

Wild Bight



Alf Larkin Wild Bight



Larkin home at Wild Bight. Photos contributed by Alf Larkin.

Larkins of Wild Bight

Alf Larkin was born at Wild Bight in 1938 to Stephen Larkin and Jenetta (Campbell) Larkin, who was one of the Cape Norman Campbells. Alf grew up and fished at Wild Bight and moved to St. Anthony in 1965 when he was 27 years old.



Alf Larkin as a young man.

“There were four of us in my dad’s fishing crew: Stephen, Fred, Tom and I. And sometimes we had Hewlett; he wasn’t always in the boat with us but he was the header at the splitting table. We had two cod traps.”

Fishing families at Wild Bight...

Nat Decker was a prominent fisher, and another prominent fishing family was that of Richard (Rich) Adey. They were well established when Alf was just a boy in the late 1940s. As soon as the ice moved out, these two fishermen fixed their moorings at their chosen berths. As other families began moving in, fishermen wondered where they could put down their traps. Eventually, to make it fair for everyone, the Draw System was implemented.

It is said that Nat Decker Sr. could haul a cod trap single-handedly. Four men can haul a cod trap comfortably. He was a big, strong man. If Nat Decker were alive today, he'd be around 90 years old. His grandfather, Skipper Nat, established the trap berths at Wild Bight.

In Wild Bight, if a man was in the first draw, he was able to secure an inside berth. If he participated in the second draw, he was able to secure an outside berth. If a fisher wasn't catching fish in one place, he could put a trap anywhere as long as it wasn't already taken.

Alf had one boat, two traps. There were some years there were no fish. One year, when the fishery was over, there was a tier of fish down at the stage, eight feet long and two feet high. That was it for the whole summer. A lot of men, that year, went to Goose Bay to work.

Trap Berths: the first seven berths were called 'outside berths' and were all second draw.

1. Trap hole. A prime berth in the 2nd draw. They'd take the sheltered berths in the first draw (smooth water berths). This berth was a prime berth, but in rough waters. It was a berth subject to tides; the tide would come in around that cape and it was like a river.
2. Horse Cove. Outside berth, 2nd draw.
3. Russell's Hole. Larkins worked this berth. It was considered an outside berth; a rough-water berth. 2nd draw.
4. Train Bay Shoal. 2nd draw.
5. Black Rock. 2nd draw.
6. Northeast Bill. 2nd draw.
7. Southeast Bill. 2nd draw.
8. Barr'd Island Point. This was the prime of all prime berths; the one everyone wanted. If you got Barr'd Island Point, you were looking good. The shore fasts are still in the rock at this berth. Prior to the Draw System, Nathaniel (Nat) Decker fished this berth.
9. Inner Barr'd Island Point.
10. Big Shoal. Fished by the Adey family.
11. Gull Island Shoal.
12. Black Rock Shoal. Prime.
13. Outer Black Rock (offer tier berth set off from Black Rock). These two berths were put into the Draw separately, so that one fisher might draw Outer Black Rock and another might draw Black Rock. Prime.
14. Gull Cove.
15. Fish Gulch.
16. Trap Berth Point. One of the main berths. Fished by the Adey family.
17. Middle Berth.
18. Swile Cove Point. This was the 2nd best prime berth. Prior to the Draw System, Nathaniel (Nat) Decker fished this berth.
19. Dog Gulch.

Henry Brown Wild Bight



Figure 1 The community of Wild Bight. Photo by Aaron Beswick



Figure 2 Photo by Aaron Beswick



Figure 3 Henry Brown. Photo by Aaron Beswick

Fishing Crews

When Henry Brown was fishing there were perhaps seven or eight crews. Henry had two speedboats and two traps: a 28' boat and a 21' speedboat, because after trap fishing he used the trawl and a smaller boat was needed. Henry, his father Samuel and his three brothers made up the crew.

Trap Berth Skippers

Reuben (Rube) Adey
Steve Larkin (Alf Larkin's father)
John Campbell fished at Outside Bight
Robert Campbell at fished at Outside Bight
Joe Campbell lived on the Cape but fished at Outside Bight
Henry Decker
Jim Brown (Henry's uncle)
Albert Brown (Henry's uncle)

Local Names

Whale Point on the map is called Barr'd Island by local fishers.

Trap Berths at Wild Bight

1. Trap Hole
2. Horse Cove
3. Russel's Hole
4. Train Bay Shoal
5. Black Rock
6. Northeast Bill
7. Southeast Bill
8. Barr'd Island Point
9. Inner Barr'd Island Point
10. Big Shoal. Good berth.
11. Gull Island Shoal
12. Outer Black Rock Shoal
13. Black Rock Shoal
14. Gull Cove
15. Fish Gulch
16. Trap Berth Point
17. Middle Berth
18. Swile Cove Point. Prime. The fish always showed up at this berth a week before they showed up elsewhere.
19. Dog Gulch

Photo Essay
Barr'd Island Point, Wild Bight
On the trail of old shore fasts
--Photos by Kathleen Tucker



Figure 4 Len Tucker, Maude and Alf Larkin at Barr'd Island Point



Figure 5 Amazing geological formations



Figure 6 Unusual rock formations



Figure 7 Alf Larkin and Len Tucker (in the far distance) searching for old shore-fasts



Figure 8 More rock formations



Figure 9 Alf Larkin and Len Tucker discussing the trap fishery



Figure 10 The old Government Wharf, once used for unloading supplies for the Cape Norman lighthouse.



Figure 11 Poured lead shore-fasts at Barr'd Island Point

Photo Essay
Wild Bight

--photos contributed by Alf Larkin



Larkin homes at Wild Bight



Tom, Alf and Fred Larkin.



Second photo: Emily Larkin with her mother, Jenetta, mussel-picking



Alf Larkin's house at Wild Bight



Emily (Larkin) married to Nat Decker, and young Nat (left).



Alf as a young man (right)



Fred & Tom Larkin by one of the first trucks in Wild Bight. Jenetta Larkin and her sister (visiting from Embree)



Erastus (Ras) Elliott with Granny Brown.



Granny Brown was the midwife for the area.



Stephen Larkin and youngest son, Tom



Putting on a felt roof (left). Jenetta, Alf's mother (right)

...And a few modern-day photos of Wild Bight
--Kathleen Tucker



Figure 12 A 'clothesline fence' rather than a wooden moose fence. It works just as well...perhaps better.



Figure 13 Larkins' old fish stores



Figure 14 Clapboard shed, still in use.



Figure 15 Wild Bight nautical chart