

Prologue

Understanding the Territory

AS IS COMMON across the island of Newfoundland, the community of Flat Bay is comprised of many smaller areas, all of which have their own unique names and history. It is important to recognize that while this prologue outlines several sections that comprise the community of Flat Bay, political borders emerge from a Eurocentric understanding of territory. On the contrary, stories from the community that describe the region typically refer to significant landmarks and natural features instead of intangible borders. For the purposes of this book, a map defining the political borders of what is now known as Flat Bay is included alongside stories that further define the area. Flat Bay was given its name from visiting fishing fleets because of the calm waters, sheltered by the strip of land known as Sandy Point; the calm waters later became St. George's Harbour.

Using Figure 1 as a reference point, from east to west, Flat Bay can be broken into Flat Bay East, Birchy Brook, Flat Bay West, St. Teresa, Bank Head, Journois, Flavin's Gulch (Middle Brook), Barry's Brook, and finally Fischell's River. Many of the areas that constitute Flat Bay have been named after families that have either lived in or somehow made use of that area. This prologue dives briefly into the significance of each section of Flat Bay and the families that have inhabited this area for centuries.

Flat Bay East, locally known as Muddy Hole, received its name from the nearby estuary with a muddy bottom that played host to eels in late fall and winter. Less than a mile west of Muddy Hole is Birchy Brook, also called “the Webb’s” in the late 1800s up to the turn of the century due to John Webb’s family occupying the area. Many other families, such as the Sheppards, Preshyons and Samms, also lived there as they married into the Webb family.

Continuing west is Flat Bay West. Alternate names were Mitchell’s Brook and Young’s Cove, used only to identify fishing locations that specific families used. Other identifiable locations in that area are Tom DuBasque’s Brook and Joe DuBasque’s Brook with the DuBasque family as namesakes. Next, Bank Head received its name from a peak of land used as a landmark by visiting fishing fleets. The parcel of land later became the

property of the Cormier family.

On the way to Bank Head there is a one-mile extension of road that is known as St. Teresa and also gives access to the railroad station. St. Teresa was home to the railroad station that serviced St. Teresa, Bank Head and Journois. Journois was named after Louisa Journeaux, a 17-year-old woman from the island of Jersey near England. Next was Flavin’s Gulch (later Middle Brook), named after Flavin Young, and Barry’s Brook. Barry’s Brook derived from the Barry family who lived there in that area.

None of the watercourses within this region amounted to any more than a dribble of water, all producing only small trout. Only during the spring break-up of snow or a torrential rain were any of

The story of Louisa is still told in the community. She disappeared from England on April 18, 1866, after going on a boat ride. Louisa drifted for three days without food or water until being rescued by Captain Edouard Landgren of the ship Tombola, heading to St. Pierre and Miquelon, which landed on Sandy Point. Her friend Jules Farne had been arrested and charged with her disappearance at the time but was released due to lack of evidence. On May 10, 1886, a telegram was sent to her family to let them know she was okay. Journois Brook was named in honour of her.



Figure 1: Map of Flat Bay, Newfoundland, by Rory McInnes, Flat Bay Land Use and Occupancy Research

these brooks impossible to cross. The largest river to the west, and the western border of the region around Flat Bay, is Fischell's River.

Figure 2 shows everything west of Turf Point, originally known as Indian Cove, to Jackatar Point, which was formerly referred to as Flat Bay.* Flat Island is now considered Jeneat Island, or Gents Island. More research would have to be conducted to verify if this was named after Chief Jeannot Pequidalouet.†

Understanding the Families

For the purposes of this book, the following chapters and stories will focus on the land east of Fischell's River and west of Flat Bay Brook as these were considered the boundaries of Flat Bay/St. Teresa. Occupying this territory for years were families, predominately the Benois, Sheppards, Legges, Whites, Mitchells, Cormiers, Preshyons, Perriers, Youngs, Webbs and Kings. These families occupied Flat Bay with strong Mi'kmaw roots and would self-identify as French Indians or English Indians in various census reports throughout the years.‡ Their identification was based on the language

* According to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (1982), a "jackatar" can be defined as "a Newfoundlander of mixed French and Micmac [Mi'kmaw] Indian descent; [or] the speech of such a person ... [E.g.,] 'intermixed with all these [Highland Scotch, the French Acadians and the English in Bay St George] were a number of Micmacs and half-breeds, known locally as Jack-o-Tars.'" This definition clearly demonstrates the negative connotations given to the name or nickname jackatar that was used for people in the communities around Bay St. George.

† Dennis A. Bartels and Olaf Uwe Janzen, "Micmac Migration to Western Newfoundland," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 10, no. 1 (1990): 72-96, cjns.brandonus.ca/wp-content/uploads/10-1-bartels.pdf.

‡ The term Indigenous will be used in this book as a blanket term referring to peoples that historically lived on the land. However, Stephen Greymorning, an Indigenous scholar, highlights in a 2004 report that several other terminologies such as Indian or Native are also used (in the Indian Act, for example), with mixed connotations. The term Indigenous (with an uppercase "I") has been growing in acceptance internationally.