Louise Whiteway

NEWFOUNDLAND IN 1867

Since the genetic approach is particularly applicable, the Newfoundland of 1867 will be more readily located in the light of “how it got that way”. Because of its special history and very moderate progress by 1867, it can best be compared with itself some fifty years earlier, the space of fifty years being chosen as a round figure and as presenting a fairly dramatic contrast.

Comparisons cannot always be instituted for the exact year; however, this matters less than it would today since not only did much the same conditions prevail throughout the 1860s but changes took place so slowly that facts and figures within the decade would often be reasonably valid for 1867. The nearest census returns are for 1869; an almanac of 1865 contains relevant data for 1865; but pertinent material in books is not always, or even often, datelined 1867.

Concrete particulars here and there will give a clearer picture of the Newfoundland of 1867 and help guard against undue reading into those far-off days of our own era and what it takes for granted.

By 1867 Newfoundland had achieved, against tremendous odds, a considerable degree of self-determination. Originally a transatlantic fishery for the Portuguese, French, English, and Spanish, it became a British fishery; permanent settlement was therefore unfavourable to mercantile and government interests and was sternly interdicted. In that day a liberal policy towards overseas possessions was considered “detrimental to the general prosperity and welfare of the nation”. It was feared that “a colony of fishermen would speedily monopolize the fisheries, obtain their supplies from the cheaper markets of America, and assume control of the carrying trade between Newfoundland and Europe”. Since in 1768 the industry was worth £600,000 and employed 20,000 men altogether, the point of view was understandable.
When at last a resident fishery did make substantial headway and when community pressures forced some concessions from British Imperial policy to local government, these were still in the interests of fishery regulation, not in those of permanent settlers or intended to protect their civil rights. Naval governors dispensed “summer justice” autocratically, and were really mainly fishery-control officers for whom Newfoundland was “a fief of the Admiralty”. There were no communal institutions. Social conditions were unspeakable. In addition, settlers endured further hardships of famine, fires, and epidemics, all complicated by uncontrolled Irish immigration, and to cap all there was the eventual rise of a local merchant class feudally enslaving the people as centres of both the fishery and the government shifted from England to Newfoundland. But it was now clear that a resident fishery could not do without Newfoundland settlers, and that Newfoundland settlers could not do without settlement policy.

Having won through to a resident fishery, Newfoundland had now to confront the obstacles of settlement by people accustomed to chaos and anarchy, and used to no government or to a government of “legalized misrule”. In such a context belonged local merchant monopoly and extension of the truck system, problems of property and agriculture connected with the illegality until 1811 of all land tenure, government of quarterdeck absolutism with no recognition of the principle of consent of the people, and much else.

Only in the nineteenth century did settlement interests challenge the system with any vigour, and only then did Newfoundland begin to agitate seriously for representative government. And the achievement of representative government led to more hurdles still.

Before and after 1832, the year in which Newfoundland was granted a representative assembly, the island was the pawn of more experienced and aggressive political and commercial interests abroad, beset by turbulence, illiteracy, and vested interests at home, and a continuing prey to famine, frost, fire, and disease. The colony obviously had its work cut out for it if it was to control and regulate its own destiny. Through the rest of the century Newfoundland gradually moved forward to full Responsible Government. It gradually developed a more aggressive, independent policy, enforcing the eventual withdrawal from its fishery and trade of the West Country, Nova Scotia (and Canada generally), the United States, and France. It began to work on its own production.

By 1832 Newfoundland was at least a colony, a self-governing unit, and it began to make up for lost time. “Britain’s greatest experiment in retarded
colonization set about putting its social house in order, laying solid foundations of religion, education, and civil establishment generally. All this was to be the work of a country unused to administration and having to administer an economy based on a single unstable industry in order to underwrite the Newfoundland community.

By 1867 there had been government by the people for the people long enough for a civilized community to manifest itself. Newfoundland had problems enough to face, but they were problems of a self-governing colony and not of a fishing station, of a colony free to combat untoward conditions in its own interests and having democratic machinery to hand with which to tackle them. The future could be faced with hope instead of despair.

In 1817 the island had been in the throes of economic disaster, evidenced in appalling destitution and widespread social distress. Yet a report of that year by an investigating committee still concerned itself with the state of the trade and not with the state of the people (upwards of 40,000 in Newfoundland, about 10,000 in St. John’s alone), great numbers of whom the truck system had brought to ruin when numerous firms went bankrupt, and who in their illiteracy and degradation were incapable of asserting their rights when such justice as existed put fishery interests first.

But by 1867 Newfoundland had its own court of justice, special divisions of Public Works, Postal Services, and Education, a Board of Health, and Poor Commissioners. There were now some 20,000 houses (23,177 in 1869), more churches, chapels, even Cathedrals, schools, post offices, banks, water and gas works, a hospital and asylums, sawmills, a foundry, and factories; hotels replaced taverns; service trades were well represented in the larger centres. There were societies—benevolent, patriotic, fraternal, cultural, and recreational—with halls to house them, all evidences of a settled way of life. The colony of Newfoundland had struck its roots and begun to grow.

A few concrete particulars of the Newfoundland of 1867 will establish more clearly the state of the colony. There might be water services and gaslight to a limited extent in the centres of St. John’s and Harbor Grace, but wells and kerosene oil lamps were very generally used both then and for years to come. Electricity belonged to the future. For transportation Newfoundland had known an occasional steam boat since H.M.S. Spitfire arrived in 1840, but a railway across country was only being mooted as yet. Schooners, packet boats, and a steamer or two carried freight, passengers, and mail where the
sea was the only road, while overland transportation depended on carriages and sleighs, with dog sleds and horse-drawn catamarans to haul wood and the like, and couriers for mail. Motorized vehicles, too, belonged to the future. In communications, development of telegraph and cable had been put on a firm footing by 1866, Newfoundland being foremost in the dramatic story, but there was no telephone. Chloroform as an anaesthetic was known, but neither X-Ray nor aseptic surgery was to hand for the 40 or so physicians (42 in 1869) any more than cocaine and modern dental equipment were available for the two dentists practising in St. John’s in 1865, as evidenced by the antiquated “Toothpuller of 1875” on display at the St. John’s Museum.

There were a dozen newspapers and as many printers, nearly all at St. John’s, but the linotype had yet to be invented. No fewer than 8 booksellers were listed for St. John’s in 1865, but colporteurs intermittently ranged the outports with their packs. For schools, slates and slate pencils were more common than paper and lead pencil or pen. Advertisements in 1867 of musical instruments featured an occasional pianoforte, but more melodeons and harmoniums, while cabinet organs were beginning to be heard of. Photography was coming into its own even in Newfoundland; in 1867 J. P. Wood’s Photograph, Ambrotype and Ferrotype Gallery was in business, but photoplays and motion pictures belong, of course, to the twentieth century.

For the housewife the stove had superseded the open fireplace, and after 1867, when the Hon. James Angelo opened the St. John’s Iron Foundry, stoves could be made in Newfoundland. Among fabrics shopped for were flannel, calico, wincey, “dungrey”, moleskin, swanskin; and in 1865 at St. John’s two agents distributed the labour-saving sewing machine, invented some 20 years before. There were 37 boot and shoe mendes at St. John’s in 1865, and the whole article was probably very generally made. There were four snuff and candle manufacturers at St. John’s, and cooper, pump and block and sail makers, blacksmiths, and saddlers were numerous. There was a small rope factory at Hoylestown; and oil clothing was made.

In general, St. John’s was the emporium for the island. On spring and fall outfitting trips schooners could and did buy everything from a needle to an anchor at the large “Hudson Bay” type of stores, paying in kind (fish, oil) more often than in cash. Trading schooners from larger centres helped fill the interim needs of outports which had, in early days, few or no retail shops of their own.

Statistics for 1867 show the population of Newfoundland to be about 142,000, and that of St. John’s and its suburbs some 22,000. An 1865 directory
lists about 470 “towns, villages and settlements”. For 1867 the revenue was $568,945, expenditure $635,816, public debt $994,154. Imports amounted to $5,551,008 and exports to $5,068,603. Exports included 815,088 quintals of fish and 399,041 sealskins. Figures for 1867 assigned to the judicial and police departments $19,823.95 and $35,446 respectively; to roads and bridges $80,000; to relief of the poor $85,843; to the postal department $16,113; to education $65,462 (for some 314 schools with an estimated 15,000 pupils). The 1869 census returns list 99 clergymen and 188 church buildings.15

In 1817, for a population of about 40,000, there had been only about 27 clergymen and missionaries in the island. As for education, there were perhaps a dozen schools of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Newfoundland, two Charity Schools at St. John’s, and a handful of private schools, most of them in St. John’s. A post office had been established at St. John’s in 1805, but it was only a depository for mail brought or sent on the sailing vessels of the time and had no connections outside itself. Relief of the poor depended largely on voluntary groups. The only road worthy of the name was a half-mile section, constructed for purely military purposes. The courts favoured fishery interests, and the only police protection given to the citizens of St. John’s was provided by a vigilante committee; bands of armed citizens formed nightly patrols to guard the wharves and other public property. The economics of a “fief of the Admiralty” had little bearing on the state of the settlement, which that year, as has been said, was suffering appalling destitution and widespread social distress.14

In 1867 what were the problems that occupied the attention of a Newfoundland that had achieved Responsible Government (1855) and an institutionalized life far removed from that of 1817? The government consisted of His Excellency Anthony Musgrave, Esq. (not yet knighted), Governor and Commander-in-Chief, an Executive of six, a Legislative Council of twelve, and a House of Assembly in which thirty members represented fifteen districts.15

In the seventeen-year-old Colonial Building the matters which the ninth General Assembly were called on to deal with between January 31 and April 26 were chiefly domestic. The government received reports on every institutionalized interest, chief of which were the Board of Works, Crown Lands, Customs, Education, Fisheries, Judicial and Police Departments, Postal Department. Relief of the Poor, Roads, and the current Geological Survey of
natural resources. To certain of these interests fell the maintenance of hospitals and asylums, courthouses and gaols, lighthouses, bridges and ferries, pumps, and the like. Harbor Grace had a new $6000 courthouse. For St. John's considerable street paving, street cleaning, and extension of roads were underwritten. The Assembly also voted to meet the expenses of the Newfoundland contribution to the 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition, which amounted to no less than $2213.50.\textsuperscript{16}

Roads took and held a commanding position, of course, in so new a colony. Back in 1838 the Legislature had voted $175,000 in two years for roads. In 1867, as has been noted, the amount was $80,000 for roads and bridges; and of 192 petitions brought before the House, 125 concerned road grants. Indeed so great was the total volume of petitions that one day a week had to be set aside for their presentation. Other petitions solicited ferries, lighthouses, breakwaters, wharves, steamship service, pumps, and a grant to the Agricultural Society to encourage the growth of flax.\textsuperscript{17}

Quite apart from the petitions, the House had a busy time for the three months of its sitting. There were amendments to Acts for the Incorporation of the New York, Newfoundland and London Telegraph Company, for the Encouragement of Education, for Road Regulation, and bills to amend the Water Company Act, the Currency and Banishment Acts, the Supreme Court Act, and to abolish the Circuit Courts. There was a Revenue bill and a bill to establish Marine Courts of Inquiry. The Cunard Steamship Company contract had to be revised. This list is not exhaustive.\textsuperscript{18}

In the Speech from the Throne the Governor had expressed appreciation of the successful laying of the Atlantic telegraph cables connecting Newfoundland with the Old World and Europe with America; deplored the failure of the fishery and of the potato crop; commended the efforts of the Agricultural Society to improve the agricultural situation; asked that more attention be paid to the herring fishery. He was also prophetically convinced of the immense undeveloped mineral wealth in the island to which the Geological Report pointed.\textsuperscript{19}

The outstanding item of "foreign policy" concerned a recent development in the problem of the French Shore, a section extending from Cape St. John on the northeast coast to Cape Ray at the southwest extremity of the island. The Imperial Government had prohibited "the issue of grants of land in that part of the Island" in a proclamation of December 7, 1866. On the other hand, the Newfoundland Legislature insisted on "authority to issue grants within the island for mining, agriculture, and other purposes". One of
the several issues on which Newfoundland was to cut its constitutional teeth, the French Shore question was not resolved in 1867. A further resolution of May, 1872, was to call for the removal of restrictions “affecting the territorial rights of the people of this island”. In 1881 Great Britain would finally concede territorial jurisdiction over the French Shore to the Newfoundland Government, though it would be 1904 before the French gave up the coast. An editorial in the Public Ledger for February 12, 1867, regretted the Imperial Government’s position that the latest ruling was a necessary restriction while the questions of British and French rights were unsettled. “The French have no rights to territorial possession, only the right to fish and to dry fish.” So the trenchant comment of the Ledger was that there was no unsettled question.20

Confederation with Canada was a lesser issue. It will be remembered that in this year the British North America Act for the Confederation of the Provinces was passed and the Dominion of Canada proclaimed. In his prorogation speech the Governor requested the members of the House of Assembly as a duty to investigate carefully the possibility of Newfoundland’s joining the provinces, since the measure contained provisions for the admission of the Colony “upon terms hereafter to be settled”. That autumn a group of “gentlemen favorable to Confederation” met on Friday nights and regretted that so few opponents attended.21

The colony of Newfoundland was finding itself in the context of an expanding world. Modern developments in communication were introducing new perspectives for everyone, and by virtue of its geographical position Newfoundland played a strategic role in the laying of a cable connecting Ireland with Newfoundland and the North American mainland, an operation that was eventually successful through the enterprise and perseverance of Cyrus Field. In 1867 A. M. Mackay was in charge of Newfoundland lines, rebuilding for $90,000 the whole telegraph line from St. John’s to Cape Ray, which had originally cost $1,000,000. In 1867, too, Cyrus Field and his wife arrived at St. John’s on August 5, as guests of Governor Musgrave, and on August 10 a Public Ball was held in the Colonial Building to celebrate the laying of the cable. From now on St. John’s newspapers could carry half a dozen paragraphs of really recent news about events abroad, “News by Atlantic Cable”. Through the rest of the century government lines were being extended to the
larger centres, rather like the rural electrification programme of today, until Newfoundland could establish an official postal telegraph system in 1901.22

Newfoundland’s postal connections with the outside world were necessarily a function of current methods of transportation, in which steam was replacing sail. In 1840 the island’s first regular post office with mail connection utilized sailing packets on a Halifax run, and in 1844 steamers were used. Locally, the earliest mail communication had been overland by couriers; indeed, couriers were to be in demand far into this century for winter work after shipping closed down. In 1867 the bill for couriers amounted to $8179.60. There were eighteen post offices and twenty-four “Way Offices”. The money-order branch of postal work was established between Newfoundland and the United Kingdom three years earlier, and that with the United States in 1876.23

When Portugal Cove was a packet station—Prowse tells us that the first coach road was opened to Portugal Cove in 1831—stage coaches with three or four horses carried mail and passengers from St. John’s bound for Harbor Grace and other points. These were the far-off days of which Archbishop Howley wrote most nostalgically. Couriers and sailing vessels served the Newfoundland of 1817.24

Only in our period of the 1860s was there coastal mail service, the S.S. Victoria travelling northeast and southwest on alternate trips in 1862, inaugurating local steam, and the S.S. Ariel taking over from 1863 to 1871. In 1867, then, the S.S. Ariel was doing the duty that two steamers would take up in 1871, and we read of steamer and couriers being held up at the different stations by ten days delay in despatch of the first winter mail of that year.25

Into the early 1860s Newfoundland was connected with Europe and America by the Galway Line of steamers which went from Galway, Ireland, to New York and St. John’s, and P. K. Devine tells of the “Galway Wharf” at St. John’s where the arrival of the Galway packet was a great event. Hundreds would collect at the wharf to get news from England and Ireland and see passengers arrive, also attending the ship’s departure. In 1867, however, the current contract was with the Cunard Line, a contract which was under discussion in the Assembly of that year.26

The industry that upheld the Newfoundland economy first and foremost was of course the fishery; the catches were mainly of cod, seal, herring, salmon, and, after 1879, lobsters. The exporting in 1867 of 815,088 quintals of fish, 399,041 sealskins, and 8418 tons of cod and seal oil no doubt accounted for most of the $5,068,603 credited to exports.27
Census returns for 1869, the nearest available, report that 37,259 persons, about 25% of the total population, were engaged in catching and curing fish from 986 vessels, using 26,523 fish nets and seines and 4761 seal nets. There were 462 persons engaged in mining—Tilt Cove copper mines had opened in 1864—and only 391 in lumbering.

The very second-string industry of agriculture followed the fishery at a considerable distance but helped to provide means of subsistence for a rapidly rising population through depression years, one to be developed in the interests of all. The newly responsible colony was now free, as it had not been in 1817, to lay down and pursue a policy in agriculture. The continuing geological survey begun in 1864 was showing many square miles suitable for settlement, even when little was known of the interior: by 1885, according to Harvey, the average annual value of agricultural products was $612,350 and the value of the land then under cultivation, together with livestock, was $2,500,000. Census returns in 1869 reported 41,715 acres of improved land which produced 94 bushels of wheat and barley, 11,150 bushels of oats, 20,458 tons of hay, 308,357 barrels of potatoes, 17,100 of turnips, and 8857 of other root crops; there were 66,027 livestock, but values were not estimated.

Interest in agricultural matters had been manifested in the forties in ploughing matches; the first cattle show at St. John's was held opposite Government House in 1849; in 1853 there were exhibitions of agricultural products in the Market House and in the Old Factory, and the latter were sent on to a New York Exhibition. In our year of 1867 a mammoth Exhibition of all kinds of Newfoundland products was held in the Colonial Building, and these products were sent later to the Paris Universal Exhibition of that year, where they gained some prizes and honourable mentions. In the same year there was also a big fair at Holyrood, 30 miles from St. John's.

Most of the anonymous eighteen factories listed in the 1869 returns probably processed cod-liver oil. The 1865 directory had listed 6 seal-oil manufacturers at St. John's, and that of 1869 noted that 1100 suits of oil clothing valued at £605 were made in the Port de Grave district. Boats were built each year (88 in 1857, 197 in 1874). The fourteen mills listed in 1869 probably covered more than sawmills, perhaps grist mills too. (There were only five sawmills for 1874 in all Newfoundland.) In 1869 bricks and slates, made at Smith's Sound, Trinity Bay, were valued at £1105. Lines and twines were imported from England and New England (until the St. John's Ropewalk opened in 1882), though there is mention of a rope factory in Hoylestown being destroyed by fire in 1869. There would be the products of the iron
foundry, of a brewery, of cabinet and carriage and sail makers, of cooperers, blockmakers, saddlers, blacksmiths, and bakers, and of the snuff and candle works earlier mentioned, most at St. John's. More diversified factories would appear in later decades.  

Naturally, with the limited production indicated above, everything else would have to be imported; indeed, imports in 1867 amounted to $5,551,008, a very large figure for the colony. But on the other hand, the greater the volume of imports the greater the revenue from duties thereon. These duties the colony could and did apply to roads and lighthouses, to subsidizing steamship services, and to other amenities.

Further evidence of a settled and communal way of life is supplied by the Water and Gas Companies, the Savings, Union, and Commercial Banks, the half-dozen Insurance Companies, the New York, Newfoundland and London Telegraph Company, the Steam Packet Company and so on. Among subsidiary sustaining services other than those already indicated that would have been largely unknown in 1817 might be those of the architect, bookseller and stationer, confectioner, coal dealer, druggist, purveyor of "crockeryware", dentist, furniture dealer, gas-fitter, watchmaker and jeweller, milliner, machinist, optician, photographer, plasterer, plumber, and certainly the agents for sewing machines and for stoves. There were even four undertakers in 1865.

Less modern overtones of business life are found in the St. John's shop signs so prevalent that "One side of our principal street has the appearance of a hungry looking menagerie", a comment borne out by the figures on the signs of a polar bear, a white ram, a Newfoundland dog, a golden leopard, and a stag's head. Other stores displayed on signs a wooden hatchet, a beehive, a bell, an anchor, a coffee pot, a seal, a codfish, a tea chest, a pestle and mortar, a gun, a circular saw, a shovel, a padlock, and, of course, a striped pole for barbers.  

Devine also tells us that for years it was the custom to import from England all clerks for the Water Street stores at St. John's and that a brother of Captain Day, M.H.A., was the first clerk of Newfoundland extraction. Toque in 1877 mentioned that clerks usually boarded in the house of a merchant, who in those days often resided over his shop. Women were first employed in dry-goods stores in 1863, at Thomas & Company. In 1867 an Early Closing Association which had been working to secure shorter hours gave thanks for the co-operation of the merchants in March, and a September advertisement announced that the merchants of St. John's would shut their shops
from September 1 to December 31 at 8 p.m., and at 9 p.m. on Saturday nights. In 1867, Water Street stores were lit by gas, which first became available in 1845. Street lights, set on high poles, were few and far between, and a man equipped with a long rod made the tour after sunset to turn on the gas. Outport people replaced their crude cod and seal oils with kerosene, which came into general use about 1860.23

The Church must have met with some success in the work of civilizing the luckless and almost ungovernable population of 1817, for by 1867 the three main denominations were well established in the larger centres and were extending their connections in the outports, some of which might adhere predominantly to one or another, with others harbouring all three.

Accounts of early missionaries tell of great hardships endured under primitive conditions of living and of travel; the missionaries were often unable to cover, even in the sketchiest way, the territory assigned to them. The Rev. Julian Moreton (C. of E., 1849-1862) was expected to minister to 23 places scattered over 200 miles of rocky northeast coastline; the travelling conditions alone were formidable. But the foundations of the several faiths were laid despite every handicap.24

Fifty years or so earlier the Church of England was represented apparently by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which had then in Newfoundland a total of four missionaries of the Established Church and seven schoolmasters at St. John's, in Conception Bay, Trinity Bay, Placentia, Burin, and Bonavista. "Each missionary", we read, "has one or more places of worship, and a dwelling-house with some land attached to it." Within the Roman Catholic denomination the Rev. Dr. Lambert had just resigned in 1817. "A few chapels were built during his episcopacy, and he left seven priests in the Mission on his departure". The Wesleyans in this year had eleven missionaries on eleven circuits.25

But the Church made progress. "At my Consecration to the see of Newfoundland I found only eight clergymen of the Church of England in the whole Colony", said Bishop Spencer of the year 1839. In little over four years he established rural deaneries, the beginning of a Church of England theological college, Queen's College, more than twenty new churches, an organization of twenty-five clergymen with lay readers and schoolmasters under them, and raised money towards a Cathedral. Bishop Field (1844-76) doubled the number of clergy, churches, and parsonages, and added to Queen's College:
also in his time the Church of England Cathedral was designed and partly built.\textsuperscript{38}

The Roman Catholic Church under Bishop Fleming (1829-50), who began his tenure with ten priests and a number of small churches, proceeded to organize Newfoundland into regular parishes, brought in more priests, introduced Presentation and Mercy nuns, had the Presentation Convent and Belvedere monastery built, and in his time the great Roman Catholic Cathedral was erected. Under Bishop Mullock (1850-69) were created St. John’s and Harbor Grace dioceses, and the Cathedral was completed. By 1869, when he died, his Church had 35 clergy, 14 convents, and 65 churches and chapels in operation.\textsuperscript{37}

The Wesleyan Connexion in 1812 had four missionaries when, according to Pedley, there were not more than three Church of England clergymen in Newfoundland, and there were about ten Wesleyan churches. The eleven missionaries had become fourteen with ten local preachers by 1840; there were twenty-two ministers, fourteen circuits, and eight mission stations by 1865, at which time Newfoundland had moved on from being the Newfoundland District of the English Wesleyan-Methodist church to being the Newfoundland District of the Wesleyan-Methodist Church of Eastern British America. In 1874 the organization would be known as the Newfoundland Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada.\textsuperscript{38}

Census returns for 1869 show a colony of some 470 settlements having 99 clergymen and 188 places of worship, of which 81 were Church of England, 59 Roman Catholic, 42 Wesleyan, and 6 of other denominations, including Presbyterian and Congregational; the Salvation Army began (at St. John’s) only in 1886. At this time the adherents of the various denominations were numbered as follows: Church of England 55,184; Roman Catholic 61,040; Wesleyan 28,990; Presbyterian 974; Congregational 338; and 10 others.\textsuperscript{39}

The Church had struggled and with the people and had grown with them to the point where solid foundations for each denomination had been established on which future expansion could rest securely.

Education, another increasingly large factor in bringing about an ordered society out of social chaos, itself grew from voluntary and episodic missionary effort into an organized state system.

The approximately 314 schools of 1867 with some 15,000 children for about 470 settlements whose total population was about 142,000, and under-
written by government grant of $64,462, were a very far cry again from the situation fifty years earlier. The level of teaching was being raised by pupil teachers trained in the several denominational academies. There were more and better schoolhouses built, assisted by government grant. Much had been achieved, but there was still much to be desired. There were 18,843 children not attending school. An editorial in the Public Ledger of December 17, 1867, urged compulsory education. In the poverty-stricken 1860s, "Ragged Schools" at St. John's were organized by the merchant J. J. Rogerson, and held "upstairs in Mudge's Block" in charge of one P. Meehan, according to Devine: and they must have met a pressing need.10

In 1817, on the other hand, there were possibly a dozen scattered S.P.G. Day and Sunday Schools, which were of intermittent operation, staffed by untrained and often incompetent teachers at an annual cost to the English Society of £325, and reaching all too few for all too short a time. There were at St. John's two Charity Schools (and in 1827 there would be the Benevolent Irish Society Orphan Asylum Schools) and a number of private schools, held usually in houses. Even this limited amount of education was almost more than might have been expected in those primitive times.41

To the S.P.G. schools succeeded the Newfoundland School Society of 1823—later known as the Colonial and Continental Church Society—initiated by Samuel Codner as a "Society for Educating the Poor of Newfoundland", assisted by the British Government as well as by subscription, and open to "the poor of all denominations", though later becoming more Church of England as the B.I.S. schools became predominantly Roman Catholic. The C.C.C. school movement, well-launched under trained English teachers, proved its worth and spread rapidly. It diminished later as a state system developed but did survive into the next century.42

The first Education Act of Newfoundland's first government in 1836 endorsed the voluntary system with grants to the several societies concerned in the education of the poor. Boards of Education were appointed in each of the nine electoral districts to administer a proportionate share of the total government grant of £2,100.43

By the time grammar schools had been instituted as recommended in the 1836 Act, denominationalism had set in more markedly, and by the 1860s there were academies for the three main denominations. In 1858, grants were provided for the training of teachers and for the appointment of two inspectors of schools, one for all Protestant groups and one for Roman Catholic schools. The total educational grant was then £10,525. In 1867 John Haddon and
Michael J. Kelly were the two inspectors. Later in 1874 the Protestant group was to subdivide into Church of England and Methodist, each with its own inspectors.44

By 1867, then, education, like the Church, had developed from voluntary missionary work to an ordered denominational system with expansion and consolidation to follow as Newfoundland established its own government with departments to serve every national interest.

Health matters, of course, were rather better in 1867 than in 1817. St. John's was cleaner and better laid out, and it had a good pure water supply. One heard less of smallpox, which had been epidemic in 1800, 1804, 1812, 1827-28, and 1834; less of recurrent cholera, though 1854 was a bad year; but diphtheria claimed 1000 victims at St. John's in 1860 and was rampant in other years until the 1890s brought antitoxin. Vaccination had been introduced early to Newfoundland by Dr. John Clinch (at Trinity from 1783 to 1819), who had been a friend of Jenner's, but the prejudice against it was strong.45

In 1867 there was still at St. John's the first civilian hospital, built in 1814 for $£2135, at Riverhead, on the site of the present Victoria Park. In 1866 the hospital reported 705 patients, of whom 529 had been discharged, 103 had died (45 had been admitted in a dying condition), and 73 were under treatment. There had been eleven operations during the year. There was no operating room in the modern sense until 1898, and there were no qualified nurses at this time. Chloroform as an anaesthetic was administered first in Newfoundland in 1849 by Dr. Samuel Carson (son of Dr. William Carson, the prime mover in securing Representative Government for Newfoundland), according to one authority, while another assigns the credit to Dr. C. H. Renouf when he successfully performed a tracheotomy. In 1855 the hospital had been taken over by the government, which had been subsidizing it from 1850. There was also a lunatic asylum, first separately housed in 1845 until it could build on the site of the present Mental Hospital. The institutions served all of Newfoundland.46

There were some forty doctors in the island by 1867 (forty-two in 1869, including fifteen at St. John's), and in that year they had formed the first Medical Association. An advertisement announcing regulations governing visits and setting fees appeared in the Public Ledger of May 24. Outside St. John's most districts had from one to four doctors. Where doctors could not
be reached, local skill was relied on. A woman might be known as a good
bone-setter. One teacher, a lay reader and general factotum in his community
from 1865 onwards, armed with a “doctor’s book”, prescribed for common ailments, turned dentist with the aid of a Toothpuller, and acted as accoucheur.
In turn, outport doctors, graduates perhaps of Edinburgh or Harvard, were
often called on to serve as Justices of the Peace and Stipendiary Magistrates,
and a number became M.H.A.’s.17

An organized approach to the problems of health and welfare is evidenced
in a government Board of Health. Its four members (1865) represented the districts of St. John’s, Harbor Grace, Carbonear, and Burin. Physicians
and surgeons were active in the government department, “Relief of the
Poor”. Two medical attendants, Drs. Rochfort and McKen, served not only
in the hospital but also in the Poor House. The Poor House building was
quite new, having been opened in 1861. It originated in the use for “paupers”
of the Shelter Camps on the Parade Ground that were built in 1846 for fire
victims.18

Poor Relief in some form or other was ever a pressing necessity. Missionary
and benevolent societies tried to meet some of the need in earlier times
and even after government subsidies were available. A Poor Relief Association of 1867 collected subscriptions and distributed bread, tea, molasses, and
fuel to 827 families instead of keeping to the soup-kitchen pattern. But by
December, with winter coming on, destitution was rearing its ugly head once
more. The Government had been distributing able-bodied relief since 1855, but
the practice was undermining morale and, according to Harvey, nearly a third
of the revenue was required for the relief of those whom a succession of poor
fisheries had rendered destitute. The Carter Administration of 1865-69 issued
in 1868 a proclamation suppressing able-bodied relief. The Tilt Cove mine
operations had improved the island’s economy, and fortunately the year 1869
was to bring a better fishery.19

To write of Newfoundland in 1867 or any other year without specific
mention of St. John’s would be like writing of Hamlet without mentioning
the Prince. The chief port because of its natural advantages, and the chief
fishing harbour, it grew into the chief supply depot and headquarters of an
immense business “second only to the West Indies as a source of wealth” to
Great Britain. Water Street was the hub of this tremendous business. As
Beckles Willson was to write in 1897 on a visit to the country. “If Newfound-
land is St. John's then St. John's is Water Street." Yet St. John's, the chief port, harbour, supply depot, and headquarters of an immense international trade, until 1811 was a place where to build other than for the fishery was illegal, a matter of encroachment.56

A petition of the Merchants' Society of about 1811 describes St. John's at that time as,

With the exception of one house . . . built of wood . . . the principal street is in one place not more than 6 feet wide . . . all our streets are narrow, unpaved, and unlighted . . . we are without a police, without a public establishment for the education of our youth, without a market-place, and without any legal provision for the poor.

And so it was to be for some time to come.57

Roads are at least as important for a city as for a country. It was long before St. John's had one good street. Tocque stated that "Up to 1811 St. John's consisted of one long, narrow dirty street, with irregular blocks of low wooden buildings, interspersed with fish flakes." In 1809, Jenkin Jones of the Phoenix Fire Insurance Company had called the one street "only a crooked and narrow alley", noting that it was about 13/4 miles long but only 6 to 12 or 18 feet wide. Lieutenant Chappell in 1813 found that St. John's "consists of one very narrow street." Further, it was on irregular unpaved ground, almost impassable in wet weather because of mud and filth; and the whole waterside was covered with flakes. Such were his observations. At least there was a street. In 1765 Sir Joseph Banks had reported that the 300 houses were crowded so close to the flakes that St. John's had no regular street. He, and also Horatio Nelson a little later (1782), found St. John's a most "disagreeable" place. If early nineteenth-century visitors found only one tolerable street, what of the Upper Path (Duckworth Street) and the street of Governor Gower (1804-07), ten yards wide and running parallel to the waterfront at a distance of 200 yards?58

By 1842 Bonnycastle could say with restrained enthusiasm that when all the zigzag houses were gone, the town well drained and cleansed, roads made in all main thoroughfares, and when oil vats were removed and the colony of dogs kept from lying all over the footpaths, St. John's would look worthier of the wealth and commerce it brought to the country.59

There was some advance by 1867, when the town had many streets with names we know today—Torbay, Topsail, Monkstown and Queen's Roads, New Gower Street, Flower Hill, Patrick Street— together with some that we
have left behind—Dreelan’s Well Road, Kiln Hill, Marsh Hill, Riverhead. The higher levels were being opened up that year. LeMarchant Road was then open from Cook’s Town to the Lazy Bank Road (Pleasant Street); it had been “gravelled the past summer, 12 feet wide, and the road made available for wheeled vehicles;” £500 would be needed to open up the rest of the road to Pokeham Path (Hamilton Street). Houses had been numbered since 1863. The Merchants’ Society of 1811 would have found wider streets, with some approach to paving, Water Street lighted by gas, $35,446 being spent on a police department, and government provision made for “Relief of the Poor.”

But with even a modest streets programme going forward in 1867, how was it that, thirty years later, Beckles Willson could say that Water Street, though the centre of commerce and of fashion, was “ill-paved, ill-kept”, was the only street, and that the others were thoroughfares?

Buildings constitute another index of a town’s status. In 1817 they included several churches and chapels, small wooden box-like structures for the most part, of the three main denominations and the Congregational Church. There was the first post office in the watchmaker’s shop of Simon Solomon, a Merchants’ Hall, printing offices of the Royal Gazette and the Mercantile Journal, the St. John’s Hospital at Riverhead, the military hospital on Forest Road, as well as Forts Townsend and William and other outlying forts. There were no state public schools, and private schools were usually held in houses. After the fires of 1816, 1817, and 1819, an Act of July 15, 1820, set out regulations about widening streets and building in stone. Further fires, notably that of 1846, when some three-quarters of the city was destroyed, led to further improvements in building.

In the buildings of 1867 can be read much intervening history; they give clues to some of the institutional growth since 1817. The principal buildings were Government House, Colonial Building, Market House, Customs Building, Penitentiary, Fisherman’s Hall, the Merchants’ Exchange, Commercial and Union Banks, Lunatic Asylum, Poor House. Then there were the two large classically styled Cathedrals, other churches such as St. Mary’s (C. of E.), a Congregational church of 1853, and the new Gower St. Church (Wesleyan) building of 1856. The larger buildings by now were of such materials as imported cut limestone, native granite, brick, or stone, and were more often possessed of some architectural style.

Older buildings such as St. John’s Hospital, the Old Factory, B.I.S. Orphan Asylum Schools, and the Colonial and Continental Church Central School, were still in existence, and there were the later Church of England and
Belvedere (R.C.) Orphanages, and Presentation and Mercy Convents. Schools other than those mentioned included Queen's College, four academies, two of which were Church of England (after 1894 to be known as Bishop Field and Bishop Spencer Colleges), St. Bonaventure's College (R.C.), and the Wesleyan and General Protestant Academies. The mercantile stores and factories were likely to be of stone or brick, and Water Street continued to be "a place of great business", centred now in Newfoundland, no longer an outpost of the Imperial Government.56

St. John's may have advanced considerably since 1817, but as we have seen, visitors could and did make invidious comparisons. Lieutenant-Colonel McCrae, stationed at St. John's from 1861 to 1864, saw Water Street as "commonplace but substantial", its larger shops comparable to those in a third-rate English town; they ran a miscellaneous gamut from wholesale to retail, while northside shops, broadly speaking, were all grog shops. The absence of any town hall, museum, monuments, parks, or greenhouses showed, he thought, a deplorable lack of public spirit. In 1872 one David Kennedy, Jr., was to mention one good street along the waterfront and a second higher up very irregular and uneven; he scored the frequency of drinking, the multiplicity of dogs, the dingy-looking houses. One climbed "steep foul byways with rocks cropping up in the middle of them" to find—to condense his extended picturesque description—rickety squalid houses shored up with poles and Maori-like palisades, a clutter of nets, sails, oil tuns . . . pigs, goats, cows, and playing children, all in the middle of the street.57

Clues to the social and cultural life of St. John's—high water mark for Newfoundland—are evident in the societies of the century, most of which were functioning in 1867. In approximately chronological order were the Merchants' Society of 1800, the Benevolent Irish Society, libraries and reading rooms (established or in being in 1813, 1823, 1835, 1847), a Chamber of Commerce of 1823, Dorcas Society, Mechanics Society, Newfoundland Law Society, the St. Andrew's, British, St. George's and Native Societies, Agricultural Society, St. John's Auxiliary Bible Society, Phoenix Fire Brigade, Total Abstinence and Benefit Society, St. Vincent de Paul, St. John's Volunteer Association, the Athenaeum, Society of United Fishermen, Sons of Temperance, Floral and Horticultural Society, Loyal Orange Association, St. John's Catholic Institute, St. John's Book Club, Y.M.C.A., the Industrial Society, the Medical Association, the Wesleyan Academy Literary Institute (later Methodist College Literary Institute). Masonic groups harked back to the previous century. There were school societies, and mercantile joint-stock companies. Annual
reports of the charitable societies dealt with sick relief and funerals of the unemployed.58

St. John's was not only the emporium for all Newfoundland; it purveyed most of the culture. As we have seen, there were reading rooms through much of the century, the latest of which merged apparently with the Athenaeum of 1861, as did Mechanics Institute lectures, according to Prowse. Young men's institutes usually began with a programme of lectures, taking up debating somewhat later, as did the W.A.L.I., which was inaugurated in this year of 1867. It was an era of lectures. Topics of Athenaeum lectures for the 1867 season included "Newfoundland at the Paris Exhibition", "The genius and works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning", "Modern Improvements", "The Holy Land", "Is Human Progress Real", "Poland", and "Popular Fallacies". The St. John's Book Club, established in 1866, had £55 available for new books, whereas a deficit of the Athenaeum limited its scope and drew down the censure of the Public Ledger: "The Athenaeum is the only institution in Newfoundland in a position to form a good public library . . . ." Yet it was unable "to supply the type of reading the Athenaeum ought to furnish."59

St. John's was hospitable to music and drama. There was always, as in all Newfoundland, any amount of music on the folk level, accompanied by the jew's-harp, mouth organ, accordion, or fiddle. The churches, at their best in St. John's, dispensed sacred music with pitch pipe, violin, bass viol, flute, seraphine, harmonium, and (by 1867) the cabinet organ. There were choral groups under the direction of choirmasters or teachers of music in the academies, and concerts of local talent usually "in aid of the poor". There were at least two such concerts in 1867 under the auspices of the Poor Relief Association with vocal and instrumental music "under the direction of Mr. Rowe." The Athenaeum wound up its year with a concert, and later would sponsor visiting artists. In 1865 five music teachers were listed for St. John's, apart, apparently, from teachers in schools, and musical instruments could be had from F. W. Bowden or James Bryden.60

In drama St. John's drew for decades on "Young Gentlemen of the Navy" or "Officers of the Garrison", with or without local talent. In 1817, St. John's could see Nicholas Rowe's tragedy The Fair Penitent, Charles Kemble's melodrama The Point of Honor with "Bon Ton", and James Townley's farce (much played by Garrick). In 1867, "Officers of the Garrison" at Fisherman's Hall were performing Charles II, or The Merry Monarch to conclude with Delicate Ground by Charles Dance, and also the Boucicault comedy Used Up, with Kenney's farce Raising the Wind. Towards the 1860s and
afterwards, visiting companies, usually American, were coming more frequently and offering more modern fare.81

For recreation at St. John's the annual Regatta at Quidi Vidi probably had pride of place, though it had lapsed through the period of the 1860s, after which it was resumed (1871) in somewhat better boats than the previous punts, gigs, jolly boats, and whale boats. Cricket and organized football belonged rather to the seventies and afterwards. There was horse racing for the military and the merchants who could afford it. A first curling club at St. John's dates from 1853. We read of a walking match in 1863. There was always sleighing, snowshoeing, and skating in winter. A first skating rink is said to have opened in the Old Gymnasium (later the site of Lawrence's Carriage Factory) in 1866. There was probably some "mummering" at festive seasons, more especially among children after 1860, when it had been put down by law because it had been a cover for much rough-housing, even for a murder. Indoors there would be music and dancing and card games. Practically all recreation of the times enlisted active participation rather than the current spectatorship.82

Newfoundland in 1867 had come a long way from the Newfoundland of 1817. Progress had come sometimes through struggle, struggle with retrogressive policies, struggle to win through to territorial and fishery rights. Sometimes progress had been a function of the times operating outside the main stream of Newfoundland events, as in the development of communications and transportation, when the country had only to incorporate the new amenities. It is the first step which costs. Self-determination had been won, and by 1867 a very fair degree of order had been wrought out of the original chaos, as could be seen as Newfoundland transacted its 1867 business and met its 1867 problems, problems of an emergent country, not of a fishery station.

NOTES

Multiple references are in order of relevance. Often authors' names cover references to more original sources, omitted for brevity: e.g., McLintock, 127, includes Governor Pickmore's report on current vigilante committees as in C.O. 194/50. 20. April 1, 1817. Modell's When Was That? has been used freely for ready reference, although the information supplied was often first obtained from primary sources.
NEWFOUNDLAND IN 1867

1. McLintock, especially 79, 8; Lounsbury.
2. Lounsbury, Ch. IX (Civil Govt.); McLintock, 75, 141, 13, 126ff., 14-15; Innis, 153; for merchant monopoly, Prowse, 378-80; McLintock, 76, 123-5; Innis, 154; Fay, 151-2; Chappell, 218ff and many others.
3. Innis, 306; Pedley, 198; McLintock, 143-4; Carson, cited in Prowse, 397.
4. See the pamphlets of Carson (1812, 1813) and Patrick Morris (1828); McLintock, 191; Harvey, 133-4.
5. McLintock, 107; Innis, 416, 450.
7. Prowse, 405-6; McLintock, 127.
9. Prowse, 455; Mosdell for St. John’s and Harbour Grace Water and Gas Cos.; and for “Postal”; Devine and O’Mara, “Chlorotorm” (1849); Encyclopaedia Americana for X-Rays, Aseptic Surgery, Cocaine.
10. 1865 directory; Encyclopaedia Americana, “Linotype”; Education Reports; 1867 advertisements in Public Ledger.
13. Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. VI, Ch. 28, p. 672ff. (population); Prowse, 693 (1867); JHA, 1868 (1867 departmental figures).
14. Harvey, 194; Howley in Prowse, Appendix 28; Wilson, 225; Rowe, Chs. 5, 6, 8; Mosdell, “Postal”; McLintock, 168, 127.
15. 1865 directory.
16. JHA, 1867, 1868.
17. Prowse, 657; JHA, 1867, 1868; Public Ledger, Mar. 15, 1867 (volume of petitions).
18. JHA, 1867; Public Ledger between Jan. 31 and April 26.
20. JHA, 1867; Innis, 399.
22. Prowse, 641; Devine and O’Mara for Aug. 5, 19; Public Ledger; Mosdell, “Postal”.
23. Mosdell, “Postal”; JHA, 1868, Appendix 89; Murphy, Historic Items of Nfld. (under “Postal”, 1876).
26. Prowse, 658; Devine; JHA, 1867.
27. Prowse, 693.
28. Harvey, 188.
29. Murphy, Century of Events in Nfld. (for 1849); Mosdell, “Exhibitions”; Murphy, The Musty Past (for 1867).
30. 1869 Census; 1911 census (comparisons with 1857, 1874); Murphy, *The Musty Past* (1869); 1865 directory.

31. 1865 directory.


33. Devine; Tocque; Devine and O’Mara (for 1863); *Public Ledger*, March 29, Sept. 23 (Early Closing Association); Mosdell, “St. John’s Gaslight Co.”; *Ency. Americana*, “Lamps”.

34. Moreton, Introduction.


36. Pilot in Prowse, Appendix 10-12.


40. Index No. 13; Special Report (Educ.), 547, 546, 548; 1869 census; Devine (Ragged Schools).

41. Rowe, Chs. 5, 6, 8; Special Reports, 542-3.

42. Special Reports, 543-6 (C.C.C.)


46. Mosdell, “General Hospital”; *JHA*, 1867; “Chloroform” in Devine and O’Mara (Carson), in Keegan (Renouf); N. S. Fraser, “Early History of St. John’s General Hospital”, in *Evening Telegram*, April 9, 1947; Mosdell, “Lunatic Asylum”.

47. 1869 census; Mosdell, “Medical Society”; *Public Ledger*, May 10, 1867; Gillingham; for M.D.’s as J.P., M.H.A., etc., see W. & S. Carson, Clinch, Rochfort, and Kelly.

48. 1865 directory; Mosdell, “Poor Asylum”.

49. *Public Ledger*, Feb. 1, 8, March 8, Dec. 2, 1867; Harvey, 149, 151-3; Prowse, 659.

50. McLintock, 16-17, 27; Fay, 132.

51. Pedley, 270.

52. Tocque, 67; Fay, 167; Chappell, 45-6; Journal of Sir Jos. Banks; Nelson letter, June 1, 1782; Prowse, 654.

53. Bonnycastle, 234.

54. *Public Ledger*, 1867 (Dead Letter Addresses); *JHA*, 1867, and Appendix 780 A; Mosdell, “House Numbers”.


56. Tocque checked against Mosdell.

58. List compiled from 1865 directory, Prowse, Mosdell, Bonnycastle, Chappell, Tocque; Public Ledger (Annual Reports).


60. Withers in Mosdell, 146, 151-2; Lench, 144-5; D. Peters, Daily News, Sept. 4, 1964, “Music in the Church”; J. W. Nicholls, 21 (choir); Public Ledger (“Poor Relief Association concerts”), March 29, 1867; 1865 directory.

61. Royal Gazette, March 18, 1817, and April; Public Ledger, Feb. 26, March 1, May 17, 1867; Devine and O’Mara listed visiting dramatic companies; contemporary papers carried advertisements.


**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Banks, Sir Joseph. *Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador* (1766); MSS copy in Gosling Memorial Library Archives, St. John’s, Nfld.


Census Returns. *Newfoundland and Labrador.* St. John’s, 1869, 1911.

Daily News. Various issues. (See Bibliographical Notes.)


Education, Dept. of. *Annual Reports.* St. John’s, Nfld.


Evening Telegram. Various issues. (See bibliographical notes.) St. John’s, Nfld.

Fraser, N. S. “Early History of St. John’s General Hospital”, *Evening Telegram,* St. John’s, April 9, 1947.


Job Bros. Account Sheets for 1867. MSS.
Journal, House of Assembly. For years 1867, 1868.
Lench, Rev. C. Methodism in Bonavista. No imprint. 1919.
McCrae, Col. R. B. Lost Amid the Fogs. London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1869.
Murphy, James. A Century of Events in Newfoundland. St. John's, 1924.
--- Historic Items of Newfoundland. St. John's, 1924.
Pedley, Rev. C. The History of Newfoundland. London: Longmans, Green, 1863.
Perlin, Albert B. The Story of Newfoundland.
Public Ledger (St. John's Newspaper, 1827-1882).
Rowe, Dr. F. W. The Development of Education in Newfoundland. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1964.
Royal Gazette (St. John's Newspaper, from 1807).
Tocque, Rev. P. The Tenth Island. London: Grant Richards, 1897.
Withers, J. W. "St. John's over a century ago", in Mosdell's When Was That?