coat pulled up over his head to keep the rain off. No, no, she said, it was a man with n'er head.

Another time, there was a ship got lost and one or two people drowned, and they pulled her up here, just off from where the wharf is now, and they anchored there for the winter. And my mother said every time there was a storm, she'd see this man going from fore to aft, back and forth – one of the men that got drowned. I said, Mother, how in the world could he walk back and forth if he got drowned? But even today, people believe in that.

### **Trails, pathways and young men**

There was a trail to Raleigh as long as I can remember, ever since we were boys. There are two paths; some people is kind of fooled: what we calls the dog path they calls the ridge path, but that's not the ridge path. The dog path goes right straight up between Mogashoe hill and another hill, on the left-hand side, and that's the way we had to go to Raleigh then. That trail was made, I suppose, in my father's time.

We worked in Raleigh when the road went through, back in the mid 1960s. Saturday, we'd work till dinner time. We had to walk home then, from Raleigh, so we never had much time for ourselves. But we didn't get tired.

When we used to go fishing

years ago, we'd come in and see the girls walking on the road, eh? And you'd get your fish done – you didn't care what hour it was – you'd be gone down the shore, thinking, if I can get down before the girls are gone in, I don't care.

### **The Loyal Orange Lodge**

*Lance Taylor joined the Loyal Orange Lodge and his eyes light up when he remembers his time spent at the Lodge.*

### **William of Orange**

The Society was based on William of Orange. King William of Holland defeated the Catholics at the Battle of the Boyne, and that's when the Orange Society started in Ireland. The Orange Order was created to defend Protestantism from Catholicism. It wasn't so long ago the Orange Society in Ireland was still fighting – north against south – the Orangemen wanted to have their march and the Catholics got up and tried to stop them. They had shootings and everything, it was foolishness, boy.

We used to get members of the lodge from Raleigh, and they used to walk from Noddy Bay to attend. Uncle Reub Edison and his son Stewart Edison used to walk across the bay when the bay would freeze up, just to attend a meeting, sure. I don't know if they used to go home again that night, or not. That's how well they liked it.

### **Royal arch**

I had the orange sash and I achieved the rank of the Royal Arch. I was a young Britoner, too.

Ship Cove had a lodge, but not for Young Britoners (men who were too young to be members of the LOL), so we had to go to Raleigh. Wes and Ross Tucker and I walked up one night and joined the Young Britoners, and that was tough, too, boy. There was a Worshipful Master; he was the one that led the service; an outdoor Tyler and an indoor Tyler, who kept a strict watch, because this was supposed to be pretty secret, the lodge was. Every now and then the Tyler would check to see if anyone was sneaking around.

We had a big lodge here in Ship Cove. My brother Norm would have crawled on his hands and knees to get to the lodge, he loved it that much – and I liked it, too. If it was run right, like it should be, it was beautiful, and we used to get some fine crowds of people.

### **The White Swan**

In the lodge, it was men only, but they had a women's lodge, too. The name of the Ship Cove Lodge was *White Swan*.

### **Lodge secrets**

Members of the Lodge can tell anything, but they're not supposed to tell how it worked; not supposed to tell anything that went on in the lodge. If I were to tell you, well, it wouldn't be right, I'm not supposed to. How we were handled when we joined it, we were not to tell anything. But one thing I'll go far enough to tell you, it was tough. The Royal Arch was tough; I guarantee you, you had to have tough skin to stand it, and the Royal Council was, too. But, apart from that, we're not supposed to tell any-

thing. We had to kiss the Bible not to tell any secrets that was in there.

In the Young Britoners you had an apron with a whale, and that apron was some nice; the women used to make them. Then you had the sash. In the Orange Society you used a sash with all the symbols and everything on it. You didn't wear a uniform; just the sash.

### **The end of the Loyal Orange Lodge**

The Orange Lodge in Ship Cove became defunct around the end of the 1960s. What happened was that people started to back out; they wouldn't attend; then there weren't enough people to run it; just a few was left. Eventually, it fell apart; they'd get out on a parade, some of them drunk and falling down, and it wasn't supposed to be like that.

### **The French presence in Ship Cove**

*Lance Taylor's property in Ship Cove sits atop an old French Fishing room. There is a brook, stones laid out all over the property, an old brook, and evidence of Bread Ovens (all that remains are bricks in the ground).*

### **The French Man O' Wars**

My mother was born in 1889 in Quirpon. In 1890, a few years later, her family moved to Ship Cove. Around the turn of the century, they moved from 'the dock' to 'the point'. The French lost their rights in 1904, and gave it all over to my great grandfather, Harry. Mother told me she used to see the French Man O' War ships; they'd go right

in the bottom of the bay, what we call Partridge Island.



Figure 2 Lydia Taylor, Lance's mother

Well, years after that the French used to come back. This is where the deep water runs between Dog Island and the sunker (they're called sunkers because at high tide you can barely see them above the water); any ship could go in through there. They'd anchor up and come ashore, picking wildflowers. I suppose that's where the French came to pick up all their supplies for fishing in the summertime.

The Frenchmen who frequented these waters were from Brittany, some of them English-speaking. Because if they spoke French, you'd have never got along with them; you wouldn't have understood anything they said. They were bilingual, but they were from an area in France that was probably more English-speaking than French. Some of the people around here spoke French, too, and we use some French terms today.

### **Bawns or Bons**

The French must have had some fish, because Mother said when her family came here, everything was covered in rock; you can see them now, all beach rock, popping up through the ground on our property. That's where the French used to dry their fish. Those rocks were called bons, or bawns.



Figure 3 The French dried their fish on these rocks called bawns

The French fishermen had a brook for their water, which was covered with little white stones all around the outside, and that brook is on my property. The brook would hold about two pork barrels of water; not so big as a puncheon. The puncheon was twice as big around as a normal barrel, and twice as high, and that's what the French used as a well. They had a couple of puncheons down in the cove when I was a share man; we used to have them full of liver, because, when you were splitting your

fish you had to save the liver and render it out for cod oil and put that in drums to ship it. And then the other barrel, not half so big, was called a tierce.

### **Barking a cod trap in a puncheon**

Some fisherman would cut the puncheons in half and make two tubs for washing their fish. And when you needed a cod trap barked, you'd light a big fire on the beach and boil the bark in a 45-gallon drum. A puncheon was just off to the side, and it had the trap in it – the linnet – the twine, which was white. You boiled the bark, and a short distance from the fire was where the puncheon was set up. You'd dip a bucket into the hot bark and pour it into the puncheon, where the new trap was. Then the twine would absorb the bark. That was for dying the twine, or 'barking' the twine, which was a way of preserving it. We'd do that every spring. The 'bark' would wash out throughout the summer, and have to be done again. But when it was just 'barked' it would be just like the colour of ochre.

I can't really say where puncheons came from, but they say the rum-runners used to carry the rum in puncheons; I suppose that's where they came from. Did you know that when the Langleecrag ran aground on Great Sacred Island she was carrying a load of rum?

### **Glossary Dictionary of Newfoundland English**

1. Winter tilt: a temporary shelter, covered with canvas, skins, bark

or boughs; a small single-roomed hut constructed of vertically placed logs, used seasonally by fishermen, furriers and woodsmen.

2. Komatik: a long sled, adopted in northern Newfoundland for winter travel and hauled by dogs or sometimes men; sledge for hauling wood.
3. Fishing Room: a tract or parcel of land on the waterfront of a cove or harbour from which a fishery is conducted; the stores, sheds, 'flakes,' wharves and other facilities where the catch is landed and processed, and the crew housed.
4. Lun, Lunner: calm; sheltered.
5. Randyng: 'to frolic; to enjoy oneself.' To play boisterously, to ride on a sled; to ride in a vehicle.
6. Logans: a leather boot with rubber foot, reaching below the knee, and used for woods or winter wear; LARRIGAN.
7. Bons, Bawns: This is where they'd make their fish – on all those small rocks about the size o' your fist. They used to call it the bawn. Finally the fish would be taken in hand-barrows to the bawns – something like flakes except that the boughs were laid on the rocks – and spread to dry. First, the cod were washed to remove the salt, then they were placed on small flat stones called bons to dry. The bons were loosely separated to permit air to circulate around the fish.
8. Puncheon: the largest of the wooden casks used as containers in the fisheries; a molasses cask with a capacity of 44-140 gallons.
9. Tierce: a tierce is bigger than a barrel, roughly thirty-one inches high, thirty-six or thirty-seven staves and the head is twenty-one inches in diameter.

## **Fishing: The end of a way of life?**

**RICK TUCKER**

*Back in the old days, when men hunted birds at Ship Cove, they used muzzle loaders. Rick Tucker tells how the men used to load the weapon – he said they had to use seven fingers of shot and wadding. "And when you fired it, you had to load it again." But muzzle loaders were before Rick Tucker's day; he used the breech loader, or shotgun, which was quicker and obtained better results.*

*There's a point at Ship Cove called Western Point. The birds fly by it – flocks of them, by the thousands. In the old days, everyone was over there, every man had a gun, and they'd line up in a row. Every man would sight the birds, and every man would shoot at the same time. If you had ten men out shooting ducks, five would take aim and fire, and five would stay back. The next time, the five other fellows would take aim and fire. Then, whatever ducks they shot, they'd share them equally.*

### **Hunting and fishing**

I'm only sixty now, but I can remember like it was yesterday, I was maybe seventeen or eighteen year old. We were over shooting at birds; I'd say there were probably two hundred of them. "Now boy! Now boy! Now boy! Now boy!" That's what one of the men said when we shot the ducks.

As little boys growing up, right from the age you could walk, your dad and older brothers were all out fishing. When you'd see the boat



coming in the harbour, you'd be down on the wharf, right into it. You'd be seeing it, watching it, and helping. So you'd grow up with that. Then, when you'd get to be seven or eight years old, you'd be getting to the age where you would have some strength, where you could help. That'd be around the time when they would take you out in the boat – on a nice day – but not in inclement weather. That was a slow introduction to fishing and, as you grew older: ten, eleven, or twelve, you might get up at four

learn like that, and keep on going. I'd do a little here, a little there, and then I started cutting throats and, after that I started taking the heads off. Finally, I went into salting; the only thing I never done was splitting.

I was fifteen or sixteen the first time I got paid, just out of school. I would have been entitled to a 'boys share,' and that was the first time I went into the boat – the first time I went fishing. A year after that they went into what they called a 'half share.'

If there was fishing now, I'd still be at it, but there's not a thing out there. I never fished every year, but I fished longer than my father. Some people were fishermen but left the fishery when it was bad, then came back when the fish came back. That was the way it was. I'd say, when you break it all down, I was in the fish-

ery for thirty or thirty-five years. The generation before me, that's all they ever done was fish. They fished in fishing season and in the fall they'd go into the woods.

But since 1992, you can't call that fishing. How can you fish when the DFO comes out and says, 'Cod's open this week.' In three days you get three thousand pound of fish. Then they say, 'take the nets up and you can't set them out before next Monday.' Now, how can you fish like that? DFO is telling you when to go and when to come. One time, you put your traps out and fished till the end of the season.

I don't know why the natives can fish and hunt any time at all. Fishing and hunting is part of the Newfoundland culture, too. Why do they have all the rights in Labrador and we don't have no rights here at all? Now, that's something I can't figure out, unless someone can tell me the difference.

### **Lost: One hammer Found: Blue Pearls**

Rick tells the story of a fisherman who dropped the lock, or hammer, of a muzzle loader into the water off Cape Onion one day when he was out in his boat. That summer, during fishing season, a fisherman put his jigger down on the bottom and pulled up the missing lock, or hammer. "And a lock wasn't very big, so what were the chances of finding something like that," he says.

*But Rick Tucker found something even smaller than a hammer when he pulled up his catch one day. He was out raking mussels off the rocks at the bottom of Sacred Bay and, when he opened one or two of the*



Figure 1 Checking the nets

o'clock in the morning and go out with them.

I started hunting and fishing with Father when I was fifteen. But I grew up around the fishery, down at the stages and was probably only eight years old when I first started and, if I couldn't be out with Father in boat, I'd be down there waiting for him to come in. Every summer from the time I was eight, I would be down there. I'd get a fish prong, get down aboard that boat, and start pronging the fish up onto the stage. I loved it. And when the fish were dropped on the stage, I'd prong them in the fish box. And there was a splitting table, and I'd take them up and put them on the table. You'd



Figure 2 Rick Tucker throwing a cast net

mussels, he found blue pearls embedded inside the shell.

*The kinds of mussels with blue pearls, the kind Rick Tucker found, are called rock mussels. Farm mussels, or cultured mussels, have a plain, smooth, blue shell. Wild mussel shells have all kinds of coral growing on them, and they're rough and they cling to the rocks. Some of them can be found on a bed on the floor of the ocean, in the pug, says Mr. Tucker.*

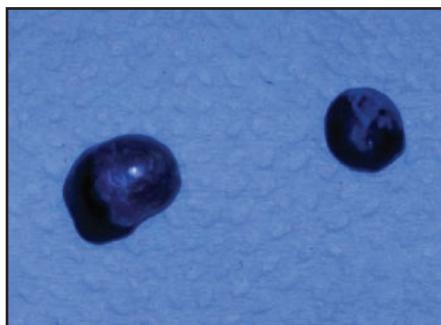


Figure 3  
Blue pearls found in rock mussels

## Shark!

ROBERT (BOB) TUCKER &  
CARL TUCKER



Figure 1 Bob Tucker jigged a shark when he was a young boy

## Shark!

When I was a boy of eight, I was in the boat with my cousin Carl, Grandfather and the Old Man (his father), and we were fishing out at the northeast bill of Big Sacred Island. I was in the stern of the boat, jigging. I had jigged one or two dozen fish when I pulled on the jigger and felt a tug. I started hauling, but I soon got tired, so Father – he always jigged beside the engine house – noticed I was having a hard time, so he came back and started pulling. I was looking out over the edge of the boat, and could see down about fifteen or twenty feet. I said, “We got a big fish!” So the Old Man said to Grandfather, “Get your hand gaff.” When I looked again, the fish was ten or fifteen feet beneath the surface, and all I saw was the colour white, so I thought he was a big cod because, after all, most fish look white under the water.

But it was a shark, and he was belly-up.

When the shark was about eight or ten feet beneath the surface of the water, he flipped over; and there he was, a big man-shark. Whoo hoo! Well, we knew he was a shark then! I’d say he was twelve to fifteen feet long. And he started to go, dragging the line behind him, snaking through the water. We had a 16-guage shotgun aboard, and they put a shot down through his shoulder, and the shark went crazy. I can remember he went pretty near the whole length of the fish line, about fifty fathoms.

He came back, circling the boat, and went under, came up, hit the keel of the boat with his tail, and the boat shook all over. When he came

up alongside of the boat, Father and Grandfather put a load of shot right down through the top of his head.

Three or four boats came along and other fishermen helped us pull the shark aboard. But, after he was aboard ten or fifteen minutes, he came back to life and started to wiggle! The whole boat was shaking!

So, what they done, they got a rope and tied it around his tail and tied it to the thwart and they tied his head, and me and Carl got up alongside of his head and held it down. Our boat was roughly twenty-five feet long. The tail of the shark was sticking up on one side and the head pretty well above the gunwale on the other side. He had three rows of teeth, and they were all angled towards his throat. His tail was about two foot across at its widest point, and tapered down to five or six inches across at the base.

A tole pin is roughly ten or twelve inches long and about three quarter inches in diameter. You could take that and push it down in his head where the shot had gone through, to a depth of about six or eight inches.

We continued on jigging for the day, and when we came in we cut the tail off the shark and put it down at the stage up over the door. Ross Hillier; he came over and he wanted the shark. He took it, tied a rope around it, and rowed over around the Point to his wharf. Shark meat tastes something like mackerel meat, so he took the shark home and used it for dog food. That’s the way Ross Hillier was; he made use of everything he could find.

My jigging a shark was the talk of the community back then. Nowadays, somebody would call the

newspaper and take pictures and it would be all over the news, but back then it was the main topic of conversation for miles around. But nobody ever thought to take a picture.

### Carl Tucker's story

One time we were out fishing off Big Sacred Island. There were four of us in the boat: the Old Man; Uncle Selby Tucker, my cousin Bob; and me. Well, that day, Bob hauled up so far, and the next thing we knew, we saw the line going through his hands.

When the fish hit the boat, he shook her right to the stern. By and by Selby looked over and the fish must have been belly up. Selby said, "You got a big one!" When Selby looked over again, the shark had flipped over. Well, he knew what we had then.

The shark had all our jiggers tangled up. He was swimming and thrashing around, and we was trying to save the jiggers. Without them, we'd lose a day's fishing.

It come to our mind we had a gun aboard, so I took the line and hauled him up forward, and the Old Man put a shot right into him broadside. We hauled him in again and put one down right through his skull and killed him – we thought. We had to get some help from another boat alongside to get him up aboard the boat to get the jiggers untangled.

We got him aboard and he come alive! Boy, he was thrashing, too; he would have beat the boat to pieces. I'd say he was over ten feet long. We had to coil him down in the rope and tie his tail. He was a big shark.

He was dead by the time we got

him home.

\*\*\*\*\*

We had known there were sharks around because every now and then somebody would haul up a fish, half gone. But I suppose when he snapped Bob's jigger, it hooked into him and he couldn't get it out.

Well, Bob done some scoting.

We called it a *man shark*, and we used to be frightened to death of them; we wouldn't put our arm out over the boat.

### Glossary

#### Dictionary of Newfoundland English

1. Hand gaff: a type of boat-hook with a wooden handle, used for various fisheries purposes; HAND-GAFF.
2. Tole pin: thole or wooden peg, often used in pairs, set vertically in the gunwale of a boat and serving as fulcrum for an oar which is usually secured to it by a 'withe' or thong formed by a flexible branch, rope or leather strap.
3. Scoting: to drag, haul or tow a heavy object.

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## Ross Hillier

BY LANCE TAYLOR

When Ross Hillier came to Ship Cove he was only young, no more than fourteen or fifteen years old. He came from Noddy Bay with Uncle Charles Edison to go fishing.

He thought he was a good singer; he liked to sing songs and tell stories; most of all, he told stories. He could tell some stories though. Religious people called them long

tales, but he didn't tell any lies on anybody, only on himself. He was a great old feller, boy, and a hard worker; he worked like a dog. He was the hardest kind of man. He had a lot of ducks one year, and boy oh boy, they was all white ducks. He had them in a tub full of water, but I don't know what he ever did with them. He had a brook, and one time he said, boy, that's where the bakeapples is to, at the bottom of that brook. He used to keep his berries down in the brook. He said they stayed fresh down there.

There's an island called Mill Island, and there was always a lot of raspberries up there. I was waiting for them to ripen, so I went up in boat, but before I got to the island I seen a dog running over the island. I said, now how did that old dog get out there? I went a little further around and I seen Ross picking berries, and the dog was tramping over everything. I started my engine and I said, that's enough for me, and I come on home again. I wasn't going to pick any of those berries after seeing the dog tramping over them.

He used to go to church a nice bit, and sometimes he'd put some money in an envelope. One time, though, Ross had \$20 marked on the offering envelope, but there wasn't a copper in there, not a cent.

### Glossary

#### Dictionary of Newfoundland English

1. Tramping: To walk clumsily, trample.



**The Northern Pen**  
**FOCUS ON PEOPLE**  
**P. 10 Section A**  
**March 4, 1986**  
**By Dave Elms**

He is a short, stooped man, but when it comes to telling tall tales, Ross Hillier can rise to equal the best story tellers around.

A resident of Ship Cove since moving from Griquet some 40 years ago, Hillier has been filling the ears and tickling the funny bone of many a listener. The tales he tells concern his own experiences on the land, on the sea and under the sea, and not once does he voice an unkind word about anyone.

Sitting in his chair, Hillier leans forward and stares at the floor, his eyes periodically darting about. Sit back and let Ross spin a few yarns.

"I was workin' at the old cold storage up in St. Anthony once," he begins slowly. "I was wheelin' one of them big steel wheelbarrows full of fish aboard a schooner. There was about 2,000 lb. of weight in all, and when I was goin' across a plank over the hatch, the plank broke and the whole thing came down on top of me." He looks up and with a twinkle in his eye, adds, "I never had a bone broke, just had some bruises. And I was unconscious in the hospital six weeks before I came to."

He takes a moment to light a cigarette, then launches into a tale of the time he fell through a cocoo pot hole.

"You like coocoos, do you?" He asks. "Yes, boy, they're good. You know, I can go anywhere in the cove down there"—he indicates with his arm—"and set me pots and come up with 150 per haul."

"I carried some over to Aunt Becky Decker one day, and when I turned to come home, it got right dirty. There's a weather light out there to help anyone find their way, but I could barely see that one. Well, I started half on a run. Next thing I knows, I'm gone down through a hole in the ice—I knew it was a cocoo pot hole. When I touched bottom I got me bearings and me wits about me and grabbed the string connected to the pot. I pulled meself up to the ice opening, but I couldn't get up on the ice. I slipped under again and started to take in water real bad then. So, I had no other way out—I had to stay down and walk all the way home on the bottom. It took me about 45 minutes to make it, and I smoked two packs of cigarettes while I was down there."

Hillier is quick to point out that he can light 12 cigarettes or pipes using a single match, regardless of weather conditions. He can accomplish the same feat while submerged, explaining he has 'special' equipment to do that.

Over the years, he has been afflicted with many physical ailments, such as the time, when, as a young boy, he damaged his toe while playing soccer.

"It was in the winter and all we had for a ball was a frozen skin boot. You get hit with that thing in the wrong place and it hurt. Anyway, I got it right in the foot and me big toe was drove out of joint. Shouldha seen it—the toe was stickin' right off from the foot. A woman tried to set the toe, but she didn't do a very good job."

Hillier stands and point to his feet. "Now," he says with a grin, "both me feet turns off in one direc-

tion and that's why I can't walk straight."

A small piece of thread saved him from drowning while sealing near Noddy Bay several years ago.

"Me and Arthur Elliott got caught in some bad weather," he relates. "We made our way to Warren's Island, but I knew we had to get to land or we'd freeze to death. And all I had on was a coat and pants made of flour sacks. We swam for a while, but I gave out and went under. Arthur had his gaff and he drove it down and hooked on to a piece of thread on me hood. That's what saved me. When the search party found us and took us to someone's home I wouldn't get undressed because the flour in me pants had turned lumpy and I didn't want anybody to see. The next day we was back out at the seals gains, as if nothin' had ever happened."

Hillier, who will be 65 in May, has never married. He prefers to live alone in a small house he built himself. He has five dogs and four cats for companionship and maintains 12 ducks.

"I never met the right woman," he states, however he does remember a young girl he met while working in Corner Brook.

"She burned some gas drivin' me around in her father's truck. I was gettin' a good show with her, but I came back home and never went back afterwards."

It's getting close to supper and Ross Hillier reaches into his pocket for another cigarette. With another grin and a wink of his eye, he clears his throat.

He has worked in many different industries, including the lumber operations at Main Brook. He boasts that he earned \$2 million during the

40 years he worked at that profession.

"But now it's all spent," he says quickly. "When I had it I used to keep my money in a tin can and lower it into a hole down an 80 foot cliff. When I'd sit down to count it, the money'd be piled right over me head—on all sides!"

"By the way," he says, blowing a puff of smoke into the air, "did you hear about the time...?"

## Folk Artist

SAM HURLEY

*Folk Art is art created by untrained artists in the common tradition of their community, often reflecting their way of life.*

[www.saffronart.com/](http://www.saffronart.com/)

[sitepages/glossary.aspx](http://sitepages/glossary.aspx)



Figure 1 Folk Artist, Sam Hurley

Sam Hurley was born in Westport, Newfoundland, March 14, 1926. His mother was a Jacobs and his father was a Hurley. Sam was three months old when his father died, and his mother later married Charles Decker and they moved to Ship Cove, where Sam grew up and has lived for over eighty years. He married a woman named Bessie Andrews and together they had ten children.

He wasn't always an artist. He fished all his life and, after that, he worked in the woods. He's been carving and painting from nature for the past six or seven years, "Since I left off fishing and wood-cutting," he says. In summertime his yard is an odd assortment of hand-made lighthouses with revolving lights, puffins, birds, boats and fish. A visit to his house is testimony to his craft: every shelf and corner-nook is decorated with carvings and works-in-progress.

"I never used to do it," he says. "At one time I couldn't even paint."

His workshop is down a narrow flight of stairs to a low-ceilinged basement where, with one pull of a cord, a 60-watt bulb dangling from a beam reveals a work table and a wall covered with tools. This is where he does his carving and measuring. To paint, Sam works at his kitchen table, keeping warm by the woodstove.

At the time of this interview, Sam paints a replica of Captain Charlie Caine's schooner - the *Norma and Gladys*. His inspiration for painting the schooner came from an old picture on a calendar taken many years before. "But there's one difference," he says, pointing to a bowsprit on the schooner he is making, "the *Norma and Gladys* never had n'er boom."

For the most part, he has a personal interest in everything he paints. "That's Great Sacred Island Cove where we used to go in and cook, and there's a little cove where we used to go jigging."



Figure 2 Mr. Hurley's work challenges our preconceived notions of art

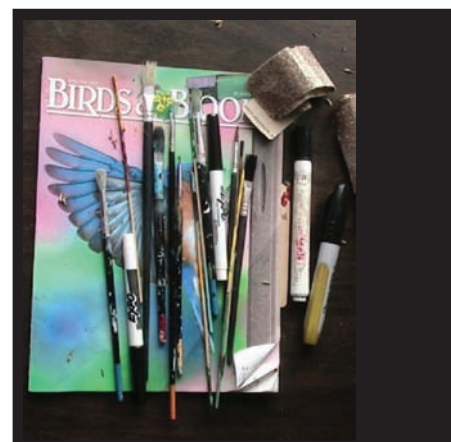


Figure 3 Tools of the Trade



Figure 4 Sam Hurley makes everything from 3-D schooners to puffins



Figure 5 Every summer Mr. Hurley puts his art work on display



He reaches into an old cardboard box and takes out a purple martin, a swallow, a jay, a cardinal, a plover, a grackle and, his pride and joy, the hummingbird. "If I lives long enough," he says, "you'll see it all out again next summer."

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## Tools of the Trade

SELBY TUCKER



Figure 1 Selby Tucker

*Selby Tucker was born at Ship Cove in 1926. He is 82 years old. In this interview, he speaks of a variety of practical topics pertaining to community life and the fishery when he was a young man.*

### Corduroids

Going up to Raleigh, there were corduroids on the marshes. The ground was soft at certain times of the year, so there were sticks, six foot across, which made a bridge across the bog so people wouldn't sink to the bottom. See, if you fell into the muck, you could disappear;

you could sink in those bogs till your boots come off.

Corduroids were made before my time. All the people in the community would have got together and made them, just like they do a road. If they hadn't made them, they'd have had to go all the way around. I guess you could say corduroids were the early version of today's boardwalk.

### The first local road to Raleigh

*This local road runs along the bottom of the bay, all the way to Raleigh.*

That was built before my time, and they would have built it with a pick and a shovel. There were no tractors, so it was hard work. They would have built the road in the fall after the fishery, and before the snow came, and they dug trenches on each side of the road, too. You couldn't have driven a car over that road, but you could have driven a dog team over it.

### Driving the dog team

When you'd drive the dog team, and meet another team, the dogs would have a fight and get all snarled up. I'd have to turn off the trail into a tree to try to stop them from fighting. When you had six or seven dogs in a sleigh, you'd go to Eastern Pond and come back, you'd put the dogs in their traces (looping their traces), but the dogs would get tangled up and the traces would be plaited like a whip by the time you got home; dogs shifting back and forth, that's what plaited up their traces. Every dog had his own trace, and each trace was a different length. One dog might have six feet

of trace, then the next dog's trace might be a little shorter or a little longer, so they could all pull in a straight line, but one dog would be ahead of another, and there was always a lead dog.

To change direction, you'd say, "huttee" or "hold in" to go right, and "keeboff," to go left. If you wanted the dogs to speed up, you'd say, "Go fast." To stop the dogs, you said, "Whoa." Another expression, to get them to go faster was, "look at the crow!" They were always after the birds, see. And if they were going too fast, and you were on ice, or going down a hill, you had a brake, called a drug.

Everybody had a dog team back then; you had to. The dogs slept outside; sometimes you might have a dog house, but in heavy snow, the dogs would curl up inside a snow bank. In the morning, you'd see a little round hole in the snow, an air hole, and next thing, you'd see a dog come up through the snow. There were times you'd have to go and dig them out, but the dogs were warmer under the snow. We fed them once a day in the evening, and that was it before the next evening. A dog couldn't work if he was overfed.

### Autoboggans, Snowmobiles, Ski-Doos

After dog teams there were the autoboggans, and boy, that was a wonderful thing. But then, after awhile, they disappeared. Then came the snowmobile; that was something, those snowmobiles. Boy oh boy. And they all disappeared and then there were ski-doos.

The snowmobile was big, with



tracks on her; they were more of a passenger vehicle. They resembled a car, with a track on each side and skis on the front end, and they had a steering wheel. The engine was in the back, and there was a hatch which opened and closed; you could open it for a vent. You could carry about ten people in one of them. In these machines, you could take a load of people to St. Anthony, or visiting to another community. Mostly they were used if people were sick and had to be taken to the hospital.

There were three snowmobiles in the community, owned by the Besseys, Deckers, and Tuckers. With those machines, you could haul a sled with a cord of wood, and those sleds were maybe eight times bigger than a komatik; a couple trips with that and you had your wood for the winter. Of course, I never had one.

But, if you were willing to pay for it, you could get somebody to haul the wood out for you. There were trails cut for hauling wood, or when the bays or marshes froze up, we'd haul the wood across there. We'd hire the snowmobile to haul the long sticks; they were called wharf sticks. Wharf sticks are the cribs at the wharves that the ballast rocks are in. Everybody built their own wharf back then. We'd go in and cut them, then pay somebody to haul them out for us. If we used the dog team, we would have had to make twenty trips, but if we hired the snowmobile, then there were only two.



Figure 2 Caulking Iron for tapping oakum into the seams of a boat.

## Tools for boat building

I built my own boats, on the stages or in the stores. You needed good big trees to make the planks for the siding of the boat. Then you needed the roots to make timbers or ribs. You have ribs on your backbone; so your backbone is like the keel on a boat. See, your spine and your ribs, if you lie down, is just like a boat. The stem of the boat would have to be a separate piece from the keel. Everything was built onto the keel. The stem was attached, the back part was attached, and all the ribs were attached. And then there were the *blades* (propellers). We use the old fashioned words; we always said, '*blades*.' We bought the propeller at the store, but everything else was made from scratch. Before my time, people used sailboats instead of motors.

Once the planks were on, you'd stog the seams of the planks with oakum, which is a tarred rope, which you would buy at the store. It's almost like wool, but

it's a tarred, hemp rope. To make the oakum fit to stog into the seams, you puts it in your hands and you rolls it to about the size, or thickness, of a pencil; maybe not quite that thick. Then you get a carking iron (caulking iron). Every seam would have to be filled up with oakum. That was called "carking a



Figure 3 Scribe Tool and Square



Figure 4 Saw Set and Raker Gauge



Figure 5 Two types of squid jigger: The old-fashioned lead jigger and the new plastic jigger

boat” (caulking a boat). You’d take the caulking iron and place it on the oakum, over the seam, and tap it in with a wooden mallet. Every last seam would have to be filled before you’d seal it and paint it.

A scribe tool was used for measuring planks. When planking a boat, the plank would be wide at the back and as it would go up to the front it would taper. You’d use the scribe tool to measure width, and then cut accordingly.

The saw set was a tool for setting the teeth in a bucksaw. The teeth had to offset each other. If the teeth were straight, they wouldn’t cut properly.



Figure 6  
Dog snap for attaching a dog to a line.



Figure 7 Scythe Wrench (left) used for changing the size of blade on a scythe. A pocketknife was a fisherman’s pocket companion.



Figure 8 Trawl Picker

The raker gauge was used if the teeth were too long on a saw; it was used to file the teeth down.

Trawl Picker: This tool goes right back to Selby’s father’s day. The tool was used for putting a hole in the line of a trawl. A trawl was a big, long rope. It had hooks on it that were baited. You’d have hundreds of them. To get a piece of line onto the trawl, you’d put a hole through it with a trawl picker, put the line through it, and tie it on. The trawl picker was also used for making clotheslines.

### What happens at the splitting table

The boat comes in and ties up at the wharf. The fish is forked up onto the stage head, which can be full of fish; the more fish the better. Then it’s taken from the stage head



Figure 9 Awl Tool for sewing sealskin boots



Figure 10 Splitting Knife and glove for splitting fish.

and put into a fish box. Usually the youngest in the family, a seven or eight year-old, will be taking the fish out of the box and putting them on the table beside the *cutthroater*, who has a long knife and slits the throat and the belly. You need a good *cutthroater* to keep the *header* going. And a good *cutthroater* won’t split the liver. He cuts the belly open—because the liver is in the belly—and won’t touch the liver. Then he slides it over to the header, who takes it and, in one motion, grabs the liver. The liver goes out a little hole into a barrel. One grab, one pull, for the liver; one grab for the end of the guts—attached to the middle of the fish—and the *header* scoops the guts towards himself. And, with one motion, his fingers go into the eyeball, and crack, off comes the head and the head and guts go down into the water. And the fish, in that motion, slides across the table to the *splitter*. The *splitter* has a little wedge of board on the table, which he puts the fish up against. He grabs it with one hand and has his splitting knife in the other. He cuts the bone out of the fish, which might fly fifty feet across and into the water (in the old days there were piles of bones on the stage and in the water...piles of them). Once the *splitter* is finished, the fish goes down into a vat full of water. Now, if you have two good *splitters* and you have a real good *header* you can keep going. When the two *splitters* have filled up the vat (the fish are in the water), the fish is taken out and put in a wheelbarrow, wheeled across the stage into a store, where it is salted.

**Glossary**  
**Dictionary of Newfoundland**  
**English**

1. Komatik: a long sled, adopted in northern Newfoundland for winter travel and hauled by dogs or sometimes men; sledge for hauling wood.
2. Stog: To fill the chinks.

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## **Sheila's Brush**

**DELILAH TUCKER & OTHER**  
**SOURCES**

*The folklore of Newfoundland tells the story that Sheila was the wife or housekeeper of a man*

*named Patrick, who later became St. Patrick. The day after St. Patrick's Day there is usually a storm, a big storm. Folklore has it that Patrick told Sheila to sweep the house clean. In her fervour to please him she brushed and swept and created a storm. It is believed that she was either angry with Patrick or eager to please him, and she swept with a vengeance. She caused a great fury and that story became passed down in folklore, and so the storm of 'great fury' that comes after St. Patrick's Day became known as 'Sheila's Brush.*

*www.ourecho.com*

There's a storm coming; it'll be

the last storm for the winter. It comes sometime around the fifteenth of March, or St. Paddy's Day. Most every year we get that, and the old people will say, "That's Sheila's Brush."

*Delilah Tucker, Ship Cove*

The storm – a classic example of what's called Sheila's Brush, or a tough March storm that falls near St. Patrick's Day – was also bringing strong gusts of winds and had caused numerous cancellations in the St. John's area and elsewhere.  
*March 21, 2009*

*www.cbc.ca/nl*



