

# "Une Grande Liaison": French Fishermen from Île Royale on the Coast of Southwestern Newfoundland, 1714-1766 — A Preliminary Survey

Olaf Uwe Janzen

Volume 3, Number 2, Fall 1987

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds3\\_2art01](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds3_2art01)

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (print)

1715-1430 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Janzen, O. U. (1987). "Une Grande Liaison": French Fishermen from Île Royale on the Coast of Southwestern Newfoundland, 1714-1766 — A Preliminary Survey. *Newfoundland Studies*, 3(2), 183–200.

# “Une Grande Liaison”: French Fishermen from Île Royale on the Coast of Southwestern Newfoundland, 1714-1766 —A Preliminary Survey

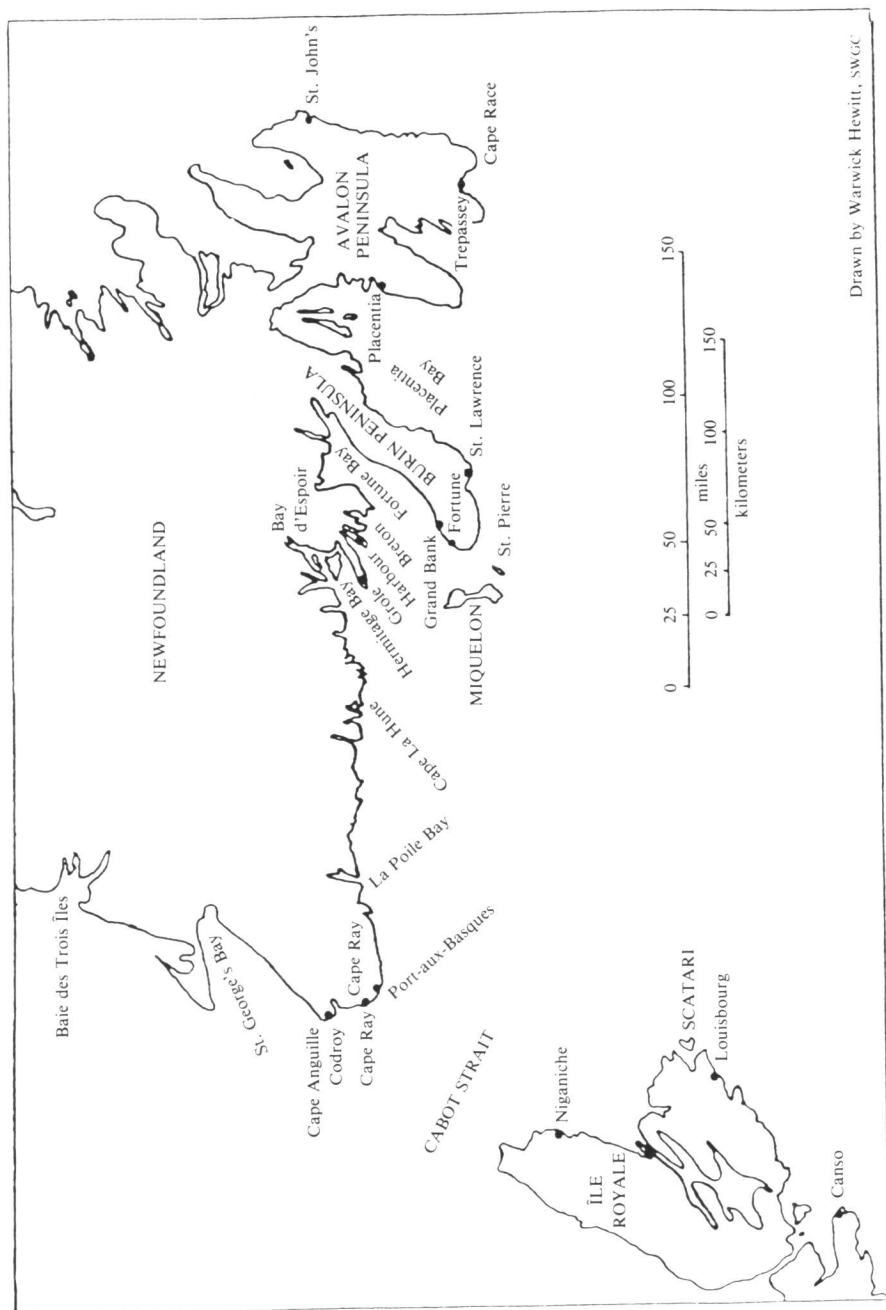
OLAF UWE JANZEN

THE SETTLEMENT HISTORY of Newfoundland's South Coast is rarely extended any further than the late 18th century, and almost invariably affirms that the earliest residents were English or Channel Islanders.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, few Newfoundland historians seem conscious of the existence after 1720 of French inhabitants at several locations on the South Coast, from Grole westward to Cape Ray and beyond to Codroy Island.<sup>2</sup> Those who are, tend to accept contemporary official perceptions of the inhabitants as outlaws and renegades, eking out a marginal existence in a part of the island which was safely beyond the effective jurisdiction of French and English authorities.<sup>3</sup> Historians who study the French régime at Louisbourg on Île Royale between 1713 and 1758 are somewhat more familiar with the French inhabitants at Cape Ray, if only because their continued presence there was a frequent irritant to the authorities at Louisbourg. However, that familiarity remains superficial, and little attention is paid to the number, distribution, or complexity of the resident population.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the historians of Île Royale, like their Newfoundland counterparts, seem willing to accept the prevailing official perception of the settlers as renegades and deserters. The disappearance of these inhabitants in 1744, when France and England went to war, seems to confirm the view that the Cape Ray settlement was an extremely ephemeral phenomenon, a curiosity perhaps, having

little or no significance in the social or economic history of the region.

In the sense that the Cape Ray inhabitants had only a marginal impact on the history both of Île Royale and of Newfoundland during the 18th century, this conclusion may be justified. Yet the persistence of their settlements in the face of French and British opposition surely merits some attention. Moreover there is evidence that some of the inhabitants had previous associations with Newfoundland's South Coast, albeit closer to Hermitage Bay. These associations developed during the period before 1713, when the region was under French control and the colony at Plaisance provided France with an anchor for her North Atlantic cod fishery. If this association can be confirmed and amplified, it may suggest that a distinct Newfoundland type had already emerged by the end of the French régime on the island.<sup>5</sup> The movement of French fishermen-inhabitants from Île Royale to southwestern Newfoundland after 1720 may not represent a migration so much as a homecoming. Finally, the way in which their settlements evolved reinforces our current understanding of the way permanent inhabitancy developed in Newfoundland during the 17th and 18th centuries. Cape Ray was not simply a chance creation of renegades and deserters from the French fishery. It began instead as a fishing station supported by French merchants and outfitters. Very quickly, it developed into a centre for trade between French and Anglo-American shipping. It was this commerce which not only kept the settlements in southwestern Newfoundland alive but, in the final analysis, was responsible for their growth and persistence.

By the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), France recognized English sovereignty over the island of Newfoundland and gave up the right to maintain any permanent habitation there. Henceforth, French contact with the island would be seasonal and was supposed to be confined to the so-called French Shore, where the Treaty accorded her several fishing rights.<sup>6</sup> The French Shore extended west and north from Cape Bonavista to Pointe Riche; it did not include that part of the island where French settlement had been encouraged and supported since the middle of the 17th Century. The town of Plaisance (or Placentia, as the British preferred to name it), the rest of Placentia Bay, the Burin Peninsula and all points further west along the South Coast, including the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon now became British territory. The French civil and military authorities at Plaisance, together with most of the inhabitants, were evacuated in 1714. Only a small, indeterminate number of inhabitants were prepared to swear the English oath of allegiance which enabled them to remain in Newfoundland.<sup>7</sup>



One of the first actions taken by the British government to consolidate its hold over the new territory was to appoint William Taverner, a Newfoundland planter and merchant, to survey the coast west of Placentia. He was to map the coast, take stock of its resources, take a census of any remaining inhabitants and administer the oath to those who wished to remain in Newfoundland.<sup>8</sup> The survey, which began in 1714 and continued through the following year, took him as far as Cape La Hune. This appears to have been the effective limit of settlement during the French régime. Taverner found fairly substantial summer populations at Fortune (over ninety people), Grand Bank (over eighty), St. Pierre (over seventy-five), Connaigre (over thirty) and Hermitage (nearly thirty). The permanent populations would have been much smaller, perhaps one-fifth of the summer population.<sup>9</sup> In addition to these larger centres, Taverner also found a number of smaller establishments at Corbin Head, Grole, Bay d'Espoir, Facheux Bay, Rencontre Bay, and Cape La Hune. With one or two exceptions, these were seasonal establishments, although sometimes the distinction was difficult to make. Thus, at Grole there was but one plantation (a term used for a permanent establishment) while at Bandalore there were several buildings belonging to a proprietor from St. Malo who was clearly not considered to be an inhabitant but who reportedly had wintered there for the previous twenty years.<sup>10</sup>

Taverner indicated that a number of the French inhabitant-fishermen had taken the oath of allegiance. Few, however, would remain in Newfoundland very long. Some would succumb to pressures to move to Île Royale, where efforts were underway to re-establish a colonial base for the French fishery. Taverner reported that a French priest had appeared on the south coast of Newfoundland before the end of 1714 to exhort the inhabitants to leave.<sup>11</sup> Others would move away, it was alleged, because the British authorities at Placentia took advantage of them, extorting illegal fees and payments from them and confiscating their properties for resale to friends and associates. Indeed, between 1714 and the late 1720s the abuse of their authority by Lieutenant Governors John Moody and Samuel Gledhill was so persistent that it drove away not only the French but also many of the English inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> Yet it is also possible that the French inhabitants, long accustomed to trading with French ships for essential supplies and gear, had difficulties developing similar commercial relations within the British mercantile framework. In 1714 Taverner reported that French ships were still putting in at St. Pierre to trade; that harbour had long been a commercial rendezvous for all the fishing establishments west of Placentia Bay.<sup>13</sup> This

was something which the British authorities would not tolerate, and the subsequent end to this practice may have forced the French owners of the various establishments to quit the South Coast. Although French inhabitants continued to be present in ever-dwindling numbers at Placentia, those on the South Coast soon faded from view. Within ten years, the English authorities appear to have forgotten altogether that a small population of French inhabitants, who had sworn an oath of allegiance so that they might remain on the island, had ever existed there.<sup>14</sup>

It was therefore with some measure of surprise and concern that the British government responded in 1724 to a complaint by Lieutenant Governor Gledhill that not only did several French families reside in the neighbourhood of Fortune Bay and Bay d'Espoir but that they had fired on "Some of His Maj<sup>ties</sup> Subjects, and wounded One Man Dangerously. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Exactly what had provoked such an assault was not indicated. Gledhill would later be accused of abusing his authority by evicting the inhabitants of some of these fishing posts and turning the posts over to his friends and clients. Certainly Gledhill went to great lengths to prejudice Captain John St. Lo, the senior naval officer in the area, against the French residents. Although they had been permitted in 1713 to remain in Newfoundland, Gledhill insisted that these particular inhabitants had settled on the South Coast "under pretext of going to Cape Britton", and accused them of being in breach of the Treaty of Utrecht. Left undisturbed, he warned, they "may in time turn Pyrats."<sup>16</sup>

St. Lo was predisposed to view any French on the South Coast with suspicion. There had been persistent rumours since 1715 that French fishermen were crossing the Cabot Strait from Île Royale to hunt and trap furs in southwestern Newfoundland during the winter.<sup>17</sup> St. Lo was therefore receptive to Gledhill's account of the situation. He was equally prepared to believe that settlers in isolated areas might turn to piracy, which had become a serious problem in Newfoundland. Bartholomew Roberts had descended upon Trepassy in 1720 and transformed it for several weeks into a sort of pirate headquarters. There he had proceeded to refit and victual his squadron, in complete disregard of local military and naval forces which he knew to be weak. Roberts was only one of a number of pirates active in the vicinity of Newfoundland at this time, and both the French and the British authorities were uncomfortably aware of their presence for several years thereafter.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it was a report of a pirate vessel cruising nearby which caused St. Lo to abandon his immediate plans to investigate the French settlers. Instead, he patrolled the waters between Placentia and Canso, using

the opportunity to put into Louisbourg where he appealed to Governor St. Ovide to deal with the movement of French fishermen from Île Royale to Newfoundland.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Gledhill's report that the French were illegally inhabiting the South Coast of Newfoundland arrived in London, causing the government to make diplomatic representations to the French court on the same issue. Both St. Ovide at Louisbourg and Maurepas at Versailles agreed to investigate; both, however, also insisted that they knew nothing whatsoever about French fishermen on the coast of Newfoundland.<sup>20</sup>

The French authorities, however, were not being completely truthful. Not only were they aware that French fishermen were going to Newfoundland, they had already taken measures to put a stop to the practice. In 1723 and again in 1724 St. Ovide had ordered inhabitants of Île Royale not to cross over to Cape Ray.<sup>21</sup> Like his counterparts in Newfoundland, his concern arose in part out of fear that such migrants might turn to piracy and threaten the local fishery. He was even more concerned that Newfoundland might become a refuge for contract fishermen and others trying to escape their debts and obligations. Île St. Jean had already developed into such a refuge. Should Newfoundland develop into an alternative haven, the situation would be much more difficult to resolve because the French government could exercise no authority there as it could in Île St. Jean.<sup>22</sup> By 1725, St. Ovide had managed to persuade a number of fishermen at Cape Ray to return to Île Royale. They had been employed by the Sieur de Boismoiris, a merchant of St. Malo, to fish on the Newfoundland coast and to winter there. Some complained of ill usage at the hands of their employer. This may explain why the French seemed so confident that the problem had been solved.<sup>23</sup>

English concern that French inhabitancy might jeopardize their interests in Newfoundland appears also to have abated, for the moment at least. Upon investigation, St. L. had satisfied himself that the inhabitants of Fortune Bay and Bay d'Espoir were legitimate subjects of the King.<sup>24</sup> Although the officers commanding the ships on the Newfoundland station were asked each year to determine whether the French were violating the Treaty of Utrecht by fishing on the Newfoundland coast and trapping for furs there during the winter, no conclusive evidence could be found. This is not to say that French fishermen were now avoiding Newfoundland. But the naval commodores never had enough ships to cruise the more remote parts of the island. Normally, no more than three ships were assigned to the Newfoundland station for the brief duration of the fishing season. This was

barely sufficient to attend to their principal duties of supervising and regulating the English fishery on the Avalon Peninsula. One ship might be sent to visit Placentia and, less frequently, St. Peter's, but rarely would it venture any further west. To all intents and purposes, the South Coast of Newfoundland was *terra incognita* to the British authorities.<sup>25</sup>

It was not, however, unknown to everyone. British colonial traders and merchants not only visited the area but did so on an increasingly regular basis. In 1730 the official Louisbourg correspondence made several references to an English merchant named Richard with a fishing establishment at "Isles des Graules"; another English fishing establishment was reported at La Poile.<sup>26</sup> At Cape Ray or Port-aux-Basques itself, the presence of English traders and fishing posts was especially strong. In 1727 a Boston vessel was seized there by Micmac Indians and taken back to Île Royale. They were avenging an attack by Anglo-American fishermen at Canso, and presumably knew that Anglo-American traders were to be found in southwestern Newfoundland.<sup>27</sup> Some owned fishing establishments; for several years Antoine Le Berteau managed a fishing post there which was said to belong to an Englishman.<sup>28</sup> This might well have been William Taverner, who had commercial relations with some of the residents during the early 1730s. In 1734 he complained to the Board of Trade that a French planter with the unlikely name of Russell had died two years earlier still indebted to him, and "tho' the Man Dyed worth Money", the other residents had conspired to prevent him from collecting his debt.<sup>29</sup> Cape Ray may have been beyond the effective supervision of the British authorities in Newfoundland, but quite clearly it was well within the range of British and Anglo-American commerce.

French shipping was also a familiar sight at Cape Ray, for the settlement was conveniently located to take advantage of several commercial opportunities. The Cabot Strait had always been a gateway for a large volume of French shipping destined not just for Canada but also for the substantial French fishery on the West Coast of Newfoundland, Labrador and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Ships from Bayonne, St. Jean de Luz, St. Malo, and La Rochelle were frequent visitors at Cape Ray.<sup>30</sup> Some went there to fish; Governor St. Ovide would have been chagrined to learn that one of the fishing establishments there belonged to Dubourg and Duchenet Boismoiris, who continued to recruit their crews in Île Royale.<sup>31</sup> Others went there to trade with the inhabitants. Both the French and the British were convinced that this trade kept the settlement at Cape Ray alive. According to William Taverner:



... their greatest Supply is from St. Malo and Rachael, who Supply them with almost every thing Needfull, to carry on the Cod Fishery, Salmon-Fishery, Seal-Fishery, and Furring, nay even with green Men. which are Engaged for thirty Six Months, which the Masters in France pretends they are to Serve at Cape Breton. . . .<sup>32</sup>

The French authorities tried to discourage this activity but had little success because Anglo-American traders were just as active there as the French. British colonial officials may even have been behind some of the trade. The French claimed that in 1734 "un Vaisseau de Guerre Anglois . . . y a reste Environs 3 Semaines et . . . y a meme Etabli une Contribution de 10 quintaux de Morue avec de l'huile de Poisson sur chaque Chaloupe."<sup>33</sup> This may have been a Newfoundland station ship; HMS *Roebuck*, Captain Crawford, visited Cape Ray that year to investigate Taverner's complaints. It seems likelier, however, to have been a private armed ship belonging to the military commandant at Placentia, who was notorious for his involvement in illicit and private trading. Not only would this explain Gledhill's silence when pressed for information about the South Coast, it would also account for claims that the people at Cape Ray had sworn the oath of allegiance.<sup>34</sup>

The opportunity to conduct illicit trade in relative security may well have been Cape Ray's strongest commercial attraction. The settlement was very convenient for anyone wishing to participate in the lucrative trade between New England and Louisbourg. While much of that trade was legitimate, and therefore open and direct, the introduction of more restrictive mercantile policies after 1730 by both France and England forced it to become more covert. Ships belonging to the Sieur de Boismoiris headed for Newfoundland under pretext of going to Île Royale.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, to disguise their involvement in illicit trade, many New England ships declared Newfoundland as their destination, then headed for the less supervised outports of Île Royale.<sup>36</sup> Since Cape Ray was not supervised at all, it is hardly surprising that when French and British colonial merchants put in at Cape Ray to pick up the year's production, they would trade not only with the inhabitants but also with each other. By 1742 the trade in cod between Anglo-American and French traders was reputed to be greater there than at Île Royale.<sup>37</sup> The locational advantages of the Cape Ray community, together with its jurisdictional remoteness from the English authorities at Placentia, had encouraged its development into a small but active entrepôt.

By the early 1730s, then, it was clear that settlement in southwestern Newfoundland had persisted. It appears to have been concentrated at Cape Ray, or Port-aux-Basques; other pockets of settlement developed a little to the

north at Codroy Island and, to the east, La Poile and Grole. The earliest inhabitants were drawn there by employment opportunities provided by the fishery. Those at Cape Ray were in the employ of migratory French fishing ships, while those at La Poile and Grole were employed by English fishing establishments. Settlement, like employment, would have been seasonal or temporary at first. This would have been reinforced by the initial lack of women. By the late 1720s, however, women as well as children were evident. By 1734, the community consisted of about ten families. Six years later, the names of some forty individuals were recorded by Louis Colas, a priest on board a fishing ship which had put into Port-aux-Basques; he was the first priest the people had seen in seven years. Nearly two dozen more names were recorded in the following year when a visiting Recollet priest performed some baptisms at Codroy Island.<sup>38</sup> Some of the witnesses belonged to the ships which were in port. Most, however, were clearly inhabitants, which means that by early 18th century standards the population of southwestern Newfoundland had become fairly substantial.<sup>39</sup> While fishing continued to be their principal employment, their continued presence and steady growth in Newfoundland was possible because of the settlement's role in the commerce between French and British colonial shipping. Habitation in early 18th century southwestern Newfoundland seems therefore to have conformed to a pattern which was characteristic of settlement elsewhere on that island, a pattern in which, according to Gordon Handcock, "merchants . . . were the activating agents. . . ."<sup>40</sup>

The inhabitants at Cape Ray had not only grown more permanent and numerous, they had also grown more diverse. Only about half of the inhabitants were French. Some, like Jean Nicholas de Malvilain and Guillaume le Marechal, were fishermen who came either by way of Île Royale, where they were employed as contract fishermen, or directly as part of the migratory fishing fleet operating on the West Coast of the island. Others were from French Newfoundland, having either settled first at Île Royale or else drifted west from fishing establishments in Fortune and Hermitage Bays which they had maintained for an indeterminate period after 1713 and then abandoned. Family names like Vincent, Bourny, and Commer were associated with St. Pierre, Fortune, Grand Bank, Hermitage, and Grole between 1690 and 1715 and would eventually appear in southwestern Newfoundland.<sup>41</sup> The other half of the settlement, according to the authorities at Louisbourg, was English.<sup>42</sup> This may have been true of the agents and traders, but a significant proportion were actually Irish. At least two and possibly three of the family units recorded in the marriage and bap-

tismal records in 1740 and 1741 were Irish. The influx of significant numbers of Irish servants to Newfoundland, especially to the regions south of St. John's, only began after 1713. It was triggered in large measure by a ten-year collapse of the inshore fishery which discouraged men in the traditional English West Country labour markets from seeking employment in the fishery. As the Irish became established in Placentia Bay, some evidently made their way west to Cape Ray. They may have been trying to escape the suspicion and abuse to which the Irish at this time were subject; they may have been trying to escape the difficult conditions which continued in the inshore fishery until the late 1720s. Yet the hardships endured by the Newfoundland Irish at this time should not be given undue emphasis. Since English traders and proprietors had penetrated the coast west of Fortune Bay, it is just as likely that the Irish at Cape Ray were brought there by their employers.<sup>41</sup>

According to the marriage and baptismal records the Irish immigrants included both men and women. A few of the French inhabitants at Cape Ray were also women who were related to the proprietors of French fishing posts on the South Coast before 1713. This suggests that they migrated as family groups. Generally, however, there would have been an imbalance in the sex ratio at Cape Ray, with men outnumbering women, especially during the early years of settlement. This occurred because most of the inhabitants were single men employed on a seasonal or limited term basis—a common practice in the 18th century fishery. They were contract fishermen from either Île Royale or France. To correct this imbalance, men living at Cape Ray began to cross over to Île Royale in search of spouses. Scatari and Niganiche were invariably mentioned whenever this practice attracted the attention—and disapproval—of French officials. In 1742 the *commissaire-ordonnateur*, Bigot, was alarmed by what he described as “une grande liaison avec le cap de ré”. He warned that “le cap de ré augmente tous les jours en français” because “les français qui sont établis sur cette côte, venoient s’y marier et remmenoient leurs femmes avec eux”. To put an end to this, he directed the priest at Niganiche to stop performing marriages between the women of that outport and men from Cape Ray. He even ordered that two women, recently married to men of Cape Ray, be forbidden to leave Niganiche, hoping that this would pressure their husbands into returning to Île Royale.<sup>42</sup>

Bigot's concern and his responses stem in part from the French government's long-standing emphasis on the encouragement and development first of Plaisance and then of Île Royale into prosperous and valuable com-

ponents of their mercantile empire. In contrast to the British, the French had long supported the establishment of a colony adjacent to the rich fishing grounds off Newfoundland. Such a colony would protect France's claim to a share of the fishery by serving as a refuge and support for the fishery while providing it with supervision at the same time. This required that both Plaisance and its successor, Louisbourg, show demographic and economic growth and diversification from the start.<sup>45</sup> The Plaisance experience, however, had been disappointing. Newfoundland's limited resources had forced the inhabitants there into what one historian has described as "a dangerously single-minded concentration on the fishery." This, in turn, had led them into a nearly total dependency on the merchants of the migratory fishery for provisions, supplies, and labour even as a chronic friction between resident and migratory fishermen for beach space had undermined government authority. In the end, Plaisance may have been more a liability than an asset of the French mercantile empire.<sup>46</sup> It was largely because of this experience that a determined effort was made at Louisbourg to assert government authority and to maintain harmony within the fishery. A legal framework was accordingly established which regulated all aspects of the fishery where friction might develop between residents and the migratory fishermen.<sup>47</sup> But this strategy quickly became restrictive and burdensome—so much so that one of the strongest attractions of Cape Ray was the freedom there from the regulations, fees, and official supervision which encumbered the fishery at Île Royale. As Bigot succinctly explained, "c'est qu'ils y sont indépendans".<sup>48</sup>

It was the way in which Cape Ray enabled people at Île Royale to avoid or escape their responsibilities which ultimately lay at the root of official concern about the growth of the inhabitant population there. Taverner described the settlement as "a little Common Wealth to themselves", while the French referred to it at one point as "cette petite Republique".<sup>49</sup> In particular, Cape Ray was perceived as a sort of refuge or haven for people evading the law, and the residents as "déserteurs" and "fripons" at best, as "brigands" and "bandits" at worst. While many of its residents were drawn by economic opportunities, Cape Ray had indeed attracted habitant fishermen seeking to escape debts, contract fishermen escaping obligations, and felons attempting to escape punishment.<sup>50</sup> There was therefore sufficient merit in the official perception that French authorities felt justified in trying to bring the settlements there to an end. But such efforts were invariably unsuccessful, as even the officials reluctantly had to admit. Efforts to discourage merchants from trading with the inhabitants foundered as

much on the seeming indifference of the port authorities in France as on a realization that success would not prevent British merchants from trading there. Besides, the Louisbourg authorities seemed reluctant to enforce trade policy too rigorously out of recognition that the Anglo-American trade with Île Royale, in which Cape Ray seemed to be playing a part, was essential to the Île Royale economy. Efforts to put an end to the "grande liaison" between Île Royale and Cape Ray had no demonstrable effect either. But in the final analysis, the inability to prevent either migration or commerce from nurturing French inhabitancy at Cape Ray rested on the fact that southwestern Newfoundland lay outside their official jurisdiction. If the settlements posed a problem for the French, then by virtue of British sovereignty over Newfoundland, they required an English solution.<sup>51</sup>

A British initiative to bring the settlements in southwestern Newfoundland to an end might have been forthcoming because officials in London had reasons of their own to be concerned by them. The Board of Trade was emphatic that "it was not for the Interest of the Fishery of Newfoundland to encourage Settlements there, even of His Majesty's Subjects."<sup>52</sup> Although settlement on the island was not forbidden, neither was it encouraged, in the belief that a resident population was prejudicial to the fishery's economic and strategic value to England. Furthermore, the appearance of a French population in so remote a corner of the island could not but arouse suspicions that the French were deliberately violating the Treaty of Utrecht—suspicions which Taverner manipulated in 1734 when seeking action on his complaints. But this was not an age in which government was noted either for its familiarity with specific colonial possessions or for the vigour of its administration of empire.<sup>53</sup> When government could be aroused to investigate the reports of French inhabitancy, as in 1724 and 1734, officials had been quickly and easily satisfied that neither British sovereignty nor the British fishery were in jeopardy. Had it therefore been left to government alone, the settlements in southwestern Newfoundland might well have flourished into the modern era. However, if Cape Ray was beyond the effective or legal jurisdiction of French and English governments in peacetime, then it was also beyond their effective protection in time of war. The outbreak of hostilities between France and England in 1744 accomplished in short order what twenty years of government effort had not; it forced the settlements there to be abandoned. Choosing discretion over valour, the residents, both French and Irish, withdrew to the seeming security of Île Royale. Within a few months, their homes and properties were gone, destroyed by Anglo-American privateers.<sup>54</sup>

To all practical purposes, the story of French habitation in southwestern Newfoundland during the 18th century ends at this point. Most of the inhabitants who can be identified by name would eventually settle in the out-ports of Île Royale, especially Scatari, Niganiche, and Petit Bras d'Or. Some went to Louisbourg. A few of these did not join in the general evacuation following the siege and capture of the town in 1745, but remained there through the occupation. Evidently they remained true to the independence of character which Bigot had found so lamentable. Whether any of the residents returned to Newfoundland after the war has not been established. A sizeable fishing community would be found at Port-aux-Basques when James Cook visited there in 1766, but there is as yet no evidence to link this settlement with the one which had been abandoned in 1744. Nevertheless, as is so often the case when dealing with marginal societies, the absence of evidence does not mean that it does not exist; rather, it means that it has not been sought. Nor does it mean that the settlements are not without significance, brief though their existence may have been. In an age which is indelibly associated with the mercantilist rationale of empire, the persistence of the settlements over twenty years is a reminder that regulation and supervision of overseas commerce and possessions were more theoretical than practical ideals. It is therefore not wise to dismiss the settlements as havens for renegades and outlaws, as 18th century officials did. Nor was the migration of fishermen and inhabitants from Île Royale to Newfoundland the only "grand liaison" to characterize the settlements. The trade which linked them to regional and mercantile commercial patterns may well be the key to the presence and significance of settlement in early 18th century southwestern Newfoundland.

### Acknowledgements

Research for this paper was supported by a Memorial University of Newfoundland Vice-President's Research Grant. For research assistance, my thanks to Kenneth Donovan at Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park. Special thanks to Warwick Hewitt, Graphics Artist at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, for preparing the map.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, the large collection of unpublished local histories housed in the Maritime History Archives at Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's. These include studies of communities from Grole in Hermitage Bay west to Port-aux-Basques. None show any awareness of early 18th century French inhabitancy.

<sup>2</sup>Briffett, "A History".

<sup>3</sup>Innis, *Cod Fisheries*, 172; Lounsbury, *British Fishery*, 328; Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 92, 99n, 163.

<sup>4</sup>McLennan, *Louisbourg*, 72-3; Maude, "Settlements", unpaginated (see especially the

paragraph in chapter 4 containing references #16-19); Moore, *Louisbourg Portraits*, 132. Of particular value in using the last source were the Annotations, acquired through the author as an unpublished manuscript. The most thorough account of the Cape Ray settlement to date appears in Balcom, *Cod Fishery*, 56.

<sup>5</sup>Harris, "European Beginnings".

<sup>6</sup>Thompson, *French Shore Problem*, Chapter I and Appendix; Bière, "Pêche et politique". The oath of allegiance would have been similar to that which was required of the Acadians; for a discussion of the oath, see Brown, "Foundations".

<sup>7</sup>Proulx, *Placentia*, 51-2, 118-9. In 1713 the civilian population of French Newfoundland had been about two hundred, a figure which would double were one to include the contract fisherman; Humphrey, *Plaisance*, 6. According to Proulx, fifty to sixty people remained behind at Placentia after the evacuation.

<sup>8</sup>Quinn, "William Taverner"; Taverner's instructions and additional instructions, 21 and 22 July, 1713, Colonial Office (CO) 194 series, vol. 5, 99-103v, Public Record Office (PRO), London. The CO 194 papers are available on microfilm at Public Archives Canada (PAC), Ottawa. Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, the dates on English letters and documents are given in the Julian or Old Style, except that the year is taken to begin on 1 January, not 25 March as was then customary. This puts the dates of English documents eleven days behind those of French documents, which are given in the Gregorian style.

<sup>9</sup>Taverner, "Report of his activities since 27 June, 1714", 22 October, 1714, CO 194/5: 260-262; Abstract and "Some Remarks on the present State of the South Part of Newfoundland", February, 1715, CO 194/6: 45-50; Survey of Inhabitants, 1714, CO 194/6: 243; Second Report for 1714/15 (received 20 May, 1718), CO 194/6: 226-241. John Mannion distinguishes between seasonal, temporary, and permanent migrations to Newfoundland; Mannion, ed., *Peopling*, 5. The permanent population was much smaller than was indicated by the "number of inhabitants" recorded in the annual "Schemes of the Fishery"; Hancock, "English Migration", 19-20; Matthews, "17th Century Settlement", 5.

<sup>10</sup>Taverner, Second Report, CO 194/6: 232-232v.

<sup>11</sup>Taverner, "Some Remarks", Items F and M, February, 1715, CO 194/6: 48-48v, 50; Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 59-60.

<sup>12</sup>Capt. St. Lo to Board of Trade, 5 March, 1728, CO 194/8: 148v, 150.

<sup>13</sup>Elisha Dobree to Taverner, 5 March, 1714, CO 194/5: 97; Moses Jacqueau to William Lowndes, Treasury, 7 May, 1714, CO 194/5: 117-117v; Taverner, "Report", 22 October, 1714, CO 194/5: 260v; Taverner, "Some Remarks", Item I, February, 1715, CO 194/6: 49v.

<sup>14</sup>See, for instance, Captains Francis Percy's and Samuel Askins' "Answers to the Heads of Inquiry" for 1720 and 1722 in CO 194/7: 10, 113v-114. See also Capt. St. Lo to Gouverneur St. Ovide, 30 August, 1724, Admiralty Papers (Adm.), Series I, vol. 2453, PRO, London. The Admiralty Papers are available on microfilm at the Archives of Fortress Louisbourg National Historic Park (AFL), Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

<sup>15</sup>Gledhill to St. Lo, 16 July, 1724, Adm. I/1473.

<sup>16</sup>St. Lo to Board of Trade, 5 March, 1728, CO 194/8: 148v, with enclosures, 150; Gledhill to St. Lo, 16 July, 1724, Adm. I/1473.

<sup>17</sup>Taverner, "Some Remarks", Item G, February, 1715, CO 194/6: 48v-49; Taverner, Second Report, *ibid.*, 237v-238; Alured Popple, secretary to Board of Trade, to Admiralty Secretary Burchett, 6 April, 1720, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial* (hereafter *C.S.P.Col.*), vol. 32, #38i.

<sup>18</sup>Deposition of Moses Renolds, mariner, 26 September, 1720, *C.S.P.Col.* vol. 32, #25liv; Gledhill to Mr. Secretary Craggs, 3 July, 1720, CO 194/6: 365-369v; de Mezy to Maurepas, 23 November, 1723, Archives des Colonies (AC), série C<sup>II</sup>B, vol. 6, pp. 233-34v, Archives Nationales, Paris; the AC collection of MSS is available on microfilm at the AFL. St. Ovide complained that "les forbans . . . ruinent la pêche" and requested that a frigate be specially assign-

ed to patrol the fishing grounds in order to discourage their activities; St. Ovide to Maurepas, 26 November, 1723, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/6: 199-204v.

<sup>19</sup>Captain Robert Boulter to the Admiralty, 12 September, 1724, Adm.1/1473; St. Lo to St. Ovide, 30 August, 1724, Adm.1/2453; St. Ovide to St. Lo, 20 September, 1724, *ibid*.

<sup>20</sup>"A deduction of representations made by the English Ambassador in France, with regard to the fishing, furring, and settling of the French in Newfoundland", including Duke of Newcastle's instructions to Mr. Horace Walpole, 15 October, 1724, Walpole to Newcastle, 10 November (New Style), 1724, Newcastle to Walpole, 11 February, 1725, and same to same, 26 April, 1725, CO 194/23: 121-24v; Maurepas to the comte de Morville, 21 November, 1724, AC B/46: 119-20.

<sup>21</sup>St. Ovide to Maurepas, 24 November, 1723, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/6: 193-98v; Maurepas to St. Ovide, 26 June, 1724, AC B/47: 276-91; de Mezy to Maurepas, 22 November, 1724, with enclosure, statement by Lieutenant Rousseau de Souigny, 23 September, 1724, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/7: 68, 72.

<sup>22</sup>Council to St. Ovide & de Mezy, 13 May, 1722, AC B/45-2: 1136-7; Council to Gotteville, 13 May, 1722, *ibid.*, 1118; "Ordonnance qui faire deffenses aux habitants de l'Isle Royale de passer a l'Isle St-Jean", 12 May, 1722, *ibid.*, 923-5.

<sup>23</sup>Maurepas to St. Ovide, 25 July, 1725, AC B/48-2: 953-59.

<sup>24</sup>St. Lo to Board of Trade, 5 March, 1728, CO 194/8: 148v.

<sup>25</sup>For instance, see Answers to the Heads of Inquiry: (1729) Lord Vere Beauclerk, CO 194/8: 275v-76; (1730) Lord Vere Beauclerk, CO 194/9: 55v; (1732) Captain Falkingham, Adm.1/1779; (1733) Lord Muskerry, CO 194/9: 196. In his "Scheme of the Fishery, 1732", Falkingham explained how he tried to obtain information about the fishing stations on the western side of Placentia Bay: "I sent Orders with the Copy of the Scheme to the Admirals of these places to send me an Exact Account of the Fishery, but they did not Comply therewith. This is the First Year we have had an account of these places"; CO 194/24: 126-9.

<sup>26</sup>De Bourville to Maurepas, 30 November, 1730, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/11: 38ff.; same to same, 14 December, 1730, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/11: 42ff; St. Ovide to Maurepas, 25 November, 1731, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/12: 36-9.

<sup>27</sup>St. Ovide to Maurepas, 13 September and 30 November, 1727, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/9: 50v-1, 64-70v.

<sup>28</sup>De Forant & Bigot to Maurepas, 15 December, 1739, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/21: 144-46v; Taverner to Board of Trade, 2 February, 1734, CO 194/23: 180-82v; "Antoine Le Berteau, dit Lyonnais", in "Journal and Census of Île Royale, prepared by le Sieur de la Roque under the direction of M. le comte de Raymond, in the year 1752", in Government of Canada Sessional Paper No. 18, *Report concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905* (Ottawa, 1906), vol. II, 44.

<sup>29</sup>Taverner to Board of Trade, 2 February, 1734, CO 194/23: 180-82v.

<sup>30</sup>On commerce between France and Canada, see Pritchard, "Pattern"; Proulx, *Between*, 25-32. On the French fishery on the West Coast of Newfoundland, see Turgeon, "La crise", 80-5.

<sup>31</sup>St. Ovide to Maurepas, 14 November, 1732, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/12: 254-62.

<sup>32</sup>Taverner to Board of Trade, 2 February, 1734, CO 194/23: 180-82v; Maurepas to St. Ovide and LeNormant, 19 May, 1733, AC B/59-2: 522-3v; same to same, 27 April, 1734, AC B/61-2: 589-90v.

<sup>33</sup>J. Burnaby to John Courand, 2 March, 1735 (New Style), State Papers, Series 78, vol. 207, PRO, London, with a memorial intended for Secretary of State the Duke of Newcastle. The SP collection of MSS is available on microfilm at the AFI. On efforts to discourage French merchants from trading at Cape Ray, see Maurepas to St. Ovide & Le Normant, 19 May, 1733, AC B/59-2: 522-3v; St. Ovide & Le Normant to Maurepas, 13 October, 1733, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/14: 43-50v; Maurepas to Guillot, 17 April, 1744, AC B/70: 73v.

<sup>34</sup>Colonel Samuel Gledhill, Lieutenant-Governor of Placentia (1719-1729 and 1730-1735), with an official salary less than £700, left an estate of twenty-four properties and a capital of



over £11,000 when he died in 1736, thanks largely to his activities as "landowner, merchant, and monopolist"; Quinn, "Samuel Gledhill". Both Gledhill and his predecessor, John Moody, were accused of private and illicit trading with both the French and the Americans.

<sup>35</sup>Maurepas to de la Bove (Bureau de commerce), 27 April, 1742, AC B/75: 84-v; Maurepas to Guillot, 17 April, 1744, AC B/79: 73v.

<sup>36</sup>On shipping at Louisbourg, see Moore, "Merchant Trade", chapter 1; Balcom, *Cod Fishery*, 7. The trade between New England and Île Royale is described in Chard, "Impact", chapter 2. See also Chard, "Price and Profits".

<sup>37</sup>Duquesnel and Bigot to Maurepas, 17 October, 1742, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/24: 28-30.

<sup>38</sup>Lord Muskerry's "Answers to Heads of Inquiry", 1734, CO 194/9: 259-v, esp. #60-62; Louis Colas, "prestre au monier du navire Le mars", "Extrait de registre de bapteme et de mariage de la poste du Petit Nord nommé Port au Basque", 18 May, 1740, Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer (ANO) G<sup>I</sup>/410, No. 12, Paris; "Baptemes fait à lisle de Cadray", 12 July, 1741, ANO G<sup>I</sup>/407, Registre 1, fol. 76. The ANO collection of MSS is available on microfilm at the AFL.

<sup>39</sup>Based on data in the CO 194 papers, the permanent population of Newfoundland in 1740 was between 1,500 and 1,700 people. From 1724 to 1744 the island population fluctuated within a fairly narrow range, generally between 1,000 and 1,500 people, with a low of about 600 in 1729 and a high of over 2,000 in 1742. See "Inhabitancy at Newfoundland from 1698 to 1776 as reflected by statistics in the CO 194 documents", in Janzen, comp., *Documents*, 83-112. The population of Newfoundland was low largely because permanent inhabitancy had been irrelevant to the profitable prosecution of the migratory fishery, which the British favored. The population of Île Royale was also prone to fluctuations during this period, but its growth was encouraged by virtue of the island being a royal colony. Consequently it was over 3,300 in 1734 and over 4,000 in 1752. Several outposts had two or three hundred people and Niganiche had as many as six or seven hundred people by the late 1730s; Schmeisser, "Population".

<sup>40</sup>Handcock, "English Migration", 24. See also Matthews, "England—Newfoundland Fisheries", 263, 377; Mannion, *Peopling*, 8. Mannion maintains that in Newfoundland, "Unlike so many parts of frontier North America, established trading patterns preceded permanent settlement . . ."; *ibid.*, 234.

<sup>41</sup>Through the use of a variety of censuses, notarial records, marriage and baptismal registrations, it is possible to identify a number of individuals who lived at Cape Ray, Port-aux-Basques, or Codroy Island at different times. Some of these individuals can be linked to families which were at St. Pierre, Grand Bank, and Grole before 1713; from there they eventually made their way directly to Cape Ray or through Île Royale. Many developed associations with Scatari, Niganiche, or Petit Bras d'Or, either through their parents or their spouses. See ANO G<sup>I</sup>, vols. 406, 407, 409, 410, 466, 467; de la Roque, "Census". The Family Reconstruction files at the AFL were valuable, although incomplete when dealing with families at Port-aux-Basques or Cape Ray.

<sup>42</sup>Maurepas to Duquesnel & Bigot, 30 June, 1743, AC B/76: 508-9v.

<sup>43</sup>At least two Irish families appear in the marriage and baptismal records for 1740; ANO G<sup>I</sup>/410, No. 12; on 18th century Irish migration to Newfoundland, see Mannion, *Peopling*, 8-11; Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 88-91; Matthews, "England—Newfoundland Fisheries", 334-41; Nemcc, "Irish Emigration". On the collapse of the inshore fishery see Innis, *Cod Fisheries*, 149-51; Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 63-5; Matthews, "England—Newfoundland Fisheries", 306-15; Brière, "Le reflux"; Turgeon, "Pour une histoire", 310-11.

<sup>44</sup>Bigot to Maurepas, 4 October, 1742, AC C<sup>II</sup>B/24: 117-v.

<sup>45</sup>Humphreys, *Plaisance*, esp. vii, 4-5, 7, 12-14; Balcom, *Cod Fishery*, 3.

<sup>46</sup>Humphreys, *Plaisance*, vii, 19-20.

<sup>47</sup>Balcom, *Cod Fishery*, 14-15.

<sup>48</sup>Bigot to Maurepas, 4 October, 1733, AC C<sup>11</sup>B/24: 117v; see also Maurepas to St. Ovide & Le Normant, 19 May, 1733, AC B/59-2: 522-3v.

<sup>49</sup>Taverner to Board of Trade, 2 February, 1734, CO 194/23: 180-2v; a memorial intended for Secretary of State the Duke of Newcastle, enclosed with J. Burnaby to J. Courand, 2 March, 1735 (New Style) SP 78/207.

<sup>50</sup>For instance, Jacques Massé and Michel Pierre Bounaud were arrested in Île Royale after stealing a chaloupe. Massé, a fisherman, admitted that they had been trying to go to Cape Ray or La Poile in hopes of securing passage back to France; ANOC<sup>2</sup>/184, dossier 13, ff.518-44, 19 October, 1737. See also Taverner, "Remarks", 2 February, 1734, CO 194/23: 180-2v. Curiously, Cape Ray did not attract military deserters, who headed towards Canso instead; St. Ovide to Maurepas, 14 November, 1736, AC C<sup>11</sup>B/18: 65-6v.

<sup>51</sup>Maurepas to Duquesnel & Bigot, 30 June, 1743, AC B/76: 508-9v.

<sup>52</sup>Board of Trade to Duke of Newcastle, 24 April, 1734, CO 194/23: J. Burnaby to John Courand, 2 March, 1735 (New Style), SP 78/207; Minutes of the Board of Trade, 9 April, 1734, CO 391/43: 60-2 (selections of the CO 391 series of MSS are available on microfilm at the AFL); Minutes of the Admiralty, 14 May, 1734, Adm.3/41.

<sup>53</sup>Henretta, "Salutary Neglect", 31-3, 64-7, 104-5, 107, 266-7; Hyam, "Imperial interests", 35-7.

<sup>54</sup>Duchambon & Bigot to Maurepas, 4 November, 1744, AC C<sup>11</sup>B/26: 32-6.

## References

- Balcom, B. A. *The Cod Fishery of Isle Royale, 1713-1758*. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1984.
- Brière, Jean-François. "Pêche et politique à Terre-Neuve au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle; la France véritable gagnante du traité d'Utrecht?". *Canadian Historical Review* 64, 2(1983): 168-87.
- . "Le reflux des terre-neuvers malouins sur les côtes du Canada dans la première moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: réponse à un changement du climat?". *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 12, 23(1979): 166-9.
- Briffett, F. Blandford. "A History of the French in Newfoundland Previous to 1714." MA thesis, Queen's University, 1927.
- Brown, Desmond H. "Foundations of British Policy in the Acadian Expulsion: A Discussion of Land Tenure and the Oath of Allegiance". *Dalhousie Review* 57, 4(1977/78): 709-25.
- Chard, Donald. "The Impact of Ile Royale on New England 1713-1763." Ph.D. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1976.
- . "The Price and Profits of Accommodation: Massachusetts—Louisbourg Trade, 1713-1744", in *Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts*, ed. Philip C. Smith. Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980, 131-51.
- Handcock, W. Gordon. "English Migration to Newfoundland", in *The Peopling of Newfoundland; Essays in Historical Geography*, ed. J. Mannion. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977, 15-48.
- Harris, R. Cole. "European Beginnings in the Northwest Atlantic: A Comparative View", in *Seventeenth-Century New England*, ed. David D. Hall and David Grayson Allen. Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1984.
- Head, C. Grant. *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland; A Geographer's Perspective*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1976.
- Henretta, James. "Salutary Neglect"; *Colonial Administration Under the Duke of Newcastle*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Humphreys, John. *Plaisance*. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1970.
- Hyam, Ronald. "Imperial interests and the Peace of Paris (1763)", in *Reappraisals in British Imperial History*, ed. Ronald Hyam & Ged Martin. Toronto: Macmillan, 1975, 21-43.

- Innis, Harold A. *The Cod Fisheries; The History of an International Economy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954.
- Janzen, Olaf, comp. *History 3110 by Teleconference; Book of Documents*. St. John's: Division of Continuing Studies, 1986.
- Lounsbury, Ralph G. *The British Fishery at Newfoundland 1634-1763*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934; reprinted, New York: Archon, 1969.
- Mannion, John, ed. *The Peopling of Newfoundland; Essays in Historical Geography*. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977.
- Matthews, Keith. "A History of the West of England—Newfoundland Fisheries". D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1968.
- . "17th Century Settlement in Newfoundland". Unpublished paper, Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John's, 1974.
- Maude, Mary C. McDougall. "The Settlements of Isle Royale and Isle St. Jean 1713-1758". M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1965.
- McLennan, J. S. *Louisbourg; From Its Foundation to Its Fall 1713-1758*. London, 1918; reprinted, Halifax: The Book Room Limited, 1979.
- Moore, Christopher. *Louisbourg Portraits: Life in an Eighteenth Century Garrison Town*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1982.
- . "Merchant Trade in Louisbourg, Ile Royale". M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1977.
- Nemec, Tom. "The Irish Emigration to Newfoundland". *Newfoundland Quarterly* 69: 1(1972), 15-19, 22-4.
- Pritchard, James. "The pattern of French colonial shipping to Canada before 1760". *Revue française d'Histoire d'Océanographie* 63(1976): 189-210.
- Proulx, Gilles. *Between France and New France; Life Aboard the Tall Sailing Ships*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984.
- Proulx, Jean-Pierre. *Placentia, Newfoundland*. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1979.
- Quinn, David B. "William Taverner", in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, ed. George Brown, David Hayne, and Frances G. Halpenny. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974, 617-9.
- . "Samuel Gledhill", in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, ed. David Hayne. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969, 249-51.
- Schmeisser, Barbara. "The Population of Louisbourg 1713-1758". Unpub. Manuscript Report on file, Archives of Fortress Louisbourg, 1976.
- Thompson, Frederic F. *The French Shore Problem in Newfoundland; An Imperial Study*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961.
- Turgeon, Laurier. "La crise de l'armement morutier basco-bayonnais dans la première moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle". Société des Sciences Lettres & Arts de Bayonne, *Bulletin*, nouvelle série No. 139 (1983), 75-91.
- . "Pour une histoire de la pêche: le marché de la morue à Marseille au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle". *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 15, 29(1982): 295-322.