

Excerpts from Decks Awash

Sources: See individual excerpts

Some Oldtimers: Story-Telling with Johnny Stride

Source: Vol. 10, No. 5, October 1981, pp. 21

... Another old-timer that John Stride likes to remember is Ephriam Rowsell, local fur-buyer from about 1880 to 1920. Eph Rowsell would travel to the various settlements in the Bay each February to buy furs, relay news, and get into long conversations. "One night in Charles' Brook," explains Johnny, "there was John Hutchings, Danny Decker, and Skipper George Perry all got together when Eph Rowsell arrived, and they talked about the Bible all night long. They were sitting around the wood stove smoking Home Rule tobacco. It was a Waterloo Number Three stove with a rim around it, and by four in the morning, they had the top of that stove filled right level with matches from lighting their clay pipes. After they had had a couple of hours sleep, Eph packed up his furs to head across the Bay to Uncle Bobby Porter's house. Just after he left, Danny Decker remembered some point he had forgot to bring up in the discussion the night before, so he put on his snowshoes and caught up to Eph Rowsell out the tickle just to have the last word. That's the kind of fella they were in them days!

"Once when I was going on the spring drive, about 1927 or '28, I went over to Point Leamington to visit Eph Rowsell and court a girl there at the same time. We were sitting in the kitchen and the girls were singing a new Pentecostal hymn, singing right loud. I could see that Eph, who was about 80 years old, was getting angry. Suddenly he ups with the big size 13 boot and stamps down on the floor, letting out a big roar, 'I wants to be talkin,' he says, and puts the run on the women. He wanted to talk to me and find out how many of the old guys had survived the winter, and how they were doing."

[Note: Johnny Stride lived in Phillips Head]

Point Leamington

Source: Vol. 10, No. 5, October 1981, p. 10

In 1912 James P. Howley recounted a story of one man named Rowsell who was killed by Beothuk Indians at New Bay.

Mrs. Violet Baggs of Point Leamington, however, maintains there were two Rowsells, brothers Thomas and Joseph, who were early settlers at Point Leamington and of whom she is a direct descendant. The two men regularly visited an area near the millstream at Point Leamington where they dammed the river and caught salmon.

Thomas became a lifelong friend of the Beothuks who came to the area in the summer to catch salmon and otter, and he often gave the Indians salmon directly from his capture dam or his cutting table.

His brother Joseph was a sworn enemy of the Beothuks and often unloaded his rifle in their direction to prove it. Howley reported that the Indians had no love for Rowsell and they finally ambushed him.

Violet Baggs maintains that the murder of Joseph Rowsell in fact took place at the millstream in Point Leamington where the Indians shot Rowsell full of arrows and later stuck his head on a pole, as was their custom. She feels that the Indians sought revenge on him because one of them had been accidentally killed while playing with a gun on board Rowsell's vessel which they had been raiding.