

The Fishery and Settlement Patterns in Newfoundland and Labrador: 17th -18th Century Trinity Bay Internal Migration

Student Information: Internal Migration at Trinity Bay

As the Island of Newfoundland became more and more populated by Western Europeans, popular locations like Trinity, Bay de Verde, Grates Cove, and Scilly Cove (now Winterton) in Trinity Bay became overcrowded. Settlers searched for other favourable locations that could support their growing families and provide sheltered harbours and rich fishing grounds. It was a common practice in Newfoundland for migrants to travel about 20 kilometres to temporary winter homes to obtain food, wood supplies, and building materials at the bottom of harbours and inlets. Residents of Grates Cove and Scilly Cove often crossed Trinity Bay to cut timbers for boat building at Random Sound. Some families in Trinity looked to areas like Heart's Ease and Random as being good fishing grounds with an abundance of wood supplies. The Newfoundland Directory, 1871, describes Random as being "...very fertile, but is almost unoccupied. The inhabitants are engaged in lumbering, farming, and salmon fishing in conjunction with cod fishing..." This alone explains why a number of the residents of Bay de Verde, Grates Cove and Scilly Cove eventually migrated from the north side of Trinity Bay to the Southwest Arm area. Family names like Vey, Green, Hiscock, Martin, Shaw, Avery, Jacobs, Drodge, King, Benson, and Frost can be traced to Grates Cove, Bay de Verde and Winterton. Families like the Spurrells, Pitcher, Dodge, Langer, and Baker also

moved from the Trinity area to seek out new opportunities and prosperities for their expanding families. Below you will find three surnames that came to the shores of Trinity Bay and became internal migrants.

Case Study 1: The Greens

The Greens arrived in Trinity in the 1700's. Early St. Paul's Church records state that John and Agnes Green had two young sons who died there in 1761. A son John Green married Mary Dewey of Bonavista in 1775. John and Mary settled in Trinity and made a living building and operating a metal forge to supply the demands of a growing fishing industry. John and Agnes had several other children and one of them, Daniel, married Jane Bailey in 1794. Jane had three children from a previous relationship. These were adopted and baptized into the Green surname at Scilly Cove (now Winterton). The population of Trinity was expanding rapidly and it appears that Daniel and Jane moved from Trinity to seek a new life for their family at Scilly Cove, a smaller fishing community on the opposite side of Trinity Bay. Here the children grew and eventually entered into the fishery. Daniel and Jane had a Grandson Levi, who married Rachael Adey in 1854. They had several children, all of whom were born in Scilly Cove. Levi and his cousin, John, often crossed Trinity Bay to harvest the forest for materials that could be used in construction of boats, homes, wharves, and stages back home in Scilly Cove. In addition, St. Jones Without offered good shelter, fishing grounds, and fertile soil. Around the 1870s, Levi and John moved their families permanently to start a new community that was recorded in the 1870s census as St. James but quickly became known as St. Jones Without. The move allowed their families to have easy access to the natural resources. The community of St. Jones remained an active fishing community from the 1870s until 1950s. Due to its isolation, however, the community lacked medical and educational facilities. To receive emergency

help during stormy weather, a person had to walk to the nearest community of Little Heart's Ease. The surrounding hills limited communication and mail was often sporadic. With the beginning of roads in Newfoundland, the community was deemed impossible to reach by road. The families voluntarily left the inlet by the early 1950s. The great-grandson of Levi, William and his young wife, Olive moved their growing family to her hometown of Little Heart's Ease. Here, William continued to fish in the waters of Southwest Arm, Trinity Bay. He often returned to the abandoned community of St. Jones Without to fish during the summer months.

Case Study 2: The Veys

The Veys of Trinity Bay were a family from New Ross, Ireland, which left that country under unusual circumstances. In New Ross, the family surname was Rice. Michael Rice and his wife, Sarah, had several children and times were very hard. Sarah had just given birth to Catherine, with the assistance of a mid-wife, Mary Browne. Mary and Michael Browne were friends of Sarah and Mick.

During an early summer's evening in 1836, the family received a loud knock upon the door. A gang of men demanded to see Michael Browne. Because the gang members were bearing arms, Mick quickly grabbed a weapon and, along with Michael, confronted the local men. Both Michael and Mick were forced down the road and into the river. Here they both were killed. Fearing for their lives the women quickly gathered underneath the house and developed a plan to escape their husbands' killers.

Sarah Rice, sons James, John and youngest daughter, Catherine, and their friend Mary Browne fled to England. Once in England they arranged passage on a ship traveling to Newfoundland. Before crossing the Atlantic, all of them reached a decision to change their names. It was agreed that the surname would become Vye and that their religion

should be changed to Protestant. Mary would also become known as Granny Elizabeth. With their new identities in place it was vowed that no one would reveal the family secret. Sarah would locate her two oldest daughters who were living at Grates Cove upon their arrival in Newfoundland. However, while crossing the Atlantic, Sarah passed away and her infant, Catherine, died before reaching Newfoundland.

Upon their arrival in Newfoundland, the remaining three slowly made their way up the Conception Bay shoreline until they reached Grates Cove. Here James and John established themselves in the fishing industry and married local women from Grates Cove. James married Lavinia Stoyles, while John married Margaret Benson. James, along with his two older sons, started to cross Trinity Bay and established a sawmill at Long Beach to supply materials to Grates Cove and Trinity. During this time period, Grates Cove population continued to grow and land for houses, stages, wharves and fishing were become more difficult to obtain. Families had already started to move to the Southwest Arm area. In the summer of 1865, James and Lavinia moved their family, along with Granny Elizabeth, to Long Beach. Here James felt his family had everything - an abundance of land, forest, fertile soil, and rich fishing grounds. In 1868, John, who had remained in Grates Cove, drowned at sea hunting seals. His death was about one year after his brother James.

Granny Elizabeth had outlived her four Rice allies who had left Ireland with her. On October 22, 1874, Granny Elizabeth passed away at the age of one hundred and two years. Her only request before her death was that she be buried at Grates Cove. Her body had to be "salted-in" until fair weather would allow its removal to Grates Cove for burial. The fear of reprisal did not end with their deaths, however. The family secret had been so well kept that it lasted another four generations before it was finally divulged.

Case Study 3: The Spurrells

The earliest records indicate that a John Spurrell from Bath, Somerset married a Mary Cutler from Taunton, Somerset in 1747. They traveled from England to Newfoundland around 1748 to likely serve as servants to John Masters of Poole and Michael Ballard of Ireland. John and Mary's grandson Moses was born in Trinity in 1803. It was Moses's marriage to Honour Sexton in 1828 and the resulting family, most of who were born in Trinity, which prompted his movement to search for a new place to raise his family. The family's first movement was to a location close to Trinity called Sooley's Cove in 1840. However, by 1845, he heard of the rich fishing grounds at Little Heart's Ease. He likely visited this area with his older sons in 1844 and witnessed the excellent fishing grounds but there was little land available at the community of Little Heart's Ease. This likely caused him to build a summer's tilt at Butter Cove where there were no settlers. This location was at a greater distance from the fishing grounds than Little Heart's Ease and nearby Gooseberry Cove but it offered lots of land for his family. Church records indicate that he likely moved permanently to Butter Cove in the spring of 1845. It was not until the birth of his youngest child, Joshua, that the community was officially listed as Butter Cove.



