

Grade 8 Social Studies

Chapter 3 (Unedited)
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- Subsistence Economy : An economy where fishing families provided for themselves most of what they needed - by hunting, gathering, trapping, gardening and raising livestock.

Fish drying on a clothesline in Parker's Cove, Placentia Bay.



Unidentified women hay-making, n.d.



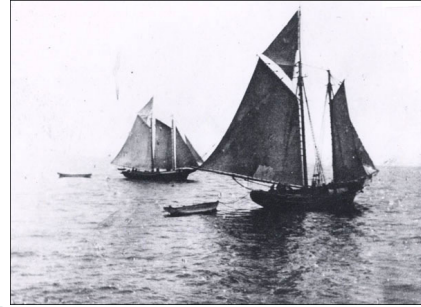
- Consumer Economy : An economy where people use cash to buy what they need.

Interior of Bowring's store, Water Street, St. John's.



- Bank Fishery : A cod fishery where large vessels (schooners) carried crews and dories to the **banks** off the south / southeast coast of Newfoundland to fish for weeks at a time.

Schooners with punts, n.d.



- Inshore Fishery : A fishery pursued in bays and inlets along the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador, in relatively shallow water , using small boats.

Hauling a cod trap, pre-1901



Comparing Bank and Inshore Fishing

Bank Fishery

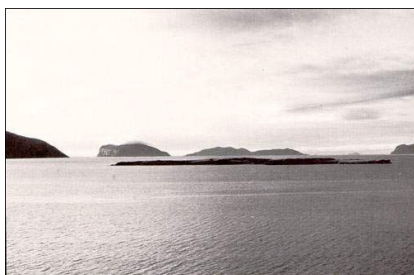
- large vessels called **schooners** carried crews and **dories** to the **banks** (the Grand Banks, Rose Blanche Bank, St. Pierre Banks)
- used long **trawl lines** and baited hooks
- two-man crews in dories went back and forth from schooner
- riskier than inshore fishery due to gales, fog
- living conditions harsh: cramped quarters, little water, constant motion

Inshore Fishery

- near the shores of NL, in small boats
- started at dawn, returned to unload catch, maybe went out again
- used **baited hook**, lowered on a handline
- bait: capelin, herring, mackerel, squid or shellfish
- on shore jobs: cleaning, splitting, salting, curing

- Labrador Fishery : it refers to a migratory fishery conducted by non-residents. Every summer, thousands of Newfoundlanders moved north to fish along the coast of Labrador.

Strait of Belle Isle



MAIN FEATURES OF THE LABRADOR FISHERY:

- this does not refer to the inshore fishery off the coast of Labrador
- rather, it refers to a **migratory** fishery conducted by non-residents
- every summer, thousands of Newfoundlanders moved north to fish along the coast of Labrador

Main Features Continued

- often an entire family went "down on the Labrador"
- It was a hard trip - a week or more at sea in cramped vessels to get there (and then back)
- **Stationers**: worked from shore, salted and dried fish on their own premises
- **Floater**s: stayed on their boats and moved around the fishing grounds

- Seal Fishery : Sealers from communities around the coastline of Newfoundland and Labrador have pursued the seal fishery for more than two hundred years, from around 1800 to the 1960s. Usually, sealers left their homes in March to join the sealing vessels tied up in St. John's harbour. Called a fishery because nets were used to harvest the catch.

SEAL FISHERY - IMPORTANT TO THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY:

- **Landsman Hunt:** Seals caught near the shore
- **Offshore Hunt:** Ships off NE coast of NL (**The Front**) and Gulf of St. Lawrence (**The Gulf**)
- Seals were hunted for food and clothing, but **oil** was the main product.

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- Seal oil was an ingredient in machine lubricants, paint, explosives, and margarine.
- It was also used in lamps and for softening textiles.

Industry Time Line

- 1790's: Just a few ships
- **1840's: 700 000 seals a year, a of Nfld exports, big income for fishermen**
- **1850's: 370 vessels, 13 600 men employed**
- 1860's: Seal fishery in decline due to **over-harvesting**
- 1880's: Further decline

KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE SEAL FISHERY:

KNOWLEDGE:

- **BREEDING:** Seals gave birth at the end of February. Young seals could be slaughtered easily. They also gave finer quality oil.
- **LOCATION OF BREEDING PATCHES**

SKILLS:

- Use of **gaff** (long stick with hooked iron tip)
- **Sculping:** removing the pelt with a thick layer of white fat still attached
- Towing seal pelts to the ship
- Seal skimmers removed the fat from the skin

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SEAL FISHERY:

- More dangerous than other fisheries, due to the:
 - **location** of the herd (ice fields)
 - **season** of the hunt (March - blizzards still likely)
- before 1860 sails were used, not steamships
- before 1906 ships were wooden, not iron-clad
- just the way seals were hunted (walking on ice in early spring)

Sealing Disasters

- **S.S. Southern Cross** (March 1914): 173 lives lost when this sealing vessel was crushed by a storm while bound for the seal hunt in the Gulf of St. Lawrence

Continued

- **S.S. Newfoundland** (March 1914): the death by exposure of 78 sealers from the S.S. *Newfoundland* who were left on the ice off the northeast coast for 53 hours in a savage blizzard.
- Both the captain of the S.S. *Newfoundland* and the captain of the nearby sealing vessel, the SS *Stephano* (who happened to be the father of the captain of the Newfoundland), both thought and assumed that the men were safely aboard the other man's boat.

- A separate slide to follow on the seal fishery. ☺

- **Truck System** : Also referred to as a "credit system". A barter system whereby the fish and cod oil that had been caught and processed were brought to the merchant and recorded at the end of the fishing season.

Drying cod on flakes, ca. 1886



Weighing saltfish at St. John's harbour, n.d.



HOW THE TRUCK SYSTEM WORKED:

- method of trade between fishermen and **merchants** was called the **Truck System**
- a **cashless** system
- the season's catch was traded for credit at the merchant's store

Continued

- credit used for fishing gear, food and clothing
- fish measured and sold by the **quintal**
- fish brought to the merchant
- a **culler** graded the fish (7 different **grades** - qualities)
- highest grade = highest price

Continued

- prices depended on international **demand**
- when fish were plentiful, demand was low, price was low
- when fish were scarce, demand was high, price was high (and cullers less strict about grade)

HOW THE TRUCK SYSTEM AFFECTED LIFESTYLE:

- merchants set the price they paid for fish and the prices of goods in their stores
- usually only one merchant in an outport - impossible for fisherman to **negotiate**
- if the value of the season's catch could not cover the supplies needed to get through the

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- winter and start-up the next season, the fisherman would be in debt
- one bad season could push fishermen into a never-ending cycle of **debt** and poverty
- some merchants became wealthy by taking advantage of fishermen (over-charge, underprice)
- some merchants were fair and compassionate, and even had financial problems themselves

- Michael Kearney : A great Newfoundland ship builder from Ferryland. He trained in Ireland and returned to Newfoundland in 1838 to build many boats for the booming seal fishery. Also a great public servant, he was elected to the House of Assembly in 1865.