

Offbeat History: The first settlers in Green Bay

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Last week this column carried an account of one of the first settlers on the Straight Shore, in the community now known as Carmanville. He was an Englishman named John Day, who came to Newfoundland around 1805. A local schoolteacher, some years ago, compiled a very interesting story of John Day's career which was the basis of this column. The story was of particular interest to some descendants of John Day who are living in St. John's, and they have promised to forward additional information about this remarkable pioneer.

In the meantime, here is another factual account of the pioneers at the other side of Notre Dame Bay, particularly the Little Bay Island area of Green Bay. The two accounts have something in common, a close association with the Beothucks or Red Indians of Newfoundland. When John Day settled down in Carmanville, which was one time called Rocky Bay, he and his family lived in fear of attacks by the Beothucks, some of whom were still alive in that region.

Last Beothucks

The first settlers at Little Bay Islands included two men named Budgell and Campbell. According to a long-standing tradition, one of them is said to have killed the last Beothucks in that area. Since Shanawdithit (Nancy) was captured in 1823, and Little Bay Island was settled two years later, this is quite possible; for Shanawdithit was the very last of the tribe.

It is possible, however, that the last Indian in that vicinity was killed some years before 1825 by transient fishermen and, in the course of time, the tradition became mixed up with the names of the first settlers. Budgell or Campbell may have heard the story from them and passed it on.

Some years ago, a Mrs. Mitchell of Portugal Cove died and her obituary contained many facts about early settlement in Little Bay. It appears that her father took his whole family there in 1825. Her maiden name was King. The family had settled in Round Harbour where Mrs. Mitchell was born.

During their first night on Little Bay Island, Beothucks stole Mr. King's boat and all his winter supplies. The boat was found the next day but the supplies were gone. Incidentally, the first known settler at Little Bay was an Indian, a Micmac, who settled at Sulian's (Sulleon's) Cove and gave it its name. This was apparently several years before 1825.

Schooners built

The first white settlers came there from Triton, including Budgell, though it is understood there are no descendants of this man there now. It's presumed he left and went to Pilley's Island before the year 1840. The next family arrived in Little Bay in the 1830s. A certain Mr. Knight of St. John's was a trader in those faroff days and used to deal with fishermen in that region. He also had some schooners built in Hall's Bay. There was also a Captain Knight, who was Fisheries Protection Officer on the northeast coast in the latter part of the 19th century. They were

related.

Trader Knight told Campbell about the fishing and the game in Green Bay and prevailed on him to leave St. John's and take his whole family down North. Campbell had a strong influence for good on the area, and was of much help when the copper mining industry began in Green Bay in the 1860s. Campbell kept the first post office, probably built the first schooner constructed on Little Bay Island. The vessel, unfortunately, brought tragedy into his life. On a trip to St. John's, the little craft was lost with all hands, including his wife and two of his sons.

Campbell had a large family. Several of them went abroad and became very successful. Daniel Campbell, one of the sons who was drowned, left a widow who later married for the second time. Her husband was William Wiseman and they were the ancestors of the many branches of the Wiseman family.

Red Indian relics

The family used to have in the possession an old stone dish, a rectangular drinking cup dug up in their own garden. Relics of the Red Indian occupation have been found all over Little Bay Island. This was some years ago. Other evidence, e.g. the shape of mounds where their wigwams were pitched, could also be seen.

Between the 1850s and 1860s there was a large movement of population into Little Bay and its vicinity. This may well have synchronized with the influx into Tilt Cove, as the copper mines there began to produce. However, for many years, men had been coming in from the islands, especially from Twillingate, from places like Herring Neck and Tizzard's Harbour, to go sealing in the winter or cutting wood, fishing in the summer mailing for salmon.

Eventually they became tired of shuttling back and forth, so they decided to move their families in and settle on the mainland. Thus the idea of centralization, of abandoning the offshore islands anyway, is not as new as it might appear.

The same man?

Thomas Grimes, who was 94 years old in 1940, told how he came to Little Bay Island in 1854. He said he had already been there several winters with his father before the family followed them. When Grimes arrived, he found the following families: Campbells, George Mitchell, Thomas Tuffin; George Tucker, William Richmond, James Wiseman, his son Willie Wiseman, and John Wellman. All were located at Mursell's Cove. William Anstey and John Locke lived at Anstey's Cove while John Marshall and Jerry Roberts lived in Ben Batt's Cove. The latter may have been a brother of the somewhat legendary figure who gave Joe Batt's Arm its picturesque name.

Incidentally, the Micmac named Sulleon has an interesting tie-in with early Newfoundland history from another point of view. When John Jukes, the first official geological surveyor was travelling the West Coast in 1839-1840, he met up with a Micmac named Sulleon, who acted as his guide into the region around Grand Lake. This could have been the same Indian who first settled in Green Bay around 1820, but who left there when the white men came five years later.