

***A HISTORY OF BAY OF ISLANDS WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO GILLAMS, ONE OF ITS FIRST  
SETTLEMENTS***

FOR

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## Table of Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction .....	1
Location .....	1
Early Settlement and Population Development .....	2
Economic History .....	11
(a) Ton-timber and Early Fisheries .....	11
(b) Salmon Fishery .....	12
(b) Herring Fishery .....	13
(c) Lobster Fishery .....	17
(d) Other Fisheries .....	21
(e) Other Industries .....	21
Land Ownership .....	24
Social History .....	25
(a) Conditions during early years of settlement .....	25
(b) Religion: The Establishment of the Church .....	29
(c) Education .....	32
(d) Transportation and Communications .....	33
(e) Postal Services .....	35
(f) Civil Law .....	37
(g) Organizations .....	39
Relationship between Bay of Islands and St. John's .....	39
Politics .....	41
(a) [English - French Relations Until 1904] .....	41
(b) Politics Since 1904 .....	45
Conclusions .....	47
Bibliography	

## Introduction

The West Coast of Newfoundland has had a somewhat different historical background from that of the eastern part of the province. Its settlement is more recent, its racial origins more varied and its economy has had a pattern of development all its own. For two centuries after the discovery it was a “no man’s land” in the sense that no Europeans had attempted settlement of the area. Then for two more centuries it was a “no man’s land” in that it was a disputed territory outside the pale of the law, an area of Newfoundland over which disputes of the most pronounced type resulted.

The discussion which follows will concern itself with one area of the West Coast of Newfoundland - Bay of Islands, with special emphasis on the community of Gillams, one of the oldest settlements in the bay. Although one must be wary of making generalizations, one can state with some degree of certainty that most of what is said concerning Gillams during the early years of settlement, is true of other settlements in Bay of Islands. This is especially true in such matters as the social and economic life of the people.

## Location

Gillams, formerly known as the Farms, is located on the north shore of the Humber Arm. It is about nine miles from the mouth of the Humber River which flows into the bottom of the Bay, and fifteen miles (approximately) from the mouth of the Bay (distances by water.)

## Early Settlement and Growth of Population

William Wanders, writing in 1951, on the subject of settlement in western Newfoundland states:

Settlement in the Humber Arm apparently began about 125 - 150 years ago. When Captain Cook, R.N. surveyed the west coast in 1768 ... there were no settlers. About 1800 it is reported that there were two men, one from Dorsetshire, with their large families located in the Bay of Islands.<sup>1</sup>

If indeed there were, as this statement indicates, no settlers in the Humber Arm in 1765, there is evidence to show that there were settlers very shortly after that date. Evidence shows that those who are reported to have been there in 1800 came about twenty years before that date, and although twenty years is very little historically speaking, it is of some significance here. It would appear from a statement of a missionary's journal of a visitation to the Bay of Islands in 1849 that some of the first settlers in the Bay settled at Gillams about 1780. It states that;

(Thursday, August 2, 1849) The Hawk became grounded while at anchor near River Head (now Humbermouth.) ...There is no remedy or relief till high water. After dinner we rowed down to Gillams Cove, about nine miles, to visit a family named Blanchard. The wind and tide were against us and the pulling was very labourious. We reached the place just before sundown. It is a beautiful little farm, and has quite an inspiring appearance from the water. The house is mean and dirty, and the old

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<sup>1</sup> Wonder, William C. (1951). Settlement in Western Newfoundland. Ottawa: Dept. of Mines & Territorial Surveys. p. 96.

patriarch, who has lived there nearly seventy years, was in a state of great filth and discomfort. He is nearly ninety years of age.<sup>2</sup>

The oldest resident of Gillams today, [1968] Mr. William Blanchard, who is eighty-seven years of age, is a grandson of this Mr. Blanchard reported to be the only man living in Gillams in 1849. And although the report states that he came from Dorsetshire and settled here, the Mr. Blanchard living today contends that the old patriarch was born in Gillams and that it was his father who came from Dorsetshire. The headstone of this Mr. Blanchard reads as follows: William Blanchard died August 29, 1850, aged 83 years - also his wife Elizabeth who died June 24, 1841 (age not given.) If this Mr. Blanchard is the same one reported by the missionary, and he had been there for nearly seventy years in 1849 as the journal states, and the ages and dates given on the headstone are correct, then it can be stated with certainty that the Blanchards were the first permanent settlers in Gillams and that they came about 1780.

J.D. Rogers stated: "one or two English families are said to have inhabited the mouth of the Humber River from 1780 onwards ..."<sup>3</sup> It was about this time too that Jerseymen sat up large fishing establishments with resident superintendents at Blanc Sablon. Establishment of Channel Islanders now ran like a ring around the whole of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, from Cape Breton and Prince Edward Islands to Bay Chaleur and Gaspé and back again along the north shore of the Gulf to the Strait of Belle Isle. It

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<sup>2</sup> Newfoundland. Journal of a Voyage of Visitation - 1849. London: R. Clay Printers. p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, J. D. (1911). A Historical Geography of the British Colonies. Vol. V, Part IV, Newfoundland. London: The Clarendon Press.

seems that after the Treaty of Paris, Jerseymen and Guernseymen repeated on a large scale the political services which they had rendered at Placentia after the Treaty of Utrecht.

The question which comes to mind in this respect is whether or not Bay of Islands, and possibly Gillams, was included in this activity and settlement by the Jerseymen and Guernseymen. There are two things which tend to indicate that they were. The first of these is the fact that one of the largest islands in Bay of Islands is called Guernsey Island. This would indicate that men from Guernsey had once settled there or at least had visited this part of Bay of Islands.

Then again, older residents of Gillams recall having heard their fathers and grandfathers talk of Jerseymen who once came to Gillams for loads of square timber that the Jerseymen called "ton-timber." The banks of the large brook that runs into the Bay at Gillams are forested with very large forests and according to these residents, Jerseymen came, cut down this timber, "squared it down" and took whole ship loads away. Pieces of this "ton-timber" have been uncovered near the brook. It was covered with several inches of moss and other vegetation which tends to indicate that this timber had been cut some years ago. It is quite likely then, that in later years some of these Jerseymen settled in the area - at least during the winter months. It seems that one such settler was a Mr. James who acted as sort of guide to a missionary party to Bay of Islands in 1835. A journal entry from this visit reports that;

Mr. James was obliged to return to Bay of Islands (he had accompanied the party to Bonne Bay), as he was in hourly expectation of the arrival of

the Jersey, in which the owner, who was his employer, wished to proceed to the Labrador fishery.<sup>4</sup>

About the turn of the nineteenth century, settlers from other areas of Newfoundland and the Maritimes began to move into Bay of Islands. For example, some of the Micmac Indians who came by sea in their canoes from Cape Breton Island to St. George's Bay immediately after, and in consequence of the treaty of 1783 were one such group. They came to St. George's Bay under a chief, and with British consent, their object being to associate with British colonists already there. According to Rogers;

similar social reasons induced a Micmac mother of many daughters to migrate from St. George's Bay to the Humber Sound in Bay of Islands, where a Dorsetshire father of seven sons, and another white patriarch and his many sons, were the only, or almost the only residents long before and for seventeen years after 1822.<sup>5</sup>

(Names given in reference to these two old men and their sons were Blanchard and Brake.) This undoubtedly was the old man Blanchard of Gillams noted above.

From other accounts too, it seems that there was a slight movement of population into the west coast and Bay of Islands from the south coast. Just as people on the east coast gradually moved into Notre Dame Bay and points farther north, so

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<sup>4</sup> Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal - 1835. (1836). London: Smith, Elder & Co. p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> Rogers, J. D. (1911). A Historical Geography of the British Colonies. Vol. V, Part IV, Newfoundland. London: The Clarendon Press.

settlers on the south coast, in the Fortune Bay area, moved west along the coast, turned up the west coast and eventually some of them settled in Bay of Islands.

Rogers describes the movement in this way:

while the people of the east coast satisfied their restless impulses by annual tours to the north, the southerners steadily went westward and went to stay. The east coast process was a series of leaps and bounds, the south and west coast process resembled the stretching of elastic. The former flew, the latter flowed.<sup>6</sup>

Today one of the most wide spread names in many settlements in Bay of Islands, especially Gillams, is Park. An entry in the journal of the Hawk in 1849 seems to give rather conclusive evidence that the first Park in Bay of Islands came from Burin. The entry gives further information of the arrival of Indians in the area from other parts of the island. It reports:

Saturday, August 4, 1849, we stood into Meadows Cove (approximately 4 miles from Gillams) and I visited the settler, one Park, whose two sons were baptised by Archdeacon Wix. His wife was an Indian from Burgeo. The man came from Burin.<sup>7</sup>

Another place on the south coast which seems to have had close connections with Bay of Islands in those days was Harbour Breton. Ships coming out from England or St. John's to Bay of Islands frequently stopped at Harbour Breton and people from

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>7</sup> Journal of a Voyage of Visitation - 1849. (1849). London: R. Clay Printers. p. 50.



one place or the other could get passage fairly easily. This is indicated by such entries as the following: "June 23, 1835 - arrived in Bay of Islands aboard the "Hope", a brig belonging to Messrs Bird of Sturminster, having put into Harbour Breton on her outward passage from England."<sup>8</sup> And later on in the century, "... Picked up at Harbour Breton by the Governor of Newfoundland, in the 'Ariel', and given passage to Bay of Islands, arriving on Friday, July 20, 1866."<sup>9</sup> This was the second trip of Rev. Rule to Bay of Islands. An account of his first trip explains how he came to Harbour Breton from where he gained passage to Channel and later on to Bay of Islands. Commenting on settlement in 1865 he said;

The population of Bay of Islands consisted in my time of the old established settlers of English race scattered chiefly along the middle and lower parts of the estuary of the Humber, with a few families in the middle arm of the Bay and one at Little Harbour; partly of recent immigrants who established themselves in the middle and upper estuary. There are also a few mixed French and Indian breed.<sup>10</sup>

From these reports it seems that most of the population at this time were direct decedents of the several families reported by Cormack - Blanchards and Brakes. Except for the missionary reports mentioned earlier, very little is recorded about actual

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<sup>8</sup> Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal. February - August 1835. (1836). London: Smith, Elder and Co. p. 116.

<sup>9</sup> Rule, Rev. U. Z. (1927). Reminiscences of My Life. St. John's: Dick's and Co., Ltd. p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

population figures for any specific settlement in Bay of Islands until the 1891 census. In that year the population of Gillams (Then known as Farms) was given as 24 people. Population growth was very slow and if one compares population figures of 1891 with those of 1901 it shows that the increase in population for the ten year period is only 4 persons - 24 in 1891 to 28 in 1901. This trend of low population increase continued until the present time although increase is now tending to become more "rapid."

There are several reasons for this slow increase in population. One of the major ones was the confused position in which the people often found themselves during the English-French disputes over the Treaty or French Shore which lasted until 1904. People who settled here could not get grants for their land because the British government did not wish to make grants in areas where the French were so active as to make life for the settlers very uncertain. However, by forbidding grants of land in the area, the Imperial government was encouraging the French in their attempt to prevent English settlement. Under these circumstances, the theoretical assertion of British sovereignty by which the prohibition of French settlement was qualified was not likely to be very impressive. Settlers to Gillams and other communities were thus obliged to settle the land as squatters.

Another factor which tended to retard settlement was the lack of civil law enforcement which was non-existent during the first one hundred years of settlement.

There is also the fact that this part of the island was believed to be a very dangerous coast. People believed that conditions were such on the west coast, that anyone who ventured to settle in the area took great chances of being wrecked even before reaching a place of settlement. This may have been true of any area of

Newfoundland but much more emphasis was placed on the dangers of the west coast than elsewhere. This belief was true of the French as well as the English. For example, in 1785 a bounty of 75 livres a man was granted to all ships fishing in the Bay of Islands “on account of it being a rocky and dangerous coast.”<sup>11</sup>

Bay of Islands was one of the most distant points to which settlers could come - either by way of the north or south coasts. This caused a lack of communication with other areas of Newfoundland already settled which in turn discouraged any great increase in settlement.

It must also be considered that Bay of Islands, except in recent years, was blocked by ice for several months of the year. This could be very discouraging to settlers when we consider that fishing was the chief occupation of the people and the herring fishery, which could be carried on through the ice, had not started until many years after the first permanent settlement.

Although these factors are by no means the only ones that tended to discourage rapid increases in population, they are considered some of the most important. Though English sovereignty was recognized, the French were guaranteed fishing rights including the landing and curing of their fish, and any fixed settlement which “interrupted in any manner” the French fishery were to be removed. Warships of both nations patrolled the shore and both looked upon settlers with considerable hostility. Under these conditions it is surprising that any appreciable settlement developed in the Bay of Islands at all.

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<sup>11</sup> Innis, Harold A. (1954). The Cod Fishery. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p. 216.

People who came out to Bay of Islands and persisted in settling under such conditions must have had good reason for wanting to stay. The question therefore arises, why were people willing to settle here when two opposing governments were making settlement difficult and life so uncertain? The truth is that although the Bay is frozen for several months during the year, other conditions more than made up for this and other discouraging factors. A missionary to Bay of Islands writing back to St. John's to Rev. Mullock in 1868 gives a good indication why many wished to come:

this Bay with its tributaries, as well as several other localities along the coast, affords better inducement than the United States, the fishermen of St. John's and other places are immigrating. In this Bay alone there are now as many vessels at anchor as will require, it is estimated, seventy thousand barrels of herring to load them ... still although herring did not strike until after the 22<sup>nd</sup> (letter dated November 29, 1868.) of this month such is the quantity taken the last five or six days that they are all in hopes of getting fair cargoes. They tell me that codfish is quite plentiful in the Bay if they could attend to it.<sup>12</sup>

He later went on to say:

I am very much mistaken then if this Bay does not hold out inducement to the poor fishermen who have to leave other parts of this island, superior to the most glittering prospects held out by Gloucester, or any other fishing district in the United States. A fisherman here is as safe while catching

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<sup>12</sup> Bronnan, Rev. Michael, (1948). Pioneer History of St. George's Diocese, Toronto: Mission Press. p. 28

his fish as he is white sitting in his house in the bosom of his family.<sup>13</sup>

This last statement tends to be in complete disagreement with the popular conception that the whole area of the west coast was extremely dangerous. There were other attractions to Bay of Islands besides the presence of herring, cod and other fisheries. The quality of the soil was known to be better than many areas already settled elsewhere. Prospects for agriculture were encouraging and even if a settler did not wish to produce crops for sale, he could grow vegetables and fruit and raise his own cattle. In this area he was less dependent on others for his food supplies since he could produce more of his own.

The quality of the forests was another asset to the area and, as mentioned earlier, it was a major attraction to Jerseymen. The harvesting of this timber for manufacturing into lumber or paper making has become one of the most important industries in Gillams at the present time.

Another advantage of the area for settlement was its closeness to the Canadian and United States markets. This was of great importance since most of the products of the area went to these two markets.

## Economic History

### Ton-timber and Early Fisheries

It has been stated earlier that many older residents of Gillams believe that one of the first activities which took place in the way of industry was the cutting of “ton-timber”

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

by Jerseymen. However, as this seems to have been of minor importance to anyone who may have been settling there, it was the fishery, or rather fisheries, that were the chief industries in the area until well after the beginning of the twentieth century.

### Salmon Fishery

The earliest fisheries in Bay of Islands seems to have been salmon and to some extent cod. It is reported that; “an Englishman carried on a salmon fishery in the Humber River in 1787 and brought 76 tierces of salmon and £ 265 worth of furs to St. John’s. But this establishment was apparently abandoned the following year.”<sup>14</sup>

The following year the [salmon] fishery in Bay of Islands was a failure and 37 French boats were reported drawn upon the shore.<sup>15</sup> The practice during those years was to catch salmon in large numbers in the Humber Sound and after this had reached its peak, the fishermen would move their families to the islands near the mouth of the Bay and carry on a cod fishery. This cod fishery was never very important but was only a supplement first to the salmon and later to the lobster fishery. These two fisheries, the herring and lobster, began during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and remained until the 1930's, the major industries of Bay of Islands.

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<sup>14</sup> Innis, Harold A. (1954). The Cod Fishery. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p. 215.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

## Herring Fishery

Rogers states that, "before 1854 there was no herring fishery in Bay of Islands." This seems to indicate that it started that year, 1854. By 1869 it had become a somewhat extensive industry. The journal of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland for that year, 1869, reports "8 schooners and about 200 small boats, employed principally in the herring fishery which has been good and promises well; also cod and a little salmon fishery, many boats from neighbouring places fish in the mouth of the run."<sup>16</sup>

It is likely that those mentioned as being from other places were from Bonne Bay and St. George's since fishermen from those areas came to Bay of Islands as late as the 1920's to take part in the herring fishery. The fall and winter fishery was always the most important. This [herring] fishery lasted from October to May and was interrupted only for short periods when the ice was forming in winter and breaking up in the spring. Nets used in the fishery were 2¾" and 3" mesh and usually two or three men fished together from one boat. When the Bay was frozen over, the nets were put down through the ice in holes about four feet square. The fisherman, knowing the length of his net, would cut two such holes in the ice at a distance from each other which represented the length of the net. One end of the net would then be lowered through one of these holes and guided to the other by a long pole. Short poles would be laid across the holes and the ends of the net attached. There were hundreds of nets being fished in this way during the time. For example, in 1867 when the population of Bay of Islands was only 118 families, the catch for the season was 30,000 barrels. In 1865

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<sup>16</sup> Journal of House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1869. p. 520.

50,000 barrels were exported. The average annual value of herring exported in the 1870's was \$358 359, and the value sold to French and Americans as bait may be safely estimated at not less than \$150 000 per annum. Allowing 73 000 barrels for home consumption at \$3 per barrel, the value would be \$219 000. Thus, the total value of herring caught in Bay of Islands for any year during the 1870's was well over \$700 000.<sup>17</sup>

The herring fishery in the area tended to decline somewhat after the 1870's. This is possibly due to increased competition from Canadian herring made possible by the Washington Treaty. However, this decline did not last long and after the turn of the century it gradually increased to new heights in both number of men employed and the amount of income realized. Figures for 1935 show that the "Humber" district had 634 nets in use. The ratio of men per net was about 1.7, which means that over 1000 men were employed during some part of the year in the herring fishery.<sup>18</sup> The methods used in catching the herring were the same as those employed since the very beginning of the industry in the area.

Herring were caught chiefly for two purposes; first to be exported for food and secondly for sale as bait. Some of course made up part of the local food supply. Most of the herring exported during the early years of the industry went to the maritime provinces of Canada. It was the custom in those days for traders to send out vessels from Halifax or some other Nova Scotian port and "buy" the herring directly from the

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<sup>17</sup> Hatton, Joseph. (1883). Newfoundland, The Oldest British Colony. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd. pp. 325 - 328.

<sup>18</sup> Fishery Research Report, Vol. II. (1935). p. 152.



fishermen. They were traders in every sense of the word because there was no money involved unless a fisherman was fortunate enough to catch herring valued at more than the cost of his food, clothing and other requirements. For example, Mr. Blanchard, the man mentioned earlier, recalls one fall when the herring fishery in Gillams was better than usual. The vessels came from Halifax and loaded the herring, making a record of the number of barrels taken from each man. When the herring were unloaded in Halifax the vessel took on a load of provisions - chiefly flour, sugar, molasses, tea, salt pork and salt beef and returned to Gillams giving each man the value of his herring in goods. In this particular year (he could not remember the exact date) Mr. Blanchard had enough herring for him to get a quantity of rum and a cheque for \$12 besides. There were some people who took their herring to Halifax or some other market themselves but the system of trading was still the main means of "selling" them. This system of trade continued for some time, but by 1905 it seems that direct sales for cash had become more common. In that year, minimum statutory price paid to fishermen was \$1.25 per barrel of 32 gallons as they are taken from the nets. Bonds were entered into that the cargo shall be landed at a port in the United States or Canada, for food purposes only, which bond was released on the production of a landing certificate to that effect.<sup>19</sup> Woods Island and Curling (formerly Birchy Cove), were the two clearing points for vessels leaving Bay of Islands with cargoes of herring.

A further change in the herring fishery in Bay of Islands and one which many feel was a major cause of the complete disappearance of the industry in the area, was the

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<sup>19</sup> Journal of House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1905, p. 161.

establishment of a herring meal plant near Summerside. The establishing of this plant meant that herring were no longer sold to maritime markets but to this plant. However, this plant was often unable to process the vast number of barrels which it bought from the fishermen, and those not processed after a certain period of time were dumped into the water. This resulted in water pollution which many feel caused a decline in the number of herring that came to the Bay. The pollution continued and the once prosperous herring fishery was eventually ended altogether.

Besides the pollution caused by dumping large quantities of herring into the water, many feel that the establishment of the pulp and paper mills at Corner Brook was also partly responsible for this water pollution. Although this has not been proven, it is a well known fact that much refuse in both solid and chemical forms are ejected into the waters of the Humber Arm and it is quite possible that there is some truth in the belief that this has helped bring about the end of the herring fishery.

There was one other important aspect of the herring fishery which warrants comment. This was the system which employers who operated boats used to pay their employees - "the shareman system." This system was started when the fishery was established and continued until the fishing had come to a complete decline. Under this system a fisherman, usually the owner of one or more boats, employed several men to work in his boats. They would be given one dollar out of every four earned by the boat from which he fished. These "sharemen" as they were called, unless they were married and had their own home, lived with their employer who also provided the food. This was provided as part of the employee's wages. If the shareman did not "move in" with his employer, he was given a special allowance agreed upon between him and his

employer. This system has been also used in the lobster fishery until very recently.

### Lobster Fishery

Another fishery which is, or more appropriately, was second in importance to the herring fishery in Bay of Islands is the lobster fishery. This fishery started in 1858 and at first the canning industry was a British monopoly. By 1887 there were twelve British factories in the area, three-quarters of them owned by Nova Scotians or Prince Edward Islanders. Again, this shows the close connection between Bay of Islands and maritime Canada. Nearly 1000 Newfoundlanders were engaged in the industry at this time. French competition began in 1883 when a St. Malo firm in defiance of treaty obligations erected two lobster factories on the Treaty shore. Prior to 1887 no question of treaty rights in the matter of the lobster fishery was raised by either side, but in that year the French claimed that the establishment of factories and the prosecution of the lobster fishery by the British were interfering with their rights. From this time until the final settlement of the French Shore question, the lobster fishery held the key to English-French relations in the area.

In the fishing treaties with France in 1783, and with the United States in 1818, cod was the one kind of fish of which the treaty making powers thought, and the treaties were therefore made in the interest of the cod fishermen. The Treaty of Utrecht, as reviewed by the Treaty of 1783 and 1814 clearly established English sovereignty as absolute, and clearly limited fish to the cod. The very vocabulary used in the treaties - dried, stages, flakes, etc. - is proof enough that they did not apply to the lobster fishery. Thus, the situation which developed over the lobster fishery in this area was almost the

exact opposite to that which followed the development of the seal fishery on the east and north-east coasts. As the seal allied itself to the cod in bringing material prosperity and political peace to other areas of Newfoundland, so the lobster allied itself to the herring in bringing political strife to the west coast. French fishing ships crossing the ocean in the spring and autumn were accompanied by French cruisers, which seemed to be a reproduction of the British convey system of the seventeenth century. These French cruisers continued to cruise in the outer Bay of Islands during the lobster fishery as a means of protection to its fishermen. Some of the oldest residents of Gillams today remember the uncertainty which was felt by their fathers (English settlers) who moved to Middle and North Arms to fish during the summer. One Mr. Blanchard recalls how, as a boy, it was his job to sit in a "look out" on North Arm Point to keep a watch for any sign of approaching ships, while his father and other fishermen canned the day's catch. At the first sight of a ship in the area it was his duty to come with all haste to North Arm Cove to report. The fishermen would immediately put out the fires and hide their lobsters in the nearby woods. He recalls too, how some Englishmen from Nova Scotia had built a bakery in North Arm and sometimes fishermen who were living on French Island near the mouth of the Bay, during the summer, would row in for supplies of bread. If weather conditions were such that these Frenchmen were forced to stay for several days in North Arm Cove, the fishermen there would not haul their traps until after they had left. On questioning the relationship between the English and French which permitted the French to buy bread from the English but yet prevented the English from hauling their traps in the presence of the French, Mr. Blanchard explained that it was a situation which developed because of fear on the part of the English. His father

and other fishermen from Gillams who fished in the area during this period did so with great fear of the French. In the meantime, efforts were made by both the English and French to settle the matter of rights. From 1844 to 1904 almost continuous negotiations were in progress but the several agreements reached in this sixty year period failed. It was only settled when the French gave up their rights to this area completely. It is felt that the French claim of English interference in their fishery was largely a pretext since their cod fishery on the Treaty Shore had already declined to negligible dimensions, and their real motive for disagreement with the English, it would seem, had been to exact reprisals for the Bait Act of 1887.

The 1911 census reported 2 lobster factories in Gillams which employed 8 men, using 120 traps. They produced, in 1910, 19 cases of lobsters - a relatively small amount. However, it is believed that this was only carried out on a part-time basis, as a supplement to the herring fishery. By 1937 the number of lobster factories in Bay of Islands was 99 - employing 500 men with a production from 2200 to 3500 cases of lobsters. (One case was 36 lbs of canned lobster, equivalent to 250 lbs of live lobsters.) The fishing season lasted from April 10<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>. Up until recently, all lobsters were canned by the fishermen themselves. Their factories were often a part of the fishermen's kitchen or at best was only another stage or store near their "camp" - as their summer living quarters were called. The equipment used in the canning consisted of a warm-water bath and apparatus for sealing the cans. A vacuum of varying intensity was produced by "blowing" the cans.

After the French Shore question was settled, the Newfoundland government employed inspectors who visited the factories at least once a year to see that proper care was taken in providing cleanliness etc. in the canning process and to check

lobster measures, since only lobsters which were over a specified size were to be processed. This inspector system was not effective since he seldom made more than one visit per season, and many fishermen canned all lobsters taken regardless of size. Most of the lobsters were sent to the United States, Nova Scotia and some to Prince Edward Island. Vessels from those places came and collected them and payment would be made by cash, or goods, or both, whatever the fishermen preferred. This type of operation lasted until several years after confederation with Canada in 1949. However, with closer connections with the mainland and through improved transportation, the canning of lobsters in small factories gave way to the fresh lobster industry. By the mid 1950's all canning factories had been closed and all lobsters caught were collected daily by agents in Curling and shipped to mainland Canada and the United States markets by air from Stephenville. The lobster industry in Bay of Islands has declined greatly in the past twenty years or so and today [1968] there are less than half a dozen fishermen in Gillams engaged in it.

Some mention has already been made of the salmon fishery in Bay of Islands during the early years of settlement. There are several other observations which should be made especially with regard to the salmon fishery as it is presently carried on in Gillams [1968]. Like the herring and lobster fisheries, the salmon fishery has also suffered a sharp decline in recent years. There are presently [1968] about half a dozen men in Gillams who engage in the salmon fishery - all of them on a part time basis. They use long nets which are fastened to the shore and run off at right angles to it. The catch is sold daily to local firms who either sell it to local food establishments or export it fresh to Canadian and United States markets.

### Other Fisheries

As previously stated, the cod fishery is not or has never been of any great importance in Bay of Islands. There was never any active participation in the Bank fishery and only very few fishermen from the area ever took part in the Labrador fishery.

Seals were taken in the Bay of Islands on a very limited scale as late as the 1940's. The thick "bayice" which usually covers the Bay until late spring, prevents loose ice-flows carrying the seals from penetrating the Bay and is without doubt one of the chief reasons why no sealing industry developed in the area. Very few, if any men from the Bay of Islands have ever gone to the iced as sealers, even when the sealing industry was at its peak in other areas of the province.

### Other Industries

Such industries as agriculture and other types of farming have never been carried out to any large scale in Gillams, although conditions generally favour this type of industry. Until 1960 there was just one farmer in the community who made his livelihood exclusively by mixed farming by which is meant a type of farming which combines vegetable growing and cattle raising. However, in recent years several other farms have developed, each specializing in one particular type rather than being mixed. For example, a resident of Kitchener, Ontario took up permanent residence in Gillams in 1960 and began a pig and poultry farm. He has continued to expand his operation each year and at present is one of the leading suppliers of pork to the Bay of Islands and Corner Brook area. A second poultry farm was established about 1961 and has continued to expand and prosper.

The most recent development in terms of farming in Gillams is the establishment of a dairy farm. This began in 1967, and present indications are that it will be a success.

Industries depending upon the rich timber resources in the area have long been important in Gillams. The value of the many species and the fine quality of the timber was realized as early as 1883 when the surveyor-general reported:

The hard-wood forest here consists chiefly of the different descriptions of birch, the yellow called the witch hazel, within a quarter of a mile of the shore was found measuring at 6 ft. from the ground, from 5 to 7 ft. in circumference; and soft-wood, as pine, spruce etc., are to be had with as little difficulty, the whole consisting of a size sufficient for any kind of building and in quantities abundant enough to become an article of export.<sup>20</sup>

Except for several years during the 1930s little use has been made of the hard-woods in the area, except for fuel. However, during those years, the 1930's, fairly large quantities of birch was cut and exported to the United States to be used as spool-wood. During the peak of this industry over 400 cords of this birch spool-wood was cut, hauled to the shore and shipped.

Since the turn of the century there has been several saw mills in operation in Gillams producing lumber from the softwoods. Today [1968] the number of mills have decreased to just two, one producing lumber of various sizes, and the other producing

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<sup>20</sup> Hatton, Joseph. (1883). Newfoundland, The Oldest British Colony. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd. p. 407.



such products as moulding, and door and window framing from large pines. Although the number of mills have fallen to two, the size of the mills has increased greatly and they produce much larger quantities of finished product. The produce of these mills is sold to firms in the Corner Brook area and to builders and contractors in other communities of Bay of Islands. It is usually delivered by truck by the producers.

The most important industry as far as forest industries are concerned in Gillams, is the production of pulp wood for the Bowater mills at Corner Brook. Local contractors and sometimes individual woodsmen obtain contracts from the company for supplying certain amounts of wood which may range from thousands of cords to fifty or a hundred cords respectively. It is usually cut in the fall, hauled to the lakes or to the bank of the large brooks in the winter. It is driven downstream in spring and directed into booms and delivered to the mill in summer. This makes it a year-round operation for a large number of men in the community. Woodsmen from other areas of Newfoundland often find employment here, especially during the cutting season.

Many men from Gillams and other communities in Bay of Islands are employed in various departments of the Bowater Pulp and Paper mills at Corner Brook. This employment and that which the mill provides through woods operations is one of the major sources of income of a very large percentage of the people.

Thus, from an economy once based on the herring and lobster fisheries, the economy of Gillams has changed to become somewhat diversified in recent years. For example, the official list of electors for 1962 lists the residents of Gillams as being employed in the following occupations; mill-wrights, electricians, machine operators, teachers, contractors, farmers, fishermen, stevedores, office clerks, carpenters,

woodsmen, sales clerks and labourers.<sup>21</sup> Except for those locally employed in farming, woods work or lumbering, the majority of people employed in other occupations or professions are employed at Corner Brook and commute by privately owned car or by bus.

### Land Ownership

Land ownership in the Bay of Islands as in other areas of the Treaty Shore had been a question much debated from the beginning of settlement until the settlement of the French Shore question in 1904. The British government was very wary of allowing any grants of land to be made because of the uncertainty of the future of settlement in the area, and also because granting tracts of land could become an additional matter of contention between the English and French. These conditions, although it retarded settlement somewhat, did not discourage it completely, and many settlers cleared rather substantial amounts of land. In 1891 the census figures show that the 6 families living in Gillams at the time were occupying 70 acres of land, 54 acres of which were improved - cleared and some under cultivation. These settlers were squatters and most of them continued to claim their lands without obtaining grants or deeds long after the restrictions against land grants were removed. The first grants were issued about 1910, and the number of grants gradually increased until most of the people owning or claiming land in Gillams have grants for it.

It is interesting to note that although as a rule grants were not issued in Bay of

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<sup>21</sup> Official List of Voters 1962, Electoral District of Humber West, Polling Division 49.

Islands, there were some exceptions. For example, the crown lands office records show that a grant of 14 acres was made to one Thomas Conway on March 9, 1888. And what is even more interesting is the fact that land was bought and sold in those days as though the various owners possessed grants for the land. Rev. Rule, on May 16, 1867, bought a store and piece of land at Curling from a Mr. Morris of St. Georges Bay for £ 18.<sup>22</sup>

As one might expect, there were many disputes over land ownership. One such dispute was recorded by Sub-Lieutenant Dawson when he visited the Humber Arm in the Pennance in 1871. He reported:

all inhabitants doing well. One complaint from a man named Montford Petitpas, relative to a piece of land which he had bought and that another man was encroaching on, as no means existed of verifying either claim, I left the matter as it was.<sup>23</sup>

It seems then that gaining possession of a particular piece of land in Bay of Islands before 1904 depended on an individual's desire to clear the land and his ability to keep others from encroaching upon it after it was cleared.

## Social Conditions

### Conditions During the Early Years of Settlement

One of the first accounts of living conditions in Bay of Islands is given by Edward Wix after his visit to the area in 1835. He compared the behaviour of the people with

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<sup>22</sup> Rule, Rev. U. Z. (1927). Reminiscences of My Life. St. John's: Dick's and Co., Ltd. p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Journal of House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1872, p. 641.

that of the untutored Indian - in fact there were acts of profligacy practised in the Bay, at which the Micmac Indians expressed horror and disgust. Excessive drinking was very common among both sexes and indeed it was not unusual to see girls of fourteen in an helpless state of intoxication. Incidents of adulterous and incestuous connections were not uncommon, profanity was the dialect, decency and delicacy the rare exceptions. Children swear at their parents and frequently struck them.<sup>24</sup>

This, according to Wix, was the situation generally in Bay of Islands at the time. However, only four years later, in 1839, Joseph Jukes visited various settlements in the Bay and from his report it would seem that there were some people or indeed some settlements where conditions were much more desirable than those described in 1835 by Wix. This can be seen from his entry for August 18-20, 1839 in which he states:

We visited one family about half way down the sound (undoubtedly Gillams since the Blanchards there were the only ones in Bay of Islands at the time) the people were more civil and intelligent than the old fellows family at the head of it - (Riverhead now Humbermouth.) Their name was Blanchard, and the old man had lived here over sixty years, having settled here before the breaking out of the American war. He had several sons that were getting married and beginning to settle around him. His house though small was neat and comfortable, and he had two or three small fields in cultivation. They were just getting in the hay ... they had very good currents, raspberries and goose berries in the garden hedges ...<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal. February - August 1835. (1836). London: Smith, Elder and Co. pp. 171-172.

<sup>25</sup> Jukes, Joseph B. (1842). Excursions in and about Newfoundland. London: John Murray Publisher. pp. 114-115.

From this account it would appear that conditions were improving. The Journal of the House of Assembly for 1869 reported; “houses are well built, people are well off and contented, no complaint.” In 1872, the population which was about evenly distributed between Roman Catholic and Protestant were reported healthy, orderly, industrious and moderately well to do. No cases of severe sickness were reported.<sup>26</sup> Such were conditions previous to the twentieth century.

The discussion of living conditions in Gillams during the twentieth century will concern itself with two distinct periods; first the depression period of the 1930s, and secondly, the period from confederation in 1949 to the present [1968].

Many residents of Gillams today [1968] feel that although times were worse during the depression years than at any other time either before or since, they were not nearly as bad as those experienced in some parts of the island. This, they attribute mainly to two reasons. First, the employment provided by the newly developed Pulp and Paper mills at Corner Brook, and the second, the presence of forests which provided not only employment in woods operations, but a good supply of wood for fuel and food in the form of wild animals. One informant explained it this way: Besides the employment in cutting of hundreds of cords of birch for spool-wood, Gillams was the base of pulp-wood operations for an independent woods contractor, Charles Parsons. Mr. Parsons, on getting a contract from the paper company would divide the amount of wood to be cut among the men and their sons, in proportion to the size of the family. Each man would agree to cut his amount and Mr. Parsons, knowing the value of the wood granted to each, would make out a list of credits and give it to the local merchant, Mr. Albert Brake. The woodsmen could go to Mr. Brake and get provisions and have

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<sup>26</sup> Journal of House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1872, p. 638.

the costs deducted from his credit rather than having to pay for them in cash. The paper company “settled up” with Mr. Parsons, the contractor, about three times a year and Mr. Parsons in turn settled up with Mr. Brake. This system was arranged so that one “settlement” was made in the fall so that Mr. Brake could buy in stock to last throughout the winter. Although the mill was on a limited production, enough contracts were obtained by Mr. Parsons to keep the men employed almost continually. As a result no person in the community was ever on government relief during the depression.

Of equal importance in helping to ease conditions during the depression were the other benefits derived from the forests in the area. First of all, it provided fuel. The value of this can be appreciated when one considers that in many areas of Newfoundland the lack of trees made it necessary for settlers to buy their fuel which was mainly coal in those days. This could be a very pressing problem and more especially during a depression. This was a problem never faced by people in the Bay of Islands area.

The presence of food, in the form of meat of animals inhabiting the forests, also provided a valuable supplement to the various species of fish which were caught in the Bay. With supplies of meat and fish readily available, only the very basic foods like flour, sugar, molasses etc. had to be bought. Given these conditions then, one can conclude that times during the depression were not really much worse than at any other period [in Gillams].

With the improvements in education and other services since the Island joined confederation in 1949, people are able to enter new fields of employment. Thus the economy has become more diversified and in turn has led to higher standards of living.

## Religion: The Establishment of the Church

Since the very beginning of settlement in Gillams the population has been almost one hundred per cent Church of England. Even though the population of Bay of Islands as a whole was reported in the late 1800s as being about evenly divided between Church of England and the Roman Catholic religions. Wix, writing in 1835, stated:

I found that this Bay had been visited by the Rev. William Bullock, in company with his excellency Sir Thomas Chocrane in 1829. He was the first clergyman, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, who had visited the place.<sup>27</sup>

Bullock, then, was the first clergyman to visit Gillams. Others followed in 1835 and 1849.

The first resident clergyman in the Bay of Islands was the Rev. U. Z. Rule who arrived on July 13, 1865 accompanied by Mr. LeGallais (later Rev. LeGallais) of Channel. During the first several years of his stay here, his time was spent mostly in visiting the various settlements in the Bay conducting both services and school classes. In 1866, under Rev. Rule's guidance a school chapel was built at John's Beach - the first in Bay of Islands. The following year, 1867, erection of the first church was started at Curling. The church, dedicated to St. Mary, and the adjoining churchyard was consecrated by Bishop Kelly on July 30, 1871. Another church was built at Meadows, a community sharing a common border with Gillams. For many years residents of Gillams attended one of these churches. However, in 1945 a school-chapel was built at Gillams and at present [1968] a new Anglican church is under construction. The north

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<sup>27</sup> Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal. February - August 1835. (1836). London: Smith, Elder and Co. p. 167.

shore of the Humber Arm was established as a separate parish about 1950 with a resident clergy at Meadows. Within the past twenty-five years two other religions or sects have made attempts to establish themselves in Gillams. In the late 1940s a family bought a farm in Gillams, settled permanently and almost immediately began to try to spread their religion, which they called - the Christian Faith. This they did by holding prayer meetings several times a week in a store which had been built on the beach. Attendance at these meetings was fairly large at first, but there were many people who were openly opposed to it and showed their disapproval by pelting the store with stones during the service. After months of this stone throwing, the group hauled their store to a new location, this time on the farm. However, by this time so few people attended the services were no longer open to the public, and no more attempts were made to convert the people to the Christian Faith religion.

The only other attempt at establishing a religion apart from the Anglican in Gillams was started in the mid 1950s when several members of the Shantymen sect from the United States bought a house and began holding prayer meetings, first for children and later for adults. There was some interest shown by a few families at the time, but this has since disappeared. The Shantymen still reside in Gillams but have gained their support in other communities and have built their church at McIvers.

Considering that it was about one hundred years between the beginning of settlement and the appointment of a permanent clergy and the establishment of the church in Bay of Islands many will ask why something was not done in this respect before - what conditions brought about a difference of a century between the establishment of settlement and the establishment of the church? According to Rev. Rule, the answer to this question was lack of funds. He wrote:

The bishop's chief difficulty in appointing a clergyman to the Bay of



Islands was lack of stipend. The S.P.G. which had given grants hitherto for the maintenance of the Newfoundland clergy had announced its inability to pay any additional grants. New increases of population led the bishop to hope that sufficient contributions toward a stipend would be made by the people to warrant an appointment.<sup>28</sup>

However, it would seem that settlers were willing to give “free labour” in the erection of school-chapels or churches but gave little money.

As Rule pointed out,

the main cost of the church erection (St. Mary’s) was defrayed out of a gift of £ 300, given for the purpose by a Miss Lampriere of Jersey. Some of this money was used for the purchase of material for school-chapels at John’s Beach and Bonne Bay.<sup>29</sup>

The results of this lack of established church in the area for such a long period had several distinct effects upon the life of the people. It was without doubt one reason why the people were so unrefined in their behaviour as described earlier. Mr. Blanchard (oldest resident of Gillams today [1968]) recalls that even after 1900, some thirty years after the establishment of the church in the area, it had little influence on the people. For example, church feasts were not observed in any special way. In fact, he recalls having had a quarrel with a minister once over a barrel-making “frolic” (bee) that had been planned for a particular day which turned out to be Good Friday. Although the clergy was very opposed to it, the men could not be persuaded to change their plans

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<sup>28</sup> Rule, Rev. U. Z. (1927). Reminiscences of My Life. St. John’s: Dick’s and Co., Ltd. p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

and the frolic was held on Good Friday. However, this indifference of church feasts decreased as visits by members of the clergy increased, until most people felt inclined to observe the wishes of the church.

One report has gone so far as to state that the lack of established church in the area during this hundred year period discouraged settlers from coming to settle.<sup>30</sup>

### Education

When Rev. Rule came to Bay of Islands in 1865 he found no formal attempt being made to educate the people. He remarked that the people although ignorant (in the sense that they knew little of religion) were most religiously disposed and ready to be taught. There was one gentleman, Mr. Maurice Derigan (Darrigan today) who did much to help people learn to read and write. Rule reported; "I was told that all of these original settlers who could either read or write had learnt it either directly from him (Mr. Derigan), or from some one whom he had taught."<sup>31</sup>

The following year, 1866, a school-chapel was built at John's Beach, and others were later built at Birchy Cove (Curling) and Meadows. With the erection of churches in these areas the school-chapels were used solely for school classes. Until 1946 pupils from Gillams attended the school at Meadows, but few of them attended school after they were big enough to work. As a result, until compulsory school attendance laws were enforced the average school leaving age was about 12 or 13 years.

In 1946 a one-room school opened at Gillams with an enrollment of

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<sup>30</sup> Bronnan, Rev. M. (1948). Pioneer History of St. George's Diocese. Toronto: Mission Press. p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Rule, Rev. U. Z. (1927). Reminiscences of My Life. St. John's: Dick's and Co., Ltd. p. 27.

approximately twenty pupils. This school has been enlarged twice and has three classrooms at present [1968]. A regional high school is presently under construction in Gillams and is scheduled to open in September, 1968. This school will serve high-school students from all communities on the north shore of the Humber Arm. As can be seen, much has been lacking in the field of education in this area in the past. Until recently most people felt that an education was not really needed since most of the young men became either fishermen or woodsmen and the young women worked chiefly as domestics. The lack of educational facilities was not considered to be a problem by either the people or the government. As a result of this indifference it is only reasonable to expect that the standard of education received was very low. It is only in recent years, with a new general increase of interest in education that students are beginning to improve.

#### Transportation and Communication

Until very recently transportation in the Bay of Islands area was exclusively by water. During the early years of settlement and indeed until about 1900 there were few engines and boats were therefore rowed or driven by sail. There was no passenger service linking it with other areas of the Island, but passage could usually be obtained on trading vessels to and from the Bay of Islands.

In 1905, a south-west costal service was inaugurated. The S.S. Prospero left St. John's every alternate Tuesday, and called at various places along the south coast and terminated at Birchy Cove, Bay of Islands. People from the Humber Arm wishing transportation to ports along the south coast or St. John's could connect with the S.S.

Prospero at Birchy Cove. Several years earlier a Bay service was operated when a vessel, the George L, owned by a firm in Birchy Cove, left that community and called at all the various communities in Bay of Islands carrying passengers and mail. This was discontinued after several years when people began to own their own motor boats and thus did not use such a service as that offered by the George L.

After confederation with Canada two costal services to Bay of Islands were established - the St. John's to Corner Brook service (via Straits of Belle Isle), and the Lewisport to Corner Brook service. These two services still exist [1968] and operate from about June to December of each year.

People from the outer Bay of Islands wishing to travel by train also connect with their train at Corner Brook.

By 1959 the Newfoundland government had built a road along the north shore of the Humber Arm and extended it to the lower Humber River. In 1955 the Ballam Bridge over the river was opened, linking the north shore of the Humber Arm with Corner Brook by road. Thus travel by car or bus has become the most important means of transportation in the last decade. A bus franchise has been granted and busses run between Gillams and Corner Brook several times daily.

Telephone and telegraph communications in this area of Bay of Islands leaves much to be desired. Until 1967 each community along the north shore had only several Canadian National telegraph phones. These phones were rented out to private householders and other residents using them paid a fee. In the summer of 1967 the Avalon Telephone Company began the installation of a complete telephone system in the Humber Arm. This will give the area much improved communications and is due to be completed early in 1968.

## Postal Services

Like most other areas of Newfoundland the first form of mail service was that offered by trading or fishing vessels. This was a very unreliable “system” and delays, often of months or whole seasons were not uncommon. From reports it would seem that Indian letter carriers were employed to carry mail between such places as Bay of Islands, Bonne Bay, St. George’s Bay and Channel. Rule, writing from Birchy Cove to St. John’s on February 14, 1872, indicates this:

Yesterday I received a letter from you dated December 18<sup>th</sup>, and I have this good news to tell you that the stamp put on it brought it all the way to Bay of Islands without any additional charge. We are it seems, fairly within range of the post office; so that instead of paying an Indian letter carrier a dollar for each letter from the nearest post office at Channel, now we have a post office here and another at Bonne Bay. The postage from here to St. John’s is three cents, but there are no postage stamps here yet ...

The despatch of letters just spoken of was the first despatch of “government” mail we have ever had in winter in Bay of Islands.<sup>32</sup>

By 1905 there were several post offices listed in the Bay of Islands. Those listed were at the following places; Birchy Cove, Bakan Cove\*, Bateau Cove\*, Benois Cove, Cape Gregory, Child’s Point, Clarke’s Cove\*, Coake’s Cove (now Cook’s Cove), Crow

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 38

Head, Apsey Beach, Ballentine Cove\*, and Broom's Bottom.<sup>33</sup>

It is quite possible that some of these places, although listed in the directory for the year 1905, did not have post offices. There are people who can remember those places in 1905 who say that no post office existed in some of them. The nearest listed post office to Gillams at that time was the one at Apsey Beach, about one mile away by boat. No indication is given as to how often mail was despatched between the various post offices, but as mentioned earlier a boat carrying passengers around the Bay was in operation between Curling and other communities calling at each several times a week. Mail was usually carried if there was any.

During the 1930s two mailmen were employed, one for each side of the Humber Arm. A Mr. William House of Gillams was the mailman for the north shore. It was his duty to carry the mail from Curling to settlements along the north shore. Mr. House usually rowed the distance in summer and walked over the ice in the winter, carrying the mail on his back. There was very little mail up to this time and often Mr. House had to walk from Curling to Cox's Cove in Middle Arm, a distance of over twenty miles, with just one letter. As there were few communities with post offices, Mr. House usually delivered the mail directly to the addressee. This type of service continued until the early 1940s when the amount of mail delivered made it necessary for the mailman to travel by dog-team during winter. Post offices were now opened in all communities except Gillams, which it was felt, was close enough to Meadows to have one post office for the two communities. The mailman was now a Mr. Janes from Cox's Cove. After

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<sup>33</sup> A Yearbook and Almanac of Newfoundland 1905. St. John's: J. W. Withers, King's Printer. pp. 50 - 125.

\* places not known today [1968].

only two or three years, the job of mailman passed to a Mr. Noseworthy, also of Cox's Cove. Instead of dogs, he used a horse to haul the mail during the winter months.

With the opening of the road and bridge over the Humber in 1955 there came some improvement in the postal service. Up to this time mail had been delivered from Corner Brook just once a week, but it was now extended to twice a week. The new mailman appointed, Mr. Wells, now delivered the mail by truck the whole year round. A post office was also opened at Gillams about this time.

In 1964, a new mailman was employed, a Mr. House of Gillams, and mail service extended to three deliveries from the general post office in Corner Brook per week. This was changed in the summer of 1967 to a daily, except Sunday, service.

### Civil Law

Until 1852 the Newfoundland legislature had held the right to appoint magistrates for the French Shore. However, in that year the British government withdrew this right and for the next half-century there was little civil law exercised in the Bay of Islands. Missionaries to the Bay realized that this was one of the most urgent requirements of the area. For example, one such visitor writing back to Rev. Mullock in St. John's on November 29, 1863 informed him; "It would be most desirable that the government of St. John's do something toward establishing some sort of civil authority and something for the cause of education on this coast."<sup>34</sup>

In 1872 the Newfoundland legislature demanded the restoration to the Newfoundland government of the right to appoint magistrates on the French Shore.

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<sup>34</sup> Bronnan, Rev. M. (1948). Pioneer History of St. George's Diocese. Toronto: Mission Press. p. 29.

They argued that the absence of any recognized jurisdiction meant insecurity of life and property and loss of revenue owing to the prevalence of smuggling. They asserted that the only effective remedy lay in the removal of the restrictions on the appointment of magistrates and on the granting of land for mining and agriculture.

Governor Hill, who was then in London, was consulted and he advised the appointment of three magistrates, two of them from the west coast and ... [Page 71 of author's original manuscript is missing. Consequently, details contained therein are omitted from this document.]

Justices of the peace who visited the area felt that it was not now in his jurisdiction and so did nothing to settle any cases that may be outstanding when they visited the Bay. This occurred in 1873 even after Mr. Carter requested help from Justices of the Peace on board the H.M. ships Eclipse and Swallow. This system was added to by 1881 when the whole machinery of government consisting of stipendiary magistrates with the powers of district court judges, of constables, of sub-collector of customs, of post offices and commissioners for issuing the means process was inaugurated.

Further steps were taken to establish civil law when members of the Newfoundland Ranger Force were stationed in the area in the 1930s. A member of this force was appointed for the north shore of the Humber Arm and he took up residence in Gillams. When Newfoundland joined confederation the RCMP took over the duties of the Ranger Force in policing the area. With this change in public forces the resident police in Gillams was removed and a rural detachment [was] formed to handle [the] affairs of the communities in the Humber Arm.



## Organizations

The only organizations active in Gillams are those sponsored by the Anglican Church, which include the WA (women's auxiliary), the BAC (Brotherhood of Anglican Churchmen) and the AYPAs (Anglican Young People's Association). These are very active in church and community work.

Several years ago a 4-H club was organized in GILLAMS but after only a year or two of operation it was discontinued.

Although there is no chapter of the L.O.L. (Orange Lodge) in Gillams, several men became members of the Corner Brook Chapter. Many residents of the community are also members of the Co-operative Society and various labour unions, all having headquarters in Corner Brook.

### Relationship Between Bay of Islands and St. John's

For various reasons the relationship between Bay of Islands and St. John's was never as close as that between St. John's and settlements in other areas of the island. Probably the greatest reason for this is the fact [that] nearly all of the fish produced in the area went to Canadian or United States markets rather than to overseas markets through St. John's merchants as did much of what was produced elsewhere. In some cases vessels from Bay of Islands carried their products to the Canadian and American ports while in others these ports sent vessels to Bay of Islands to bring back the fish. Thus a close relationship developed between the fishermen in Bay of Islands and buyers in these ports, rather than with the merchants of St. John's.

Many residents of Gillams recall that such things as furniture, headstones and in

later years gasoline engines came from such ports as Boston, Halifax and Bridgewater. For example, Mr. Blanchard remembers that his grandfather's headstone (one referred to at the very beginning of this paper) was bought at Halifax around 1900 and cost \$12.00 at the time. [See Picture Gallery, [Heritage Trail](#) on Town of Gillams website - <http://gillams.net/>]

Others recall how in the 1920s and 1930s a Mr. Carter from Nova Scotia came to the Bay of Islands and started business in certain areas. He employed men to clear large tracts of land and grow crops, one such farm being cleared in Gillams. Besides these operations he also bought any herring that the fishermen were unable to sell, either because of lack of markets or lack of means of getting them to market. Such conditions favoured close relations with Nova Scotia.

However, one must not conclude from this that Bay of Islands had no connections with St. John's. Indeed, one report states that around 1868 several families had recently come out from St. John's to settle in Bay of Islands.<sup>36</sup>

In 1905 a costal service between St. John's and Bay of Islands was inaugurated. This in itself indicates at least some business was carried on between the two areas. In that same year, Ayres and Sons Ltd. of St. John's under a branch known as "Law, Union and Crown Insurance Co.", had agents in Bay of Islands at McIvers, Meadows and Mill Brook (now Corner Brook). But even with these connections, the much closer connection and relationship of Bay of Islands and indeed the whole west coast with the Maritime Provinces and the United States was and still is one of its distinguishing characteristics.

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<sup>36</sup> Bronnan, Rev. M. (1948). Pioneer History of St. George's Diocese. Toronto: Mission Press. p. 29.

## Politics

### [English - French Relations Until 1904]

From the beginning of settlement shortly after the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the French gave up their claim to rights on the Treaty Shore, the area was one of almost continual negotiation, treaty making and disputes. Although English sovereignty had been clearly established by the Treaty of Utrecht and others which revived it, the King of England in the Declaration of Versailles promised to take measures for preventing his subjects from interrupting in any manner by their competition in the fishery of the French during the temporary exercise of it which is granted to them upon the coast of Newfoundland - but will for this purpose cause the fixed settlement to be removed.<sup>37</sup>

This meant that if the French chose to fish in a particular bay or harbour already settled by the English, the English would have to refrain from fishing; and furthermore, if the French could show that the fixed settlement interfered in any way with their fishery they would be forced to leave that particular harbour. Such conditions were likely to cause disagreement between English and French. The Treaty Shore was without government at the time and the same type of anarchy prevailed in this area as that which had prevailed two centuries ago on the east coast of the island.

Efforts were made to reach a compromise and as stated earlier the period from 1844 to 1904 was one of almost continuous negotiations. In 1857 a scheme of partition

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<sup>37</sup> Rogers, J. D. (1911). A Historical Geography of the British Colonies Vol. V., Part IV, Newfoundland. p. 218.

of the area was accepted by both parties. Fishing and the use of the Strand for fishing purposes were to be exclusively French on the north and northeast coasts and sat five ports on the west coast, the most southerly of these being a point in Bay of Islands. Just as both parties were beginning to settle down, the quarrel over the lobster fishery began, resulting in more years of friction which at times threatened to cause war between England and France. It is quite possible that war was only averted because no attempts were made to force the French fishermen to obey the many laws concerning such things as seines, nets, closed seasons on fishing, Sunday observance and the like.

Under an arrangement agreed upon in 1884 the France withdrew her claim to an exclusive fishery and recognized concurrent rights of Newfoundlanders to fish everywhere on the coast from Cape St. John to Cape Ray, on certain conditions. These conditions were that they did not molest or interfere with French fishermen; second, the French surrendered their claim to fish in rivers except at the mouth as far as the water remained salt. They agreed that all fixed settlement then existing on the French Shore were not to be disturbed, that Newfoundlanders in the future be allowed to erect fixed settlement of any description except fishing establishments in certain areas of the Treaty Shore. The French, in giving up these substantial rights, were given the right to police the waters of the Treaty Shore. This right gave French cruisers the power, in absence of British cruisers, to police Newfoundlanders into obeying fishing regulations. The next issue and the one which eventually led to the final settlement of the issue was the Bait Laws. In 1904 the Newfoundland government refused to relax the Bait Law, France consented to enter into the agreement which once and for all

abolished the grievances and difficulties caused by the “French Shore question.”

It is very difficult and perhaps impossible to get a clear picture of what conditions were really like on the Treaty Shore during those years of treaty making and alleged treaty breaking. Lord Birkenhead writing on the subject said:

According to the English contention their (treaties and agreements) cumulative effect was to give the French a concurrent right of fishery with themselves, on the other hand, by the French that her subjects enjoyed an exclusive right of fishery along the so-called French Shore. It may be said at once that the course of English diplomacy was almost uniformly weak, and was in fact such as to land no small countenance to the French contention. Thus, for many years, it was the policy of the Home government to discourage the colonists from exercising their right which was always alleged in theory to be concurrent.<sup>38</sup>

There are few who would disagree with this explanation of the English and French positions. Then again, reports of the various naval commanders in the area during the period tend to be misleading in that one year reports indicate that English-French relations are good, and the next year or even a further report of the same year, indicate a relationship of constant conflict. For instance, Commander Knowles, writing in 1872, reported; “... another man in Bay of Islands informed me that a Frenchman said that he would enter his house and pull down the beams if he wanted wood to repair his fish

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<sup>38</sup> Birkenhead, Lord. (1920). The Story of Newfoundland. London: Horace Marshall and Son. pp. 176 - 177.

stage, and if he could find none handy.”<sup>39</sup> However, he goes on to say:

these occurrences were not frequent; as a rule the English and French live together on the best of terms, but in the heart of all the settlers there is a feeling that they are placed in a very anomalous position, and one that ought to be remedied.<sup>40</sup>

Captain Hoskins reporting the next year, 1873, said:

The only French establishment in the Bay of Islands is at Petit Port or Little Harbour, where there is one room; They have as yet only interfered with English fishing at the outskirts of the Bay, but threaten both here and at Bonne Bay to drive all the people off the shore next year.<sup>41</sup>

Just two years later, in 1875, Commander Howarth reported; “A good feeling exists here between the English and French fishermen, the latter occasionally furnishing bait to our people when it has been scarce.”<sup>42</sup>

If there is one thing that these reports have in common it is the fact that each oversimplifies the situation and therefore neither gives a true evaluation of it. For example, to expect a Frenchman to enter an Englishman’s house and tear it down because he cannot find timber to repair his stages seems very unlikely when one considers the amount of timber that grew to the very edge of the water in Bay of

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<sup>39</sup> Journal of House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1872. p. 634.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 634.

<sup>41</sup> Journal of House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1873. p. 419.

<sup>42</sup> Journal of House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1875, p. 750.

Islands. One can not deny that the French may have made such threats, but it is very unlikely that they were the most important things to be reported. The fact that bait was interchanged between the English and French is some indication that the relationship between them was hardly as tense at times, as many historians show it to be.

### Politics Since 1904

Because of the financial prosperity which followed the first World War there was little interest in politics or political parties in Bay of Islands. However, during the depression which followed this period people in the area became aware that only the establishment of the pulp and paper industry in Corner Brook had saved them from very hard times indeed. They thus looked with favour upon the politician who was responsible (in their opinion) for the easing of the situation - Richard Squires (later Sir Richard Squires). Even after he was forced to resign his position for a period, popular opinion in the Humber district was still in his favour. When the riots in the House of Assembly caused an election it resulted in a landslide victory for the opposition group led by F.C. Alderdice. However, of the two seats held by the liberals, one was the Humber district. Alderdice was very unpopular and when his party formed the new government, there was a decline of interest in politics by many people in this district. This apathy continued somewhat through the period of Commission Government and did not end until the elections which brought Newfoundland into confederation. Since that time the Humber district (now Humber West) [1968] in which Gillams is located, the liberals have been elected. However, liberal support had fallen to such a small majority by the mid 1960s that the premier himself found it necessary to become the candidate

for the district in the last election. The vote in Gillams was about evenly divided between the Liberal and New Democratic Party. The Progressive Conservative party did not have a candidate in the district.

In questioning some of the residents of Gillams about certain influences which have tended in the past to sway voting, one finds that the merchants were the greatest single influence until recently. Some men recall going to Mr. Jim Bagg's store in Curling for supplies and being told by Mr. Bagg, "Mr. so-and-so is the man to vote for in this election if you want good government." He added, "Anyone who don't vote for him will get no nets out of this store in the spring." But the situation did not stop there. Possibly the very same day that Mr. Bagg was visited, a man might also have reason to call at Mr. Albert Brake's store [in Meadows] for provisions, and would mention that Mr. Bagg had recommended a certain candidate to him. If Mr. Brake didn't agree but favoured a different one, he would usually inform him that the other candidate had proved he was the best by giving a couple of hundred dollars to be "worked up" on the road between Meadows and Gillams. Anyone wishing a job when the road work began was expected to vote for the candidate who provided the money. The voter was thus torn between two influences. He could vote the way Mr. Bagg suggested and be assured of getting nets in the spring or else he could vote for Mr. Brake's choice and get a chance to make a bit of money. Most people say that they almost always voted for the candidate that would offer such employment but they still managed to get the nets they required from Mr. Bagg.

As stated previously the most popular politician of all times as far as the majority of voters in Gillams is concerned was Sir Richard Squires, the man who, in their words,



“put the hum on the Humber.” The most unpopular politician of all times was F.C Alderdice because they feel “he was too tied up in his ropewalk in St. John’s to carry out the business of government.”

## Conclusions

It is not meant that the discussions of topics dealt with in this paper is taken as complete. Many aspects are too complex to make thorough discussion here possible. This is especially true of the French Shore question.

From the sources studied it seems quite clear that Gillams was one of the first permanent settlements in Bay of Islands. Its first settlers were the Blanchards who came from Dorchester, the Parks who came from Britain by way of Burin and the Brakes. Settlement began shortly before the outbreak of the American war but for many reasons, chiefly the political unrest caused by the French Shore question, population increase tended to be very slow. Only since the establishment of the pulp and paper industry in Corner Brook has population in the area increased substantially.

For many years the herring and lobster fisheries were the basis of the economy of Bay of Islands. Unlike the east and south coasts, the cod fishery was never very important in this bay, but served only as a supplement to the herring and lobster fisheries in much the same way as the seal had supplemented the cod fishery on the east coast. In recent years the economy has become more diversified.

During the first hundred years of settlement little was done to establish the church, schools, means of transportation and communication, civil law and the many other services considered necessary if desirable living standards are to be achieved

One of the most significant characteristics of the west coast and Bay of Islands area is its close relationship with the maritime provinces of Canada and the United States, which tends to distinguish it from the rest of Newfoundland. From the beginning of settlement until 1904 the main political issue was the French Shore question - the question of English and French rights in the area. With the settlement of this issue and a renewed interest in politics after the general apathy which followed World War I, the area voted for the policies of Sir Richard Squires.

The people in this district have continued to vote liberal, even in 1932, when only one other district elected a liberal candidate.

Although living standards in the area have improved greatly in the past decade or so, there is still much more that could be done. With proper action and planning on the part of both the people of the area and the government, there is much that can be done in the way of increased employment and higher living standards in the area.

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