

From Outport to Outport Base: The American Occupation of Stephenville, 1940-1945

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STEVEN HIGH

ON THE EVE of the Second World War, Stephenville represented the largest and most prosperous settlement in the district of St. George's — Port-au-Port on Newfoundland's west coast.¹ Aggregate census data show that the village had experienced steady population growth since 1901, reaching nearly 1,000 inhabitants in 1935.² This mainly French-speaking community consisted of 144 households divided into three clusters of settlement.³ The largest, known as the "parish area," surrounded St. Stephen's Church at the western end of Stephenville. To the east and north of the church were two other clusters of homes. The group of farms known as the "back of the ponds" area, situated next to Stephenville and Noel's ponds, was separated from the rest of Stephenville by Blanche Brook to the west. It was this community within a community that had to make way for a new American air base in 1941.

But even before that transformative event, Stephenville was an oddity in rural Newfoundland, in that its inhabitants made their living from the land rather than the sea. In fact, the district accounted for the second largest number of "farmers" on the island. This terminology is noteworthy as the census also allowed people to identify themselves as "Fishermen Farmers," that is, fishers who farmed.⁴ The area consisted of farms varying in size from 30 acres to 103 acres, averaging 40 acres.⁵ In 1935, Stephenville's farmers produced 15,926 bushels of potatoes, 499 barrels of turnips, 2,500 pounds of cabbage, 503 tons of hay, 435 bushels of oats and 635 gallons of strawberries.⁶ Residents also owned large numbers of livestock and their dairy herd produced 35,347 gallons of milk and 2,217 pounds of butter, while their

chickens laid 5,507 dozen eggs. This abundant farm production came from an area regarded as having among the best agricultural lands in Newfoundland.

By comparison, the fishery was of marginal importance. The settlement supported 54 fishing vessels in 1911, 29 in 1921, but only two dories in 1935. The collapse of the fishery contributed to the large number of local men working in the woods during the winter months. In fact, the men of Stephenville were jacks-of-all-trades: farming, fishing, logging and hunting, depending on the season.⁷ Stephenville women, in turn, worked at home, weaving, spinning, gathering, and raising children. This combination of occupations served residents well. Few Stephenville people were on the dole during the 1930s.⁸

The US Army's decision to locate an emergency landing field for aircraft in the St. George's Bay area, more specifically at Stephenville,⁹ triggered immediate changes. The first Americans arrived in January 1941 and construction began in March of that year.¹⁰ The spatial transformation of the "back of the ponds" area was recorded in a series of three maps drawn by the US Army Corps of Engineers between April and October 1941. The first map (Photo 1), dated 25 April, identified the area to be taken for the original base.¹¹ It communicated much cultural and environmental detail: civilian buildings, property lines, owners' names, wooded areas, and marsh lands. The area had been settled by a handful of families with anglicized names such as White, March, Bennet, Russell, Cormier, Gabriel, and Barry. Their social world centred on the fork in the road where the Roman Catholic school and a small store stood. By September 1941, much of this physical landscape had been demolished, cut or filled in. A second map, dated 17 September, erased everything that had existed previously,¹² and the adjoining areas to be annexed the following year were already delineated, with new military uses scrawled over the old property lines.

This liminal landscape did not persist for any length of time. By late October, the imaginative boundary between town and base had been re-drawn. Not only did the small vicinity map in the upper right-hand corner of the larger map situate Stephenville to the west of Harmon Field, it indicated that the two were no longer contiguous.¹³ The village's location had shifted westward, both physically and imaginatively, as the base became a reality. In effect, Stephenville and Harmon Field became two distinct and separate cartographic places, even though this neat demarcation proved to be far less stable on the ground.

The constantly shifting boundaries of "the Base" were matched by the dramatic changes occurring within Stephenville itself. During the war, hundreds of outsiders moved into what had hitherto been a closely-knit Roman Catholic settlement.¹⁴ By November 1941, Harmon Field employed 1,301 Newfoundland men and an undisclosed number of Newfoundland women.¹⁵ Thousands of US soldiers, airmen and skilled workers also arrived. At least two questions arose with the coming of the Americans to rural Newfoundland: How could property owners be re-

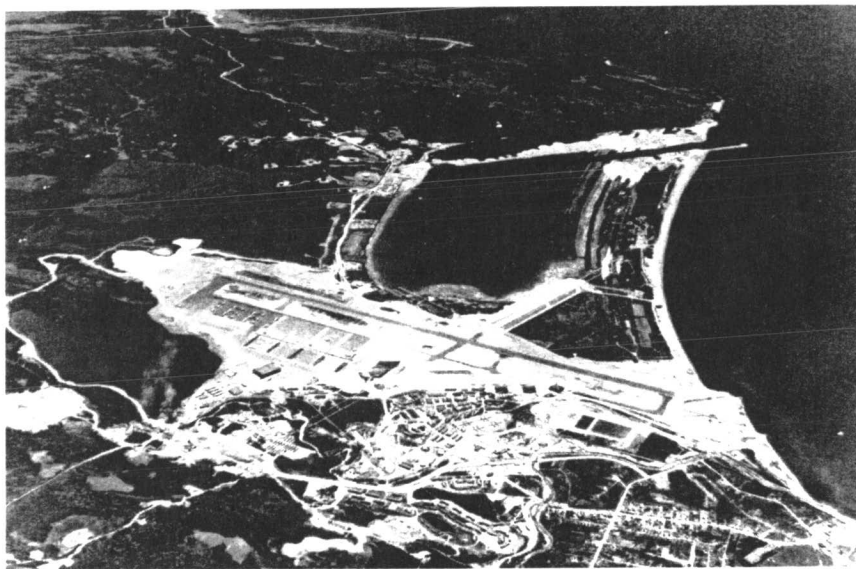


Photo 1. Aerial view of Harmon Field taken in 1950. This gives a good idea of the size of this American base at that time. Courtesy of Cardoulis Collection, American Legion. Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives, Coll. 109 (6.01.02), Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's.

moved quickly and fairly? And could the government prevent the appearance of unsanitary shack towns near the American bases?

This paper considers each question in turn. Even though the Newfoundland government passed extensive regulations dealing with both of these matters, it proved unable to control development in the Stephenville area.¹⁶ The American occupation of Stephenville during the Second World War may have been friendly, but it was not an orderly affair.¹⁷ Nor was it trouble free. Rather, the transformation of this quiet farming village into a garrison town brought with it both prosperity and dislocation. The Americans arrived in January 1941 to build a small emergency landing strip covering 865 acres of farm land. It was expanded twice, adding 677 acres in July 1942, and 5,938 acres in 1943.¹⁸ By 1945, Harmon Field sprawled across 7,480 acres and constituted a major stop on the North Atlantic Air Bridge that ferried bombers and fighters to England.¹⁹ This paper examines how the building of the airfield resulted in the removal of hundreds of local residents, in the deterioration of sanitary living conditions, and in the spread of venereal diseases. The piecemeal expansion of Harmon Field meant that many local residents found themselves displaced on more than one occasion.

MAKING WAY FOR THE AMERICANS

The exchange of notes between Great Britain and the United States on 2 September 1940, known as the destroyers-for-bases deal, saw 50 American destroyers traded to the British for 99-year leases on base sites in Newfoundland, Bermuda and in the British Caribbean. The agreement stipulated that a process of compensating uprooted property owners should be mutually agreed, though how this would be achieved was undetermined.²⁰

From the outset, the Commission of Government intended to play a key role in the implementation of the agreement. Although the 1935 Public Works Act enabled the government to expropriate private land and property for a public purpose, the process proved unwieldy. Under this measure, the assessment body included the property owner (or his or her representative), who could appeal the award to the Supreme Court.²¹ In wartime, however, normal practice could not accommodate the large number of cases that accompanied the building of military bases, and as speed was of the essence, a made-in-Newfoundland solution had to be found.

The Commission of Government proposed in November 1940 that a three-member board be appointed to hear property claims left unresolved between the parties. The proposed procedure comprised a number of steps. First, property owners would be made an offer. Failing an agreement, the claim would be heard by a board chaired by a judge of the Supreme Court.²² The written claims of displaced property owners would be compared to the government's own valuation of the land and buildings, and having heard the claimants' testimony, the board would appraise the value of the property and assess the damages.²³ The board's decision would be final.²⁴

This proposal received a positive reply from Canada, but approval did not come as easily from Britain or the United States. The British feared that this proposal would cast into disrepute the usual system of expropriation in the other colonies where there were US bases.²⁵ Yet Governor Sir Humphry Walwyn was adamant that the proposed board was the best solution for Newfoundland and for the war effort. He reminded his superiors in London that the Newfoundland Supreme Court was incapable of handling hundreds of cases in a timely fashion. Further, the residents of Argentia in Placentia Bay, where another base was to be built, refused to leave their homes until they received compensation. The prospect of forcibly removing hundreds of families in the dead of winter was politically unacceptable, if not practically impossible. For base construction to begin, the cooperation of local residents was essential.

While these despatches crossed back and forth across the Atlantic, the governor received a guarded reply from the Americans. Not wanting to become directly involved in the expropriation proceedings, Secretary of State Cordell Hull agreed to the Newfoundland proposal, subject to several conditions.²⁶ The most troubling of these was American insistence on a veto over the board's decisions, thus making

it little more than an advisory body, which would prolong the process still further. Governor Walwyn reminded the US government that the destroyers-for-bases agreement stipulated that the process of determining compensation had to be mutually agreed to.²⁷ On 9 January 1941, the Newfoundland government again insisted that no residents be moved until a mechanism for their timely compensation had been arranged.²⁸ It remained, the governor added, transparently unfair to property owners to have their land occupied, and to have the final award made subject to American approval.

The US government retorted that it would not write what amounted to a blank cheque, and persisted in its demand for a veto. As the dispute dragged on, the Newfoundland government bought some time by permitting the US to move onto private lands in order to begin construction at Argentia, provided that residents were left undisturbed in their homes. The matter was finally resolved on 22 January, when the British and American governments agreed to a second round of arbitration between the two powers in disputed cases.²⁹ Isolated, the Newfoundland government reluctantly agreed to the arrangement, with the caveat that it be included in this final deliberation.

With the overall process now agreed, the problem remained of how to assess the value of lost land and property. Cordell Hull had listed seven points that needed to be considered.³⁰ Claimants should be asked under oath the price paid for the property; the date of acquisition; the cost of improvements; the assessed value for tax purposes; the taxes paid; the usual spread between assessed and market values; and the sale price of similar properties. In effect, the United States wished to apply its own system of land valuation and make market value the sole basis for property compensation. However, senior members of the Commission of Government, including John H. Penson and L.E. Emerson, believed that compensation should be "based on something more than or different from a mere appraisal of the market price of the property acquired and that it should include something by way of compensation for disturbance and re-establishment." Commissioners feared that because the cost of resettlement was bound to be higher than the market value of the land being taken, the result would be the "sorry spectacle" of people once decently housed and in reasonably good circumstances being reduced to the "position of impoverished shack dwellers."³¹ The Newfoundland government therefore rejected the seven points, a decision which produced yet another impasse. To break the deadlock, the British government agreed to cover any difference between what the board of arbitration awarded and what the Americans were willing to pay. Having won its case, the Newfoundland government now put its plan into effect.

Incredibly, Stephenville's residents had no contact with the Newfoundland government for the two months following the January 1941 announcement that the United States intended to build an air base there, even as Americans poured in. Officials in the Department of Natural Resources were quietly preparing to relocate the displaced Stephenville farmers to West Bay on the Port-au-Port Peninsula, the only

area within a 40-mile radius with farm land available,³² but these plans were soon questioned by the Americans. Their information was that residents did not wish to move so far away and were content to receive monetary compensation and resettle as wage earners in Stephenville.

On 11 March, E. Howell, the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Reconstruction, deploring this embarrassing situation, urged the government to take immediate action, and the acting Chief Ranger, R.D. Fraser, forwarded a damning report from the Ranger at Stephenville Crossing lamenting the lack of government oversight. Despite the impending removal of 36 families, the Ranger wrote, "to date nothing in the shape of plans has become public regarding the disposal of these people; or the settling of them in other localities."³³ He urged the government to act quickly to avoid confusion and future recriminations.

The government then directed S.F. O'Driscoll, a land resettlement official at nearby Lourdes, to ask Father Brennan of St. Stephen's Church about local opinion concerning relocation. O'Driscoll found Brennan pleased to speak to someone connected with the government. The Americans were already working all around them, and "[n]aturally, they are a bit worried," O'Driscoll reported.³⁴ Confirming the American assessment of local opinion, Father Brennan said that his parishioners wished to remain in the immediate vicinity. Many of those being displaced had other parcels of land situated at the back of the air base, running towards Stephenville Crossing, and he felt certain that they would be able to resettle in that area.

The anxiety felt by those being removed escalated in April, when their land and houses were appraised by a team of well-dressed American engineers, led by a Mr. Strape. The men measured homes, surveyed the property lines, assessed farm land, and photographed dwellings and outbuildings (Photos 2, 3). The District Agriculturalist, a Mr. Tompkins, also appraised the farm land to be taken. The land had been passed down through families for generations, it had been periodically sub-divided, and few official deeds existed. It was sometimes difficult to establish title and determine the extent of property holdings. Two life-long neighbours, for example, disputed for months the ownership of several small islands. But this quarrel proved exceptional. By the end of May, Magistrate Dawson reported that all of the families removed from their homes were comfortably housed and accommodated.³⁵ He also reported a delay in the appraisal process because of "slight discrepancies" between the US and Newfoundland surveys.

These differences proved to be far from slight, and the Americans took serious issue with Tompkins' land assessment. Their estimated value of the land in fact represented less than half that recommended by Tompkins,³⁶ and Colonel Philip G. Bruton, the US District Engineer, thought this might prevent "any possible agreement between us as to any valuation that we both can certify as not being considered excessive." As a result, Bruton proceeded "to complete the appraisal reports for the various properties in question, with the idea of transmitting them to [his] Division



Photo 2. Stephenville farm house before expropriation. Spring 1941. PANL. GN 43. Box 17-16S.



Photo 3. American engineers assessing the value of a Stephenville home. PANL. GN 43. Box 20-147.

Engineer in Washington, for forwarding to the State Department to be used as they see fit in arriving at an agreement with [the Newfoundland] Government as to the total reimbursements.”³⁷

To discover the reasons for this large discrepancy, the Newfoundland government sent R.S. James, the Chief Land Settlement Officer, to investigate the matter. He arrived in Stephenville on 24 June and began to examine the terrain and the conflicting land classifications. Just how dissimilar the two assessments of the land were, is made clear in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Stephenville Farm Lands Subject to Expropriation (Acres)³⁸

| <i>Land Classification</i> | <i>Tompkins</i> | <i>Strape</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Cultivated | 431.71 | 256.72 |
| Wooded | 131.29 | 138.72 |
| Pasturage | 151.71 | 131.50 |
| Marsh | 72.91 | 226.11 |

James sided with Tompkins. The Americans, he reported, suffered from a “rather nebulous idea as to actual land classifications as they apply in Newfoundland and the true value that it has both from individual and national points of view.”³⁹ Accordingly, James spent considerable time during his stay explaining to the American authorities “just how we classified land in this country.”

A cultural misunderstanding lay behind this dispute, involving contrasting definitions of land use and of land value. In Newfoundland, “cultivated land” comprised land actually under the plow and yielding crops, as well as all other lands which in ordinary rotation would yield a crop. “Pasture land,” in turn, included cleared land where stones or stumps made it impossible to plow, but where live-stock could graze. “Marginal Land,” by contrast, was ill-suited for cultivation or pasture, but these “wet areas” could be drained with a bit of work. By contrast, “marshland” was under a considerable depth of water that would take some time to bring under cultivation. Finally, “woodland” was defined as all wooded areas.⁴⁰

Using this land classification as his starting point, James examined the discrepancies between the two reports and concluded that the problem lay in the American tendency to classify a great deal of the land that Newfoundlanders would consider cultivated land as pasture land, and pasture land as marsh land. Predictably, when American officials argued for universal land classifications, they were actually saying that the US system should be applied to Stephenville. To this, James replied that “[s]ince cleared land is not unlimited in Newfoundland, it has, apart from the individual point of view, a tremendous value from the national point of view more especially in times of crises such as these.” Collective as well as individual consid-

erations thus factored into the calculation of land value.⁴¹ However, District Engineer Bruton remained unconvinced and recommended against the Newfoundland valuation.⁴² Ultimately, they agreed to disagree and the British paid the difference.⁴³

Secure in this knowledge, the Newfoundland government fixed standard valuations for different classes of land in each of the affected base areas. These valuations did not reflect the actual agricultural quality of the land, and political and locational factors were clearly factored in. Thus, cultivated land at Stephenville was valued at \$250, while poorer, less productive land at Argentia was valued at \$300. Land in the St. John's/Quidi Vidi area was fixed much higher, at \$400.⁴⁴ Stephenville residents again lost out in the calculation of compensation for disturbance. Property owners everywhere else received an extra 20 percent allowance for disturbance, but those in Stephenville only ten percent.⁴⁵ The government justified this double standard by arguing that Stephenville residents were not as disturbed by the coming of the Americans as the residents of Argentia or Quidi Vidi. Had St. Stephen's Church been located in the "back of the ponds" area, or had the community agreed to relocate to West Bay, government officials might not have concluded that Stephenville's suffering did not compare. In the end, though, the great geographic and social distance separating Stephenville's French-speaking farmers from government administrators in St. John's worked against equal treatment.

Having set these rates of compensation, the Newfoundland government contacted those being displaced. Unable to respond in written English, many of the replies sent by the residents were identical in both language and style, and had obviously been composed by one individual. In each instance, Stephenville residents expressed their willingness to cooperate with the war effort, but wanted compensation for having to move, and to be paid as quickly as possible. Only a few letters took on a more personal tone. Vincent Russell, for example, wrote of his fears for his family's future: "I have a large family and this Parcel [of] land was the living for my self and family. I am in no small way disputing as I am aware this Air Base may be needed. But what I look at Sir what and how am I to be able to maintain my family after my land is gone?"⁴⁶ Similarly, John Austin wrote that the loss of his farm would have a devastating effect on his life: "Now in losing my land I do not see what I can do for a living. All the land taken here is the best farming land in Stephenville.... I know our lands are being taken for war purposes, but I do not understand why they should take all our cleared lands. Why don't they take forest lands and leave the people their cleared farm lands. I never received any bonus from the Government for clearing this land nor was I on dole."⁴⁷ Time and again, these letters reveal the reluctance of farming families to give up the land that they had cleared over several generations. Their vocal support for the war effort, in turn, suggests that they took pains not to appear unpatriotic.

In June 1941, the government made an offer to residents based on what the Americans were willing to pay. Of the 43 replies received by 12 August, 33 ac-

cepted the government's initial offer, and ten asked that the matter go to the Board of Compensation; six had yet to respond.⁴⁸ This represented a far higher acceptance rate than at either Argentia or Quidi Vidi, where residents decided en masse to take their claims to the Board. Whether language played a part in the decision of Stephenville residents to accept the offer is impossible to tell, but those who went to the Board won far more than their original offers. In the most extreme case, store owner Andrew E. Gallant walked away with \$32,425 instead of the \$16,700 he had been originally offered. Not surprisingly, these early awards convinced future claimants to take their chances with the Board (see Table 2).

Table 2. The First Five Stephenville Rulings from the Board of Compensation, Awards and Offers⁴⁹

| <i>Claim Number</i> | <i>Property Owner</i> | <i>Amount Awarded</i> | <i>Amount Originally Offered</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1S | Andrew E. Gallant | \$32,425 | \$16,700 |
| 2S | Euzebe Cormier | \$ 1,315 | \$ 900 |
| 3S | Aloysius White | \$ 5,615 | \$ 2,575 |
| 4S | Telephore White | \$ 3,280 | \$ 1,700 |
| 5S | John Austin | \$ 2,475 | \$ 1,650 |

Those residents who accepted the initial offer waited months for their compensation to arrive; yet without the money they could not afford to rebuild. Magistrate Dawson drew the government's attention on 26 September 1941 to the dire financial circumstances of those who had been displaced. Many families, he wrote, had not been able to pay room and board for the previous three months "in spite of the fact that I have repeatedly written and 'wired' your Department in this connection."⁵⁰ The frustrated magistrate felt that the delay had already produced great dissatisfaction among Stephenville residents and in some cases "imposed a hardship on the people who are boarding families." The money was sent the following week.

The Stephenville claims came in three waves during the war. The first batch of 12 claims (1S to 12S) were resolved by December 1941. After the base expanded, the Board of Compensation travelled to Stephenville in July 1942 to hear another 41 cases (13S to 56S), and returned again in July 1943 to consider yet another 128 claims (57S to 185S). By October 1945, the Board had distributed more than \$3 million to 604 Newfoundland property owners. Of this total, Stephenville's 185 claimants received \$791,270.85,⁵¹ not including the 38 property owners who settled directly for \$133,470.⁵² There were still 26 Stephenville claims outstanding. In short, from the vantage point of the Newfoundland government, the cost of removal had been high, but the process had worked relatively well. Residents had been removed quickly with minimal protest. Unfortunately, no similar claim of success

could be made for the government's handling of the deteriorating sanitary situation at Stephenville.

BOOM TOWN BLUES: THE DETERIORATION OF SANITARY CONDITIONS

In the absence of a strong central government, and with no local governments outside St. John's before 1943, virtually no regulation of growth and development existed in rural Newfoundland. People were free to build what they liked, where they liked. While this did not often pose a problem, the unregulated development that accompanied the erection of paper mills in Corner Brook and Grand Falls earlier in the twentieth century had produced unsanitary shack towns on free Crown Land adjoining the company-owned townsites. The result was a study in contrasts. A March 1943 sanitary survey of Corner Brook, for example, contrasted the well-laid-out streets, the modern buildings and the water and sewerage service provided on the company townsites, with the adjoining community of Corner Brook West where "no thought or planning" had gone into its development.⁵³ Shacks sprawled over the hillside, and residents drank from polluted wells.

Given this history, the Newfoundland government felt certain that without preventative measures, shack towns would spring up next to the outport bases at Argentia and Stephenville. The Agricultural and Rural Reconstruction Committee debated how to control the areas adjoining the bases on 8 January 1941, before the matter was brought before the Commission the following day. J.H. Gorvin, Commissioner for Natural Resources, feared that people working at the bases would build shacks, cafes, stores, and garages without bothering to get building permits,⁵⁴ and suggested giving additional powers to local magistrates. The Commissioner for Justice and Defence, L.E. Emerson, proposed the incorporation of local municipalities, but other Commissioners doubted that residents would support this option out of fear of higher taxes. The Commissioner for Public Health and Welfare, Sir John Puddester, therefore proposed that the government take control by designating territory adjoining the bases as special areas under the jurisdiction of the 1937 Local Administration Act, which allowed for the prosecution of offenders and the removal of buildings constructed without a permit. This had been the situation at the Newfoundland Airport at Gander before the war. To deal with squatters' rights, the government amended the act to prevent shacks from being built on Crown lands within a five-mile radius of the bases.⁵⁵ On 16 September 1941, the Commission directed Puddester to exercise all powers of local authority except taxation in the Argentia and Stephenville areas. Due to his department's limited bureaucratic capacity, this new responsibility was delegated to the local boards of health. The only local authorities in rural Newfoundland, these boards (created to administer the cot-

tage hospitals) were the natural choice to issue building permits in the vicinity of the bases.

As expected, the arrival of the Americans in Stephenville produced a rush to buy land and erect buildings. Farm land was quickly sub-divided into building lots and sold or leased on an ad hoc basis.⁵⁶ The regulatory framework soon broke down, resulting in a hodge-podge of buildings erected on plots of every shape and size. These hastily-built stores sold the wealthy mainlanders much that was not otherwise in demand: large-sized clothing, expensive women's wear, and small leather souvenirs with "Stephenville — Newfoundland" stamped on them.

Taking advantage of this new market, many longtime Stephenville residents went into business for the first time. Euzeb White, for example, opened a store on his property after much of his farm land had been taken away: "We never ran a store before," he said. "I had to do something to eat."⁵⁷ At age 32, farmer-logger Ambrose Payne became a barber.⁵⁸ Norbert Russell's father, in turn, gave him a half-acre of land on which to build a garage, where he sold gas from a drum and did small automotive repairs.⁵⁹ At night, he taxied in his new 1942 Dodge.

Dozens of merchants and other business people followed the Americans to Stephenville to provide a range of amusements, goods and services. They were a varied lot. Maurice J. Boland of Stephenville Crossing sold his lumber interests and built a nickelodeon, the "Royal Theatre," an ice cream parlour, a beer parlour and a department store.⁶⁰ The American trade also attracted Newfoundland merchants of Jewish and Syrian origin from other parts of the island and from Sydney, Nova Scotia.⁶¹

The growing diversity of Stephenville inhabitants did not escape the notice of Newfoundland officials and long-time residents. Anti-Semitism raised its ugly head when the Commission of Government prevented "undesirable traders" from setting up shop near the Argentia base. L.E. Emerson clarified what the government meant by "undesirable":

I can sympathize with the United States authorities in wishing to have just one or, at least the most, two reputable stores in the vicinity of their bases and which would be in accordance with Government policy to avoid the creation of a shack town by Jews and Maronites similar to Grand Falls Station [Windsor]. This must be avoided at all cost.⁶²

To that end, the government gave the prominent St. John's merchant firm of Bowring Brothers a virtual monopoly over the American trade there. While this policy of racial exclusion proved effective on the Crown lands surrounding Argentia, no comparable effort was implemented on the privately-owned lands adjoining Harmon Field. Some Stephenville residents resented the "undesirables" moving into their community. The merchant Arsene V. Gallant, for example, complained to the Board of Compensation that:

Others have moved in there now and are making a few dollars. There are Jew stores established there. Outsiders have come in and opened stores. Had they moved me in the beginning, I would have been better off; I could have established somewhere else near the Base. The other stores are closer to the Base.⁶³

Men were not the only ones operating businesses in wartime Stephenville. In fact, many women owned small convenience stores and laundries. Aloysius White estimated that his wife cleared \$60 a month from selling raisins, onions, and small groceries.⁶⁴ Joan LaFitte, wife of a barber who relocated to Stephenville in 1941, operated a laundry business from her kitchen and a small store out of her front room selling cigarettes, soft drinks and candy. She estimated that she earned \$10 a day from the laundry work — “even on Sunday.”⁶⁵ Margaret Boulos Basha operated a substantial store and restaurant in her own name, and retained a separate bank account even after she married another merchant (Photo 4).

Three families dominated the American trade. Arsene V. Gallant, from Stephenville Crossing, opened his first store in Stephenville just before Christmas 1941. The Gaultois brothers (Francis, George and Henry), with their business partner Richard J. McIsaac, also moved in from the same place.⁶⁶ Finally, Paul and George Boulos came from Millertown Junction. All three lost their stores to the



Photo 4. Margaret Boulos Basha's restaurant and store. PANL. GN 43. Box 17-140.



Photo 5. One of Stephenville's many dance halls. PANL. GN43. Box 17-142.

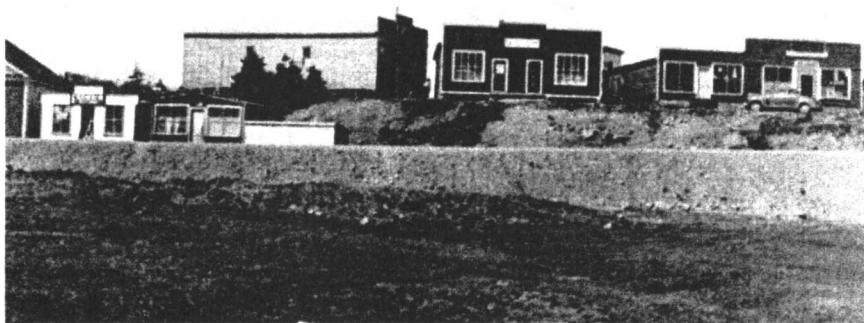


Photo 6. Wartime Stephenville's business district. PANL. GN 43. Box 20-185.

first base expansion in 1942, and their claims went before the Board of Compensation, where they received large settlements for damages. They used this money to rebuild and expand their business operations in close proximity to the main gate. These included a large number of tightly-packed buildings consisting of stores, tenement buildings, dwellings, and various other commercial premises (Photos 5, 6).⁶⁷

With so many houses demolished to make way for Harmon Field, and so many people moving into the settlement, there was naturally an acute housing shortage. W. L. Whelan, solicitor for many of the displaced families, wrote the government in March 1942 with disturbing news: "The situation this Spring is much more difficult than it was last Spring, as this year, people who are moved from their homes have no place to go. Every house in Stephenville outside the Base area is filled up, and I feel quite sure not one family could be placed."⁶⁸ Displaced residents found that they now competed for scarce housing with incoming Newfoundland civilians, as well as the families of American commissioned and non-commissioned officers.⁶⁹ This friendly invasion resulted in overcrowding and high rents.

Some of the newcomers naturally constructed shack dwellings, usually at night when they were not building the base itself. Mack Hulan, for example, purchased a 30-foot by 30-foot plot of land in June 1941, and built a small one-storey building with clapboard siding and a flat tar-paper roof for his family. Others leased small plots of land,⁷⁰ or built shacks on Crown land alongside Noel's Pond. Due to their uncertain tenure, these squatters did not make improvements to the grounds or to their rudimentary structures.⁷¹

The most notorious slum developments were the tenement blocks built a stone's throw from "the Gate" (Photos 7, 8). On a single acre of land, amidst their many other businesses, the Boulos and Gaultois brothers erected 17 and 18 apartments respectively. Built close together, these tenements were long, narrow one-story buildings made of rough lumber. One of the longer tenement buildings, 20-feet by 10-feet, housed ten families.⁷² Typically, each apartment held two to five persons. There were no sanitary conveniences on the property, so tenants used nearby public toilets — little more than raised boards with shallow holes dug underneath. Not surprisingly, the three wells located nearest to Boulos' tenement blocks were all polluted.

Unsanitary conditions were not the only public health issue troubling the American military authorities, who found the problem of venereal disease control particularly difficult in Stephenville.⁷³ Throughout the war, Newfoundland Base Command (NBC) tracked the number of US servicemen infected at its various bases, and found that Harmon Field had the worst record in 1943. Although the overall numbers were small, the rate was generally high even for NBC, which had higher rates of infection than other army commands in the eastern United States and Bermuda.⁷⁴ The rate of infection showed great seasonal fluctuation, with Harmon Field's rate peaking in the spring and summer months of 1943 (Table 3).

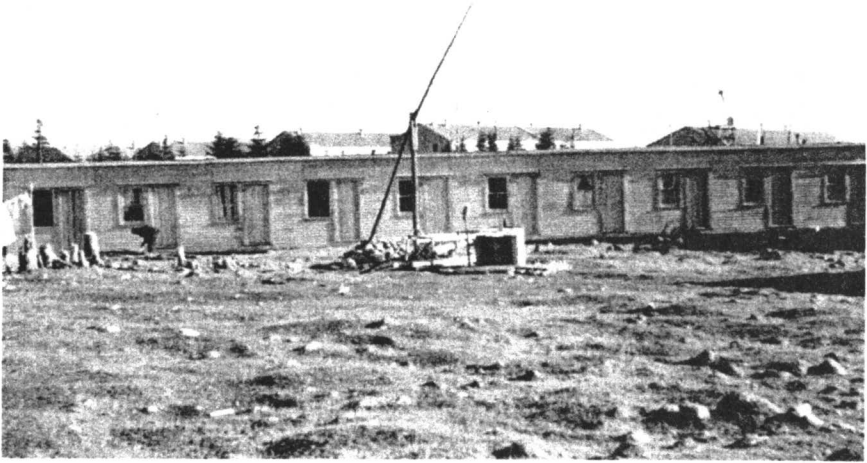


Photo 7. A typical tenement building in Stephenville. PANL. GN 43. Box 17-126.

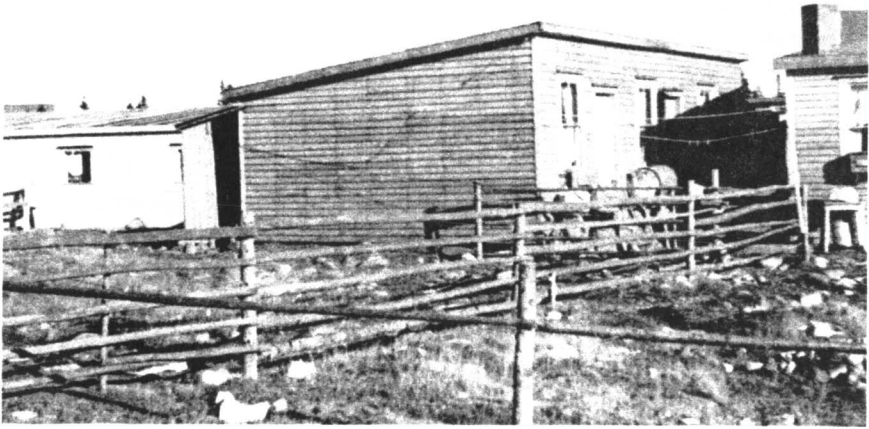


Photo 8. Many shacks were erected behind businesses. PANL. GN 43. Box 19-124B.

To counteract this problem, the US authorities treated infected women at the base hospital “gratis,” but lamented the fact that they could not compel treatment. This state of affairs changed on 8 April 1943, when the district’s civilian Medical Health Officer authorized Harmon Field’s Venereal-Disease Control Officer to “request the local police to produce any local resident he may designate for blood tests. Photographs are to be made of such apprehended individuals and in some

cases necessary sulfathiazole therapy will be administered. The photographs will serve to acquaint Military Police only with these suspects and they will have orders to require any soldier seen in their company to receive prophylaxis.”⁷⁵

Table 3. Composite Monthly Rates of Venereal Disease Infection at Harmon Field, April 1943-March 1944 (per 1000, with actual number in parenthesis)⁷⁶

| <i>Month</i> | <i>Harmon Field</i> | <i>Newfoundland Base Command</i> |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| April 1943 | 54.74 (4) | 14.58 (13) |
| May 1943 | 17.68 (1) | 15.62 (12) |
| June 1943 | 107.64 (6) | 18.95 (15) |
| July 1943 | 85.71 (6) | 24.09 (23) |
| August 1943 | 0 | 17.81 (14) |
| September 1943 | 0 | 20.21 (11) |
| October 1943 | 40.26 (3) | 14.55 (12) |
| November 1943 | 0 | 24.29 (16) |
| December 1943 | 28.69 (2) | 20.22 (16) |
| January 1944 | 0 | 23.35 (13) |
| February 1944 | 17.36 (1) | 31.49 (17) |
| March 1944 | 25.77 (2) | 16.25 (11) |
| TOTAL CASES | 25 | 173 |

With each case of venereal disease discovered among US servicemen, the “source” of the infection was hunted down.⁷⁷ Interrogation of the infected servicemen, whose cooperation was required to escape punishment, led to the identification of civilian women. The resulting case histories identified the race and age of the soldier and the time of infection. The second part of the form asked the name or nickname of the “alleged contact,” her address, race, age, height, weight, colour eyes, hair colour, other descriptive features, occupation, place of employment, “type of contact” (wife, friend, pick-up, streetwalker, brothel, call girl); place of exposure (home, hotel, cab, auto or trailer, brothel, other), name and address of place of exposure, condition of patient at time of exposure (intoxicated, drinking moderately), prophylaxis. The final section detailed the “Procurement History.” Women were thus labelled “suspects” and held solely responsible.⁷⁸

The contact histories reveal that the large majority of cases involved a casual “pick-up” while intoxicated. Where the “source” was identified as a civilian female employee of NBC, she was immediately discharged and treated. Where women lived also came under scrutiny. Corporal Fagan, a Ranger stationed locally, reported that “unmarried girls — girls of questionable reputation” lived in some of

the tenement buildings. He cited one case where a "notorious girl" lived with an American sergeant. Fagan had the landlords evict the couple and extracted a promise to henceforth check men's marriage certificates. Many "delinquent girls" were drummed out of town by the combined efforts of the base authorities, the Rangers and the clergy. In one celebrated incident, the local priest directed in his sermon that no parishioner should lodge or board two women purported to be prostitutes. Having been publicly identified, the women temporarily slept in fields or parked cars before being forced to leave town.⁷⁹

With the infection rate among servicemen embarrassingly high, the US took a number of additional precautionary measures. No soldier was allowed to leave the base on a liberty pass unless he had a prophylaxis kit in his possession. Likewise, all intoxicated soldiers and airmen returning to Harmon Field after a night away received prophylaxis. The usual educational lectures and films were also supplemented by the showing of US Army venereal disease films to civilians at the local movie house. Lastly, military men living off-base were required to prevent suspected "promiscuous females" from living in their homes.

Despite these measures, the spread of venereal diseases went largely unchecked within the civilian population. While there is little data available as to the extent of the contagion, 117 routine examinations in nearby St. George's uncovered 49 cases of syphilis. The American medical authorities reported that the entire civilian population west of St. George's was infected: "These people are descendants of the Micmac Indians and the early French settlers and are called Jackie-Tars. They are poor, uneducated, have low moral standards and are sexually promiscuous. The population shifts frequently with the men going to work in the logging camps and the women in the towns. As mentioned before these areas are 'Off-Limits' to American military personnel and this is a provision which obviously must be enforced." Left unsaid, of course, was the embarrassing fact that venereal diseases had accompanied the American invasion of Stephenville.

By comparison, the public health efforts of the Newfoundland government were meagre. The cottage hospital at Stephenville Crossing was in such a state of disrepair that at one point its refrigeration, light and water systems were out of order.⁸⁰ The hospital also lacked operating room equipment, instrument sterilizers, operating gowns and a resident doctor. A civilian doctor visited the hospital once a week. Given the sad state of civilian medical care, the base hospital at Harmon Field accepted civilian cases throughout the war.⁸¹ All emergencies were therefore handled by American medical personnel. Major James R. Bell related the case of one desperate father whose wife had been discharged from the cottage hospital with a week-old baby which was unable to nurse, but no milk was available. The man pleaded with the Americans for assistance, but under strict instructions from Commissioner Puddester on the subject, an obviously frustrated Bell declined to lend or sell the man any milk. Major Bell nonetheless wrote Puddester to say that these matters "must be corrected by the Commissioners." This story of government ne-

glect undermines more positive interpretations of public health administration during the 1940s.⁸² What existed on paper and what happened on the ground in rural Newfoundland represented two very different realities.

The reasons for the deterioration in Stephenville's sanitary conditions and the increased rate of venereal disease infection among US servicemen in the spring and summer months of 1943 had much to do with the rumoured enlargement of Harmon Field.⁸³ By February 1943, everyone in Stephenville believed that the shack town outside the Gate would soon be swallowed up by the base. In anticipation of this announcement, and with full knowledge that compensation would follow, a building boom erupted.⁸⁴ Much of this feverish activity was little more than blatant opportunism. Corporal Fagan reported in May that:

Huge buildings were hurriedly pushed up with no apparent necessity existing for their erection. Two theatres were erected, a huge warehouse, and numerous buildings. All of the buildings are of the cheapest construction, with clapboard nailed to the studing: the purpose behind their erection is evident — to make a 'rake-off' when the property is eventually acquired by the Government. Quite recently, I served notice on certain people that the land on which they were building was required for the American Base. They continued on building. All the above were erected under permit issued by the Secretary of the Local Board of Health, Stephenville Crossing. Some of the Permits inspected by me have for their expiration date 'June 20, 1943.'⁸⁵

In exasperation, Fagan undiplomatically ended his report by asking his superiors whether "a repetition of the conditions referred to above [were] going to be permitted outside the new Base boundaries?" Would the shack town just move a little down the road as it had done previously? He added bleakly: "We know the people we are dealing with and know what to expect. As soon as they receive notice to move from their present locations, they will commence to build again outside the new boundary line. Even now, certain businessmen are acquiring building lots located in proximity to the new Base boundaries."⁸⁶

At about the same time, disturbing reports about the rapidly expanding shack town were being received in St. John's from Medical Corps officers stationed at Harmon Field. Captain Earl S. Hallinger wrote in February 1943 that adjacent to the Gate there existed a "large number of temporary type shanties and shacks, in which live the families of twenty enlisted men, and others who may be considered as ordinary 'camp followers.' This situation is bad from the health standpoint, not only because of the crowded and unsanitary conditions existing there, but also because of the presence in this area of a few highly undesirable females."⁸⁷ In May, he repeated his warning that the area constituted a "menace to the health of the command, and is rapidly becoming more intolerable due to increase in number of buildings now being erected in that locality."⁸⁸

On 26 May, US diplomat Charles S. Reed II warned the Newfoundland government that unscrupulous individuals in Stephenville were rushing the construction

of buildings in order to claim additional compensation.⁸⁹ As the race to build continued unabated, US Consul General George D. Hopper wrote to the Newfoundland government on 9 July to say that his country had no intention of compensating anyone who built after 8 December 1942, the day that the US advised Newfoundland that it intended to expand Harmon Field. To make his point, Hopper cited one enterprising merchant who erected a store and placed empty shoe boxes on the shelves in order to say that the business was a "going concern."⁹⁰

With the Americans now raising the alarm, the Commission of Government finally came to the realization that the situation in Stephenville had badly deteriorated. Taken aback by what he witnessed during his visit on 4 June 1943, Puddester reported that: "Only the width of a military road separates the settlement from the buildings on the Base, and some of the houses of the settlement are literally situated right at the door of the Base, being less than a stone's throw from the entrance gates." He concluded that for all intents and purposes this settlement was continuous with the base itself, and thus had a direct bearing on the health of the servicemen stationed there. Very few buildings in this area, whether commercial or residential, "could pass muster under any system of inspection, no matter how mild the minimum requirements might be." Settlers lived in "little more than shacks covered with tarred paper," and the tenements were so poorly constructed that he could see the ground beneath the flooring, and the apartments were open to wind and weather. The surroundings were in an "untidy and very filthy condition" with household garbage and slops being disposed of by "throwing them into open cess pools which constitute a serious menace to health." The only sanitary conveniences were small privies "covered with tarred paper and set up all over the place."

Sent to Stephenville to help clean up the mess, the sanitary inspector Dr. Bishop fined shack owners for polluting the waters of Noel's Pond, the main source of drinking water for Harmon Field. He ordered that the tenements be emptied of their occupants, and found the well water supply of the town to be "uniformly and grossly contaminated by sewage and human excreta." This finding convinced the Americans to temporarily place off-limits all cafes, barber shops, and other establishments using water in the course of their business.⁹¹

The great expansion of Harmon Field that followed resulted in the bulldozing of the shack town. In addition to the usual military reasons given, the base expansion of 1943-1944 was justified on the basis of "control of the administration, health and discipline of military personnel."⁹² Evidently, the inability of the Newfoundland government to control growth in Stephenville had convinced the American authorities to take matters into their own hands.

The Board of Compensation visited Stephenville in July 1943 to hear the claims of those displaced (Table 4). As expected, Boulos and Gaultois claimed exorbitant investments for their newly-erected premises. This time round, however, they faced sometimes tough cross-examination. For example, they were repeatedly asked whether they knew that the buildings going up would soon be expropriated.

The lawyer for Francis Gaultois retorted: "I want to squash right now any feeling this Board might have, or any suggestion that Mr. Gaultois went down there and built in the expectation of a large reward from this Board." More often, however, those questioned fell back on the simple truth that they had been issued a building permit.

Table 4. Amounts Claimed and Awarded for Selected Stephenville Cases, 1943-44⁹³

| <i>Claim #</i> | <i>Name</i> | <i>Amount Claimed</i> | <i>Amount Awarded</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 88S | George Boulos | 23,915.40 | 5,970 |
| 92S | Paul Boulos | 14,337.60 | 4,370 |
| 89S | Boulos & Co | 63,503.85 | 9,515.60 |
| 80S | Gaultois & McIsaac | 83,845.40 | 17,637.20 |
| 95S | Maurice J. Boland | 90,124.26 | 41,630 |
| 128S | Austin & Rodney White | 29,096.90 | 15,800 |
| TOTAL | | 304,923.41 | 94,912.80 |

The huge difference between claims and eventual awards can be explained by the Board's decision not to award compensation for lost profits. Unhappiness with this decision led many claimants to demand a re-hearing. In August 1944, 28 Stephenville claimants who had refused to vacate their premises were summoned to St. George's to appear before the Supreme Court on Circuit, which ruled in favour of the government. Once served notice, most of the hold-outs left the next week.⁹⁴ But, unwilling to accept the Board's \$610 award for their shack dwelling, Cecelia White and her husband Remi refused to leave (Photo 9).⁹⁵ After repeated warnings, the Newfoundland Rangers entered the house in October 1944 and removed the couple's furniture and possessions and placed them on the ground a short distance away. Thus ended a little-known chapter in Stephenville's history.

How, then, did the public health situation in Stephenville deteriorate so badly? The testimony of two of the three members of the local Board of Health, Charles "Charley" Martyn and Richard J. McIsaac, provide a clue. It turns out that the Board's chairman, Magistrate Dawson, who lived in St. George's, did not involve himself in its day-to-day operations. The work thus fell to the two other members, both residents of Stephenville Crossing. That Richard J. McIsaac, business partner of the Gaultois brothers, was party to some of the worst violations of the building regulations did not go unnoticed. No doubt personally profiting from the passivity of the Board of Health, he nonetheless played a secondary role to Charles Martyn who, as Secretary-Treasurer, issued the building permits.

Although Martyn agreed that the purpose of the Board was to ensure that public health was not jeopardized, he claimed that he had "no powers to interfere in any



Photo 9. Cecelia White before her eviction. PANL. GN 43. Box 20-161.

way.”⁹⁶ As a result, he issued building permits to all comers, and failed to conduct a single inspection even though he was required to do so. When asked about this failure by the Board of Compensation, Martyn replied that he had not bothered as “there was no funds for anybody to go down, so nobody went. The machinery broke down through lack of funds and organization.” Martyn also complained that he did not get satisfaction from the many letters he had sent to St. John’s about being paid: “I get no remuneration; not even ‘thank you’ for this job. I do not see why I should fly all over Stephenville about these permits.”⁹⁷

The trouble began, Martyn argued, in the spring of 1943 when business owners displaced the previous year moved “a little further down to the entrance of the Base and built up again.” Some of the businessmen, he said, had not “played the game by building these sorts of buildings.” Gaultois and Boulos, for example, first made application to build a store and then “roughly fixed them up and rented them out for people to live in. There had been no permit for that sort of building.” Martyn’s testimony confirms that there had been no control of development in Stephenville before June 1942 when the permit system began, and only nominal supervision thereafter. Building permits were issued on demand with no subsequent inspection of any kind. He even continued to issue permits after it had become evident that the

area would soon be expropriated for the base. "There was nothing to prevent me," he testified. He had received no instructions to do otherwise.⁹⁸

Despite this assertion, a letter instructing the local Board of Health to desist from issuing permits was sent to Magistrate Dawson on 20 April 1943. The local Board was to "go very slow about issuing any building permits at all until the area of enlargement of Harmon Field has been definitely made known to us. It would therefore be best to have all applications for permission to build referred to this Department before any permit is issued."⁹⁹ The letter also instructed Dawson to enforce departmental building and public health regulations — "no permit should be granted except upon a definite undertaking by the applicant to comply with the conditions of the Department" — and that building sites be inspected. Though this letter did not demand an outright suspension of building permits, it came very close to doing so.

The Stephenville situation proved intensely embarrassing to Commissioner John Puddester, who had already had food control removed from him due to departmental bungling. Now, his department risked taking the blame for the unsanitary condition of Stephenville. In private, Puddester admitted candidly to a fellow Commissioner that "nothing like the control required and instructed by this Department had been exercised" there.¹⁰⁰ But at no time did Puddester take personal responsibility for what had happened. Just as Martyn blamed the failures of the government for the deteriorating public health situation, Puddester placed all the blame on the local Board of Health. He noted that his department had a local official (presumably Martyn) brought to St. John's for detailed instructions, and had believed that the situation in Stephenville was "well in hand" until complaints from the Americans began to arrive in May 1943. There had evidently been no supervision of the local Board of Health in the interim. As a result, both the Department of Public Health and Welfare in St. John's and the local Board of Health must share the blame for the deteriorating public health situation in Stephenville.

Having drawn the same conclusion, the government ceded control of commercial development in Stephenville to the commanding officer of Harmon Field in 1944. For the remainder of the war, anyone wanting to start a business in Stephenville had to get American approval. In its effort to impose order on Stephenville, the United States authorities barred undesirable traders from rebuilding in the area. This decision resulted in the dispersal of the wartime business community that had sprouted up next to the base. Nonetheless, the problem of shack development persisted, culminating in the suspension of all civilian construction in the area from 1 July 1945 until 18 October 1946. Though no permits were issued during this time, creative minds got around the suspension by constructing shacks outside the controlled area and moving them into Stephenville.¹⁰¹ A. V. Gallant simply went ahead and built his new store, making the suspension a "laughing stock."¹⁰² The problem of disorderly growth thus did not end with the war. Asked if these illegally built dwellings and businesses should be torn down, Magistrate F.

Scott replied in 1948 that it would serve no useful purpose as the problem had become "systemic" to the Stephenville area.¹⁰³

CONCLUSION

The coming of the Americans to Stephenville in 1941 resulted in several years of disorderly growth, punctuated by successive removals as Harmon Field expanded to encompass an ever-wider area. This pattern of growth and removal resulted in a constant state of uncertainty for Stephenville residents. The way of life of the older farmers had been profoundly disrupted, and the local magistrate doubted that the younger generation would ever return to the land. But what represented a tragedy for some proved to be an opportunity for others. Wartime Stephenville featured a large number of stores, amusements, shacks and tenements packed into a confined area next to the main gate of the base. But in the absence of state regulation, sudden population growth produced an unsanitary shack town. Makeshift privies and cess-pools quickly polluted the town's drinking water. These deteriorating sanitary conditions, combined with the introduction of venereal diseases by the Americans, proved embarrassing to the Newfoundland government.

This boom town atmosphere, unrestrained by any state regulation, peaked in the spring and summer months of 1943 when a building rush erupted in anticipation of windfall compensation payments. By then, it was an open secret that the community's ramshackle business district would soon be swallowed up by the base. The Newfoundland government's decision to delegate the power to issue building permits to a voluntary local Board of Health and its failure to oversee matters, thus proved disastrous. This mercenary behaviour provides ample proof that business owners had hitherto fared well in Board of Compensation proceedings. At a minimum, the often-repeated claim that Newfoundlanders would have fared better had they negotiated directly with the Americans for property compensation is unsupported by the archival record.¹⁰⁴ Though known for its wealth and generosity, the United States government did not recognize Newfoundland's customary allowance for collective property rights, replacement value, moving costs, legal fees, and damages, including disturbance and lost profits. Had the Newfoundland government not insisted on applying its own more expansive notion of property valuation, compensation would have been limited to the market value of the land and property being taken. Order was only imposed in late 1943 when the Americans expropriated the offending shack town and won the right to regulate commercial development outside the leased area. The transformation of Stephenville from a close-knit community of French-speaking and Catholic farmers into an outport base thus proved to be a disorderly and drawn-out affair.

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Notes

¹Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL). GN 13/1/B. Box 93, file 64: Miscellaneous — St. George's Magistracy, 1937-1943. "January 1943 Miscellaneous Report."

²Newfoundland. Department of Public Health and Welfare. *Tenth Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935. Volume 1: Population by Districts and Settlements* (St. John's: The Evening Telegram, 1937), 386.

³National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland. RG 338. RG 59. Decimal File, 1940-44, Box 5054. W.H. Kennedy, Bureau of Yards and Docks, US Navy, "Report on General Conditions in Newfoundland," 28 September 1941. See also "Stephenville-History," *Decks Awash* 13, 4 (July-August 1984).

⁴Supplementary farming was an integral part of the local economy in Newfoundland outport communities. See Sean Cadigan, "The Role of Agriculture in Outport Self-Sufficiency," in Rosemary E. Ommer (ed.), *The Resilient Outport: Ecology, Economy and Society in Rural Newfoundland* (St. John's: ISER, 2002).

⁵PANL. Department of Agriculture and Rural Reconstruction. GN 31/3A. R 602. Minute by Commissioner of Natural Resources, 13 January 1941.

⁶*Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935*, II: 396-97.

⁷Cecilia Benoit, "Mothering in a Newfoundland Community: 1900-1940," in Katherine Arup, Andree Levesque, and Ruth Roach Pierson (eds.), *Delivering Motherhood: Ideologies and Practice in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 174.

⁸The fact that it was mainly French-speaking provided an additional sense of community cohesion. For a brief history see Gary R. Butler, "L'Acadie et la France se rencontrent: le peuplement franco-acadien de la baie St. Georges, Terre Neuve," *Newfoundland Studies* 10, 2 (1994), 180-207. Occupational pluralism in Canada's Maritime Provinces has been examined by James Sacouman in Bryant Fairley, Colin Leys and James Sacouman (eds.), *Restructuring and Resistance: Perspectives from Atlantic Canada* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990).

⁹Not to be confused with Stephenville Crossing, nine miles to the west.

¹⁰William Clarence Parrott, "On the Perimeter: A Reconstruction of the Military Geography of Newfoundland and Labrador During the Second World War, 1939-1945" (MA thesis, Memorial University, 1993), 225.

¹¹PANL. RG 4.3. Map 2390: Philip Bruton, "Stephenville Staging Field — Boundary Lines and Property Ownership," US Engineer Office, St. John's, Newfoundland, 25 April 1941.

¹²PANL. RG 4.3. Map 4548: Philip Bruton, "Harmon Field. Revised Boundary Line and Property Ownership," 17 September 1941.

¹³PANL. RG 4.3. Map 4537: Philip Bruton, "Harmon Field Boundary Line and Property Ownership," 20 October 1941.

¹⁴Every Stephenville resident identified him or herself as Roman Catholic in 1935. *Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935*.

¹⁵The United States authorities kept regular tallies of male employees only.

¹⁶It is important to distinguish between the policy intentions on the one hand and actual outcomes on the other. For a study of the ambitious reforms to public health administration see Peter Neary, "Venereal Disease and Public Health Administration in Newfoundland in the 1930s and 1940s," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 15 (1998), 129-51. A more critical view of the Commission of Government is presented in James Overton, "Economic Crisis and the End of Democracy: Politics and Newfoundland During the Great Depression," *Labour/Le Travail* 26 (Fall 1990), 85-124.

¹⁷John Cardoulis, *A Friendly Invasion: The American Military in Newfoundland, 1940-1990* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1990).

¹⁸PANL. GN 13/2/A. Box 390, file 50. Memorandum by W.W. Woods (Commissioner of Public Works), 29 July 1942.

¹⁹PANL. GN 13/1/B. Box 365, file 19. Governor Walwyn to Viscount Addison (Dominions Secretary), 15 October 1945. The strategic importance of Newfoundland is examined in Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engelman and Byron Fairchild, *The Western Hemisphere: Guarding the United States and its Outposts* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1964), especially chapter 14.

²⁰The negotiation of the bases agreement is well examined in Charlie Whitham, "On Dealing with Gangsters: The Limits of British 'Generosity' in the Leasing of Bases to the United States, 1940-1941," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 7, 3 (November 1996), 589-630.

²¹The custom differed elsewhere in the dependent Empire, where the governor of the colony made an initial valuation. PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Governor to Dominions Secretary, 30 December 1940.

²²PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Governor to Dominions Secretary, 23 November 1940. Judge William J. Higgins was later named to the board. See Peter Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996 [1988]), 141. The board is also discussed in Malcolm MacLeod, *Peace of the Continent* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1986), 31-5.

²³PANL. GN 13/1/B. Box 104A, file #1.

²⁴PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. J.H. Gorvin to Commission, 20 December 1940.

²⁵PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Dominions Secretary to Governor, 20 December 1940.

²⁶PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Cordell Hull to N.M. Butler (chargé d'affaires), 13 December 1940.

²⁷PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Governor to Dominions Secretary, 30 December 1940.

²⁸PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Governor to British chargé d'affaires in Washington, 9 January 1941.

²⁹PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Circular despatch to Newfoundland and other base colonies, 22 January 1941.

³⁰PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Hull to Butler, 13 December 1940.

³¹PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/2. Governor to Dominions Secretary, 8 February 1941.

³²PANL. GN 31/3A, R 602. Minute by Commissioner for Natural Resources, 13 January 1941.

³³PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/5. R.D. Fraser to the Secretary for Natural Resources, 14 March 1941, enclosing General Condition Report from the Stephenville Crossing detachment.

³⁴PANL. GN 31/3A, R 602. S.F. O'Driscoll to J.E. Tabor, Director of Agriculture, March 1941.

³⁵PANL. GN 4/1/D, G/445/2. J. F. Dawson to Secretary for Justice, 31 May 1941.

³⁶PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/5. Philip G. Bruton to W.J. Robinson (Chief Engineer, Department of Public Works), 9 June 1941.

³⁷PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/5. Bruton to Robinson, 12 June 1941.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹PANL. GN 31/3A, R 602. R.S. James to Tabor, 2 July 1941.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹James' views on land values were widely shared. A US Navy officer sent to investigate the Argentia claims in January 1943 heard a similar argument being made by Judge Higgins, Chairman of the Board of Compensation. He said that land values in Newfoundland took into account the scarcity of agricultural land and the work required to clear it. PANL. GN 38. Box S 3-1-2, file 6. Gerald G. Tessier to Sir Wilfrid Woods, 16 January 1943. That same week, Woods informed the Americans that in Newfoundland "disturbance" represented a legitimate claim "because of the low fertility of the soil." Cultivated land had been made to produce "only by dint of the hard labor of many generations." NARA. RG 59. 811.34544. Box 3798. Memorandum of conversation between Woods, and Mr. Hickerson and Miss Borjes of the Department of State, 15 January 1943.

⁴²PANL. GN 4/1/D, G/445/2. Bruton to Woods, 5 July 1941.

⁴³As it turned out, the United States refused to pay compensation for disturbance. See Peter Neary, "'A Mortgaged Property': The Impact of the United States on Newfoundland, 1940-1949," in James Hiller and Peter Neary (eds.), *Twentieth Century Newfoundland: Explorations* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1994), 183.

⁴⁴PANL. GN 13/1/B. Box 104A, file #1.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶PANL. GN 4/3. Box 20. File: Vincent Russell. Russell to Woods, 6 March 1941.

⁴⁷PANL. GN 4/3. Box 17. Claim 5S. Austin, John. Austin to Department of Public Works, 5 March 1941.

⁴⁸PANL. GN 4/1/D, G/445/2. W. J. Robinson to Magistrate Dawson, 12 August 1941.

⁴⁹The underlying reason for the higher awards likely originates with the US refusal to consider claims for disturbance, loss of business and replacement value. PANL. GN 4/1/D, G/445/2. All five of these claimants travelled to St. John's to meet the Board.

⁵⁰PANL. GN 4/1/D, G/445/2. Dawson to Woods, 26 September 1941.

⁵¹The dollar figure, as well, did not factor in government payments for temporary accommodation, cost of moving, or legal fees. PANL. GN 4/1/D. R. Manning, Secretary of Public Works to Commissioner for Home Affairs and Education, 14 November 1945.

⁵²PANL. GN 38. Box S 3-1-2. File 6. Tessier to Woods, 16 January 1943.

⁵³NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 22. File: Sanitary Reports. Capt. Charles W. Barton, "Sanitary Survey of Corner Brook, Newfoundland," 23 March 1943. The situation in Grand Falls proved broadly similar. Next to the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company's townsite was the shack town of Grand Falls Station (later Windsor). NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 19. File: Sanitary Reports. Capt. Duane L. Cady, "Sanitary Survey of Grand Falls, Newfoundland," 8 July 1941.

⁵⁴PANL. GN 31/3A, D 26/21/4. J.H. Gorvin, 10 January 1941.

⁵⁵PANL. GN 13/1/B. Box 119, file 46. Acting Director of Local Government Affairs to Secretary for Justice, 2 July 1948.

⁵⁶This was also true of Corner Brook West. PANL. GN 38. Box S 6-1-6, file 1: Bowater's Newfoundland Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd., "A Report on Existing Conditions and Recommended Public Improvements for West Corner Brook," 1 November 1939.

⁵⁷Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS), Memorial University. Collection 87, John G. Higgins, 2.08.011, Claim #23. Euzeb White's testimony, 7 July 1942.

⁵⁸CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #66S. O'Dallon White's testimony, 13 July 1943.

⁵⁹CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #96S. Norbert Russell's testimony, 19 July 1943.

⁶⁰CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #65S. Maurice J. Boland's testimony, 13 July 1943.

⁶¹Newfoundland's Jewish community expanded considerably during the war. Alison Kahn, *Listen While I Tell You: A Story of the Jews of St. John's, Newfoundland* (St. John's: ISER, 1987), 101, 119-22, and 145. But for a discussion of Newfoundland's immigration policy and Jewish refugees during the 1930s, see Gerhard P. Bassler, *Sanctuary Denied: Refugees from the Third Reich and Newfoundland Immigration Policy, 1906-1949* (St. John's: ISER, 1992).

⁶²PANL. GN 4/1/D, G/442. L.E. Emerson to Commissioner for Natural Resources, 17 May 1941.

⁶³CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #11S. Arsene V. Gallant's testimony, December 1941.

⁶⁴CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim # 3S. Aloysius White's testimony.

⁶⁵The Gaultois family already operated grocery stores in several communities in the district. CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #15S. Martin LaFitte's testimony, 7 July 1942.

⁶⁶CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #18S. Francis Anthony Gaultois' testimony, 7 July 1942.

⁶⁷PANL. GN 4/3. Box 19. Claim #80S. Gaultois Bros and Richard McIsaac.

⁶⁸PANL. GN 4/3. Box 19. Claim #100S. Letter from W. L. Whelan, 23 March 1942.

⁶⁹CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #54S. Loyal Johnson's testimony, 9 July 1942.

⁷⁰PANL. GN 4/3. Box 20. Claim # 154S. Sheppard, Isaac.

⁷¹CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim # 60S. James A Pitman's testimony, 12 July 1943.

⁷²CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.011. Claim #29S. George and Paul Boulos' testimony.

⁷³The exaggerated reaction, or "moral panic" concerning venereal disease during World War II, is explored in Ruth Roach Pierson, *'They're Still Women After All': The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).

⁷⁴NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 46. File: Venereal Disease Reports. Lt. Colonel John B. Lynch, Base Surgeon, "Venereal Disease Control Activities: Harmon Field and Vicinity," 31 May 1944.

⁷⁵NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 22. File: Sanitary Reports. Capt. William H. Fleming, Acting VD Control Officer, 3 May 1943.

⁷⁶These figures were compiled using venereal disease reports in NARA. RG 338. NBC.

⁷⁷NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 22. File: Sanitary Reports. Lt. Richard W. Lippman, VD Control Officer, to 311th Station Hospital, New York, 30 June 1943.

⁷⁸This was nothing new. The British Contagious Disease Acts in the 1860s established a similar system of inspection in eighteen "subjected areas." See Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁷⁹NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 19. File: Venereal Disease. Captain Daniel Bergsma, "Venereal Disease and Other Health Problems in Newfoundland," 1 December 1942.

⁸⁰PANL. GN 38. S 6-1-4, file 14: Major James R. Bell to Puddester, 22 June 1945. The contents of a November 1939 report suggests that these sub-standard conditions were long-standing. PANL. GN 38. S6-1-2, file: Establishment of Health Services in 1938-41.

⁸¹PANL. GN 38. S6-1-4, file 25: Bell to Leonard Miller (Director of Medical Services), 3 July 1945. The US Army's medical service in Newfoundland is explored briefly in Charles M. Wiltse, *The Medical Department: Medical Service in the Mediterranean and Minor Theatres* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1965).

⁸²Neary, "Venereal Disease and Public Health Administration."

⁸³PANL. GN 4/1/D. Volume 7: P.D.H. Dunn (Commissioner of Natural Resources) to Commissioner for Public Utilities, 15 May 1943, enclosing report (4 May 1943) from the Ranger at Stephenville.

⁸⁴PANL. GN 38. S6-1-4, file 11: Report by Ranger J. Fagan, 3 June 1943.

⁸⁵PANL. GN 4/1/D. Volume 7: Dunn to Commissioner for Public Utilities, 15 May 1943.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 22. File: Sanitary Reports. Capt. Earl S. Hallinger, "Monthly Sanitary Report," 1 February 1943.

⁸⁸NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 22. File: Sanitary Reports. Major Earl S. Hallinger, 3 May 1943.

⁸⁹PANL. GN 4/1/D. Volume 7: Charles S. Reed II to Woods, 26 May 1943.

⁹⁰PANL. GN 4/1/D. Volume 7: George D. Hopper to Woods, 9 July 1943.

⁹¹NARA. RG 338. NBC. Box 22. File: Sanitary Reports. Lt. Richard W. Lippman, "Supplement to Monthly Sanitary Report for June 1943," 30 June 1943.

⁹²PANL. GN 13/2/A. Box 390, file 50: Hopper to Emerson, 14 September 1942.

⁹³PANL. GN 4/1/D, G/445/6: John G. Higgins to H.A. Winter, 28 January 1946.

⁹⁴PANL. GN 38. Box S 2-5-2, file 48: J. Fagan, Ranger Report, 5 October 1944.

⁹⁵PANL. GN 4/3. Box 20. Claim #157S. White, Cecelia.

⁹⁶CNS. Higgins Collection, 2.08.11.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹PANL. GN 38. Box S 6-1-3, file 67: Mosdell to Dawson, 20 April 1943.

¹⁰⁰PANL. GN 4/1/D. Volume 7: Puddester to Commissioner for Public Utilities, 28 May 1943.

¹⁰¹PANL. GN 13/1/B. Box 119, file: 46. H.W. Quinton to Secretary for Justice, 29 April 1946.

¹⁰²PANL. GN 13/1/B. Box 119, file 46: F. Scott (Assistant Magistrate for St. George's) to Secretary for Public Health and Welfare, 26 November 1945.

¹⁰³PANL. GN13/1/B. Box 115, file 46: Scott, 28 September 1948.

¹⁰⁴Eileen Houlihan suggested that had Argentia residents dealt directly with the US government instead of the British, "a town with modern conveniences would have been prepared for us in the beginning." Peter Neary, "Eileen (Hunt) Houlihan's Family Memoirs," *Newfoundland Studies* 7, 1 (1991), 48-64.