

Community Profile: Rattling Brook by D. Smith

Source: The Nor'Wester, Springdale, Newfoundland, Wednesday, July 15, 1981

There are seven original families that settled in Rattling Brook during the late 1800s. The first man to bring his family to the present-day site of the community was Jesse Newhook, a furrier by trade. In rapid succession he was followed by the families of Phillip Upwards, Elias Toms, Richard Foster (from Shoe Cove), William Budgell, Solomon Rowsell, William Burcey Bartlett, and others. Although other families have moved into Rattling Brook down through the years, the majority of people living in the village have descended from the original families.

The land on which the community was built was and is fertile. During the early years, agriculture was very important to the inhabitants of Rattling Brook. Not only did the soil yield a supply of food for the people, it also provided money; money gained from the sale of farm products to the people of Tilt Cove who were enjoying a boom period due to the mining that was ongoing in that area. Many of the older residents of the community recall that life was simpler forty and fifty years ago. Not easier - harder - but simpler nonetheless. As with many Newfoundlanders, the people of Rattling Brook had to work hard just to survive. Luxuries were unknown and the bare essentials were considered luxurious.

Fishing was of prime importance. Scotch herring (a particular way of salting herring) and the barrels to pack them in were, at one time, an important part of Rattling Brook's industry base. The smoking of fish also had its place. Smoked fish for food and money was once an important industry. Even today, there are still smokehouses to be seen along the shoreline of Rattling Brook.

During the thirties, snaring rabbits and selling them for 25cents a pair provided much needed funds in the winter months when fishing was impossible. Lumbering was yet another way that was found to survive. Some moved inland to work for logging companies. Others stayed in Rattling Brook, cutting lumber for their own use and for sale in St. John's. In 1929 the keel was laid for the first of ten schooners that would be built in Rattling Brook over the next twelve years by men

working for Mr. Frank Bartlett. There would be an average of eight men working on each schooner. Eight more would be gathering materials needed in the construction work. The daily wage was \$1.50 per day.

Among the schooners built by Mr. Bartlett were: the Arizona (27 tons), the Denver City (76 tons), the Dawson City (87 tons), the Eric Bartlett (96 tons), the Audrey Bartlett (77 tons), the Golda (35 tons), the Tempest (67 tons).

Each of the ten schooners was built according to 1st class bounty regulations, meaning that each of the schooners was at the top of her class. The average price at sale for a 1st class bount schooner was approximately \$7,000. The boatbuilding in Rattling Brook was an important boom to the village simply because of the era in which it occurred. This industry created jobs that were much needed during the depression period. At that time, Rattling Brook was one of the few areas of Newfoundland which was building schooners on a continual basis.

There is only one church in Rattling Brook. This United Church was first built in 1904. It was rebuilt on a different site in 1941 and timbers from the old church were used in the second structure. In September of 1978 a new church was officially opened and the previous one torn down. Even now the finishing touches are still being completed on the new building.

The Fisherman's Protective Union built a community hall in Rattling Brook between 1910 and 1915. Fifteen years later it was taken over and used by the Orangemen. It was in use for almost forty years until a new L.O.L. building was erected and opened in 1965.

A part of Newfoundland history which is deeply embedded in the history of Rattling Brook is the old mail delivery route. During the summer months, a coastal boat would stop weekly on its way up the coast. It would pick up and deliver mail, supplies and any passengers. It would not stop at Rattling Brook on its way back to Lewisport. Rather, the coastal boat would stop at Harry's Harbour and all mail to go would be collected by a smaller boat and taken to meet it. All the mail from the coastal boat would be brought back in a similar fashion. However, during the winter months, the only mail route was overland by dogteam. A man who held many of the contracts for this area was Job Randell. One of the principle carriers was William Rowsell of Rattling Brook.

The mail was brought to Davis Pond from Badger via Springdale. At Davis Pond the mail was picked up and brought back to Rattling Brook and King's Point in an hour's run. From there it was taken by dogteam(s) to Middle Arm, Burlington, and Nippers Harbour. From Nippers Harbour the mail was taken to Tilt Cove. At Tilt Cove the mail was passed to a different dogteam and it was taken to Shoe Cove and La Scie. After delivering the mail to Tilt Cove, the Rattling Brook dogteam would retrace its route, picking up mail as it returned.

Rattling Brook is now an area dependent on the larger communities. Few of the people who live in Rattling Brook actually work there. Most have farms and jobs elsewhere. One of the oldest surviving businesses is Joshua Toms and Sons. Others include Pearls Farms and Golden Yolk Farms. There are also a number of sawmills operated in and around Rattling Brook.

Today, there is a common problem facing many Newfoundland communities. The problem is that many of the younger people have had to leave their home community and often their home province to find work. To this problem, Rattling Brook is no exception. The government wharf the former meeting-place for the younger generation now stands abandoned. Most of the people who remain in Rattling Brook are the older people who have homes established and the younger people who are not yet old enough to leave. There are few exceptions.

The paved road ends at the end of Rattling Brook. Beyond that there is only a dirt road leading down to the "Barrens." Because of this, traffic jams are not much of a problem in Rattling Brook. Ask one of the younger people about Rattling Brook. "Nothing ever goes on here." Ask one of the older people about Rattling Brook. "It was different in my day, not like it is now." Rattling Brook has gone from a place used for survival to a place where "nothing much ever goes on."