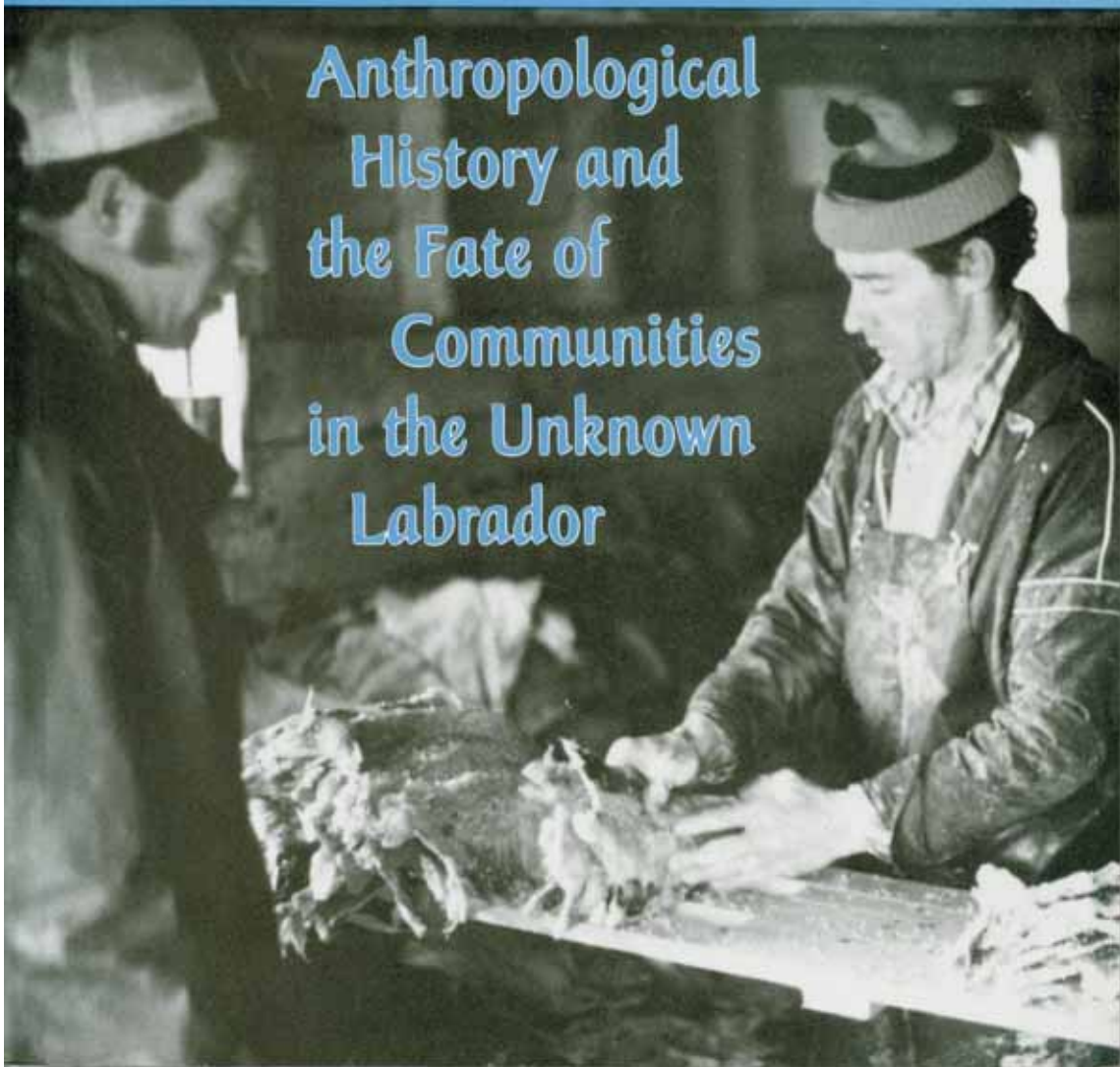


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People of the Bays and Headlands

*Anthropological
History and
the Fate of
Communities
in the Unknown
Labrador*



A New World

Cartwright's saga contains occasional references to men who ceased working for their former merchant employers and attempted to fish or net seals on their own. Such a shift was fundamental, involving a change from being salaried workers to being supplied by merchants on credit. This change was essential to early permanent settlement. Unlike island Newfoundland and the Labrador Strait, an indigenous source of wives for early Settlers existed in southeastern Labrador. Thus, the timing of permanent settlement was not delayed by an absence of women; instead the timing appears related to two other factors: an apparent reduction in merchant opposition to settlement after around 1800 and an influx of thousands of visiting fisher/traders. Indigenous women and illicit trade figure prominently in the history of early permanent settlement.

Three assumptions pervade this explanation of early permanent settlement. *First*, our examination must be regional. In a general sense, there are many likenesses in history and culture throughout all of English-speaking Newfoundland and Labrador. At another level, however, there are very real although often subtle differences between regions. Consequently, while some relevant lessons may be drawn from other parts of Newfoundland or Labrador, the historical and socio-economic character of each region is unique. Some similarities (such as the fact that founding Settlers often married Inuit) exist between early settlement in northern and southeastern Labrador, as well as important differences, such as the enormous institutional influence of the Moravian missions on northern Labrador. Consequently, caution must be used in making comparisons.

My second assumption concerns the quality of relations between rival merchants, between merchants and the servants they employed, and

between merchants and the planters (or settlers) they supplied. My understanding of these three types of relationships is characterized more by words like 'domination' and 'competition' than 'interdependence' and 'reciprocity,' as would appear to be the case in the Newfoundland model. I am not simply saying Settlers or fishers were helpless victims of mercantile capitalism, only that they faced horrendous obstacles limiting their ability to shape their own history.

However, one possibility long available to fishers is leakage, essentially an act of resistance, whereby planters or Settlers simultaneously and covertly dealt with traders other than their supplying merchant. I maintain that leakage has been a continuous feature of merchant-fisher relations, even though the vigilant eye of supplying merchants made such surreptitious trade difficult to conduct. As Macdonald states, this view of leakage concludes that reciprocity, 'the obligation of a fisherman to remit his catch to the merchant who supplied him' (1989, 142), has always been incomplete.

Finally, and consistent with the position taken here, I do not believe that regions or peoples can be viewed as isolates but, instead, are always linked to global forces. In this case, I maintain that intrusive forces, chiefly foreign fisheries, engendered conditions which facilitated the transition from salaried servants to provisioned permanent Settlers.

PROBLEMS OF RECONSTRUCTING EARLY SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH-EASTERN LABRADOR

Regrettably, the story of early permanent settlement in southeastern Labrador will never be completely known. Yet a great deal is known about early settlement in the Labrador Strait and in northern and central Labrador. Why is this so? Since their arrival in northern Labrador in 1771, European Moravian missionaries meticulously chronicled local events in their diaries and other writings. They made detailed records of births, marriages, and deaths, and their 'supplementary catalogues' recorded the movements of people between mission settlements. Consequently, both in the Moravian *Periodical Accounts*, and in the tremendous corpus of other Moravian writings, we learn a great deal about the arrival and early years of European Settlers in northern Labrador. Similarly, although to a lesser extent, in central Labrador, the records of the Hudson's Bay Company after its arrival in the 1830s, as well as written published accounts of famous early Settlers, such as Lydia Campbell or Margaret Baikie, describe early settlement in that

region (cf. Plaice 1990). In contrast, very little documentary material exists describing early permanent settlement in southeastern Labrador.

The Anglican church established a mission at Battle Harbour in 1850, twenty or more years after permanent settlement began. Although adequate, the Anglican records lack the detail and antiquity of the Moravians' and only record the arrival of a second 'wave' of Settlers. I know all this first-hand. In 1979 and 1980, I hand-recorded all the Anglican baptismal, marriage, and death data between 1880 and 1980 at Mary's Harbour, now headquarters of the old Battle Harbour mission. These were later supplemented with copies of marriage and birth data between 1850 and 1880, contained in the Provincial Archives, and with tombstone entries which I collected from most of the cemeteries between Chateau Bay and Sandwich Bay. These church and gravestone data were entered in a computer as data for this and another study (Bear 1984). Computerization made the data more accessible but raised more questions than it gave answers. Few marriages occurring before 1850 are listed, and the earliest individuals appear to be the sons and daughters of first-generation Settlers. Thus the Battle Harbour data are of some, but limited, use.

Another source of data on early settlement in other parts of Labrador is the 'voluntary statements' and affidavits gathered during the first two decades of this century, as evidence for the Labrador Boundary Case. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, central Labrador Settlers trapped extensively in the Labrador interior, and this explains why Newfoundland government officials interviewed many of them to build a legal case showing the importance of the interior to the coast. Consequently, there are many such statements from northern and central Labrador people, containing valuable information about social history. But there are only two written statements from southeastern Labrador. The first is that of William Collingham, the British-born (1842) clerk for Slades and later Baine Johnston at Battle Harbour, and the second is that of former Cartwright Hudson's Bay Company post manager W.E. Swaffield. He signed an affidavit, at Montreal in 1926, but it, like Collingham's, says little about settlement.

Personal diaries are also rare, although we do have the so-called Moss diary (1832) from Battle Harbour. In Cape Charles I heard about several diaries that are believed to exist. These include the so-called Pye-Bellows diary, said to have mysteriously disappeared on the death of its last caretaker, near Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Several people claimed to have seen it and said that it described the earliest Cape

Charles Pyes. I was able to examine an anonymous diary describing Cape Charles in 1857 which was locally believed to be associated with a man named George Buckingham, thought to have been a petty merchant. In time period, style, and content, this anonymous 'Buckingham' diary resembles the older Moss diary.

Another potential documentary source, Newfoundland fishery or customs reports contained in the *Journal of the House of Assembly*, begins in 1833, yet these reports contain little of value until the 1840s and 1850s, and say little about permanent settlement. Finally, except for Bishop Edward Feild's excellent 1849 account and shorter accounts by Methodists Hickson and Knight, the handful of relevant first-hand accounts (e.g., Chappell 1818; Moss 1832; Tucker 1839; and De Boilieu [1861] 1969) are either vague or silent about early permanent settlement.

Local people kindly allowed me to copy the genealogical information commonly written in family bibles, yet few ancestors prior to about 1850 are listed. Likewise, local memories are limited to about three generations, extending back to around 1900. In short, while I will date the first permanent settlement of southeastern Labrador to the years between 1830 and 1870, few of the particulars will likely ever be known.¹

THE NEWFOUNDLAND MODEL OF EARLY PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

What I will call the Newfoundland model of early permanent settlement attempts to explain how settlement occurred, at what time, and why. The important question is: What conditions led to the transition from a migratory fishery conducted by seasonal servants to a resident fishery in which planters or settlers drew most of their provisions on credit from local merchants?

Matthews (1968, 1988), the pioneering historical researcher, emphasizes the unique importance of the fishery in the political debate over permanent settlement, and the long-term geopolitical relevance of colonial America and New France in questions relating to early Newfoundland. The many geographers (Head 1976; Handcock 1989; Mannion 1977; Thornton 1977, 1979; and others) working on early settlement emphasize space, specifically the adaptations necessary for transient fishing servants to become permanent residents, and the locations and conditions fostering their move from England.

The debate over settlement centred on whether Newfoundland should

remain only a destination for the migratory ship fishery or become a home. In the Labrador context, after the fall of New France in 1763, opposing sides of this debate were advanced by Governor Palliser, whose 1765 Labrador regulations prohibited permanent settlement, and by Captain Cartwright, whose 1773 petition advocated year-round residency. However, as Matthews, the geographers, and others conclude, efforts to curb permanent settlement were futile.

Before settlement began, the general pattern of the migratory ship fishery, dating from the early 1500s to around 1800 in Newfoundland and from after 1763 in Labrador, was as follows. Each January and February ships' agents recruited single young men for the fishery in the fairs and markets of interior west England (Matthews 1988; Handcock 1989, 63). Ships embarked for Newfoundland in early spring, fished during the summer, and returned to England in fall. However, as this migratory fishery developed, companies left some men to overwinter; some of these 'winter men' eventually became permanent settlers. Also, British mercantile firms established headquarters in Newfoundland or Labrador, bringing new crews of servants and supplies from England each spring to fish for cod, salmon, seal, and so on.

Describing Newfoundland society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Head observes that 'almost every man in Newfoundland in these years could be described as either merchant, boat keeper, or servant' (1976, 142, 230). Head is referring to the period prior to settlement, and to a historic mode of production which Sider (1986) calls the servant fishery. Cartwright's *Journal* suggests that such a three-tiered status system also existed in late eighteenth-century southeastern Labrador. Servants worked for wages, serving either from spring to fall or for two summers and a winter. The status of boat keeper or by-boat keeper was roughly synonymous with that of planter, an equally ambiguous category with at least four meanings in Newfoundland and Labrador (Story et al. 1982, 382-3). Generally, however, a planter was a more or less permanent Settler or fisher who, as boat keeper, normally owned a fishing boat and provisioned himself through a merchant, who then claimed the man's catch.

Excluding the short-lived planned colonies of the early seventeenth century, early permanent settlement in Newfoundland began around the mid-eighteenth century and was, Head (1976, 93) contends, tied to several coincidental external forces, including trade with the American colonies for bread and other foodstuffs necessary to survive in Newfoundland. Handcock shows how wars during the second half of the

eighteenth century decreased the importance of the migratory fishery (1989, 75) relative to the resident fishery. Matthews (1988, 145) and Handcock (1989, 75) explain how the Napoleonic Wars (1802–15) marked the crucial turning point, after which resident fishers predominated, now supplied by merchants based in Newfoundland rather than England.

Referring to the Newfoundland model, scholars of early settlement emphasize two key points I have not yet mentioned: a) that merchants voluntarily began supplying former servants with supplies, on credit, and b) that the timing of permanent settlement depended on the availability of women as wives for potential Settlers. Thornton makes both points, and given that her work occurred just south of our study area, it is pertinent here.

Thornton's (1977, 1979) work on early settlement on the Newfoundland and Labrador sides of the Strait of Belle Isle pinpoints the beginnings of permanent settlement there to 1830–50. Since no 'indigenous source of wives was available' on the Labrador side of the Strait, the phasing of settlement awaited the immigration of females from Newfoundland (1979, 75). The second determinant in Thornton's explanation was the sudden recognition by merchants that it was more 'flexible and efficient' (*ibid.*, 78) to supply Settlers with provisions on credit and later purchase the seal, salmon, and fur they produced than to employ them on wages. Just why this recognition occurred when Thornton claims it did (after 1830) is not entirely obvious. What is also unclear is why merchants relinquished control of essential means of production, such as salmon or sealing posts, to local planters, when, as Thornton admits, doing so created a leak which ultimately brought about the demise of the migratory ship fishery (*ibid.*) and its replacement by resident merchants supplying local Settlers.

Although data show similar turnovers at Battle Harbour, voluntary turnovers appear to contradict a theme of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history, which claims that merchants maintained control of fishing berths and other valued property but allowed Settlers to use them in exchange for rent or to fish them on shares. Frankly I cannot resolve these contrasting views of allocations of merchant property – one stating that property rights were voluntarily relinquished, the other that they were vigorously maintained.

Thornton is a leading authority on early settlement. Yet, as rich and convincing as her work is on the Strait of Belle Isle, her version of early settlement, based as it is on the Newfoundland model, requires, I believe, an amendment if it is to be applied to southeastern Labrador.

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This amendment involves three factors, factors which make the south-eastern Labrador case different from that of the Labrador Strait and island Newfoundland. These three factors are: a) the disorder and competition which characterize the early British era; b) the transient trade, especially with the American traders; and c) the presence of Inuit women as potential spouses.

THE MERCANTILE BACKGROUND OF EARLY PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

Fierce competition over resources and labour characterized relations between rival Labrador merchants during the late eighteenth century. Sabotage, arson, and other cutthroat tactics were common. One case of rivalry between John Slade and Company and Noble and Pinson was resolved by a formal truce, witnessed by a British naval officer. The truce's concluding statement is indicative of the monopolistic power of mercantile capitalism: both parties agree to 'prevent any strangers coming on the Caribou [Great Caribou Island, Battle Harbour] to the prejudice of our settlements at Battle Harbour or Cape Charles' (Slade Ledgers 1793). Although they do not specify what kind of 'strangers' they seek to prevent, I assume they are talking about other merchants or even planters who would threaten their newly bounded territories.

While pacts were possible between large and equally powerful rivals, large firms commonly used bullying and ultimatums to intimidate weaker merchants, planters, and servants. Remarks appended to a 1792 report vividly describe how merchants treated planters:

The coast of Labrador, in the Straits of Belle Isle, is much in want of some attention from Government. The planters and furriers, who are numerous, (although I cannot return how many), are entirely subject to the oppression of the merchants, who impose whatever price they please, and upon any debt however small being incurred and not being paid upon immediate demand, the boats and other effects of the debted are seized (without any authority for so doing), sold, and purchased by the creditors for sometimes one-sixth of their value. (Gosling 1910, 386)

Merchants reacted swiftly and mercilessly to any leakage from the planters they supplied. In the 1780s, for example, two Camp Island planters, Mr Macy and Mr Dean, leaked their salmon and cod to Netlam Tory, the merchant based in White Bay, Newfoundland, who was

forced to relocate to Labrador after extension of the French Shore in 1783.² Macy and Dean had been supplied by the powerful merchant William Pinson, who in the autumn of 1786 told Macy he would 'ruin him' if Macy continued to sell to Tory. In Whitely's words: 'Pinson charged extortionate prices on all articles sold to Macy and Dean and ordered a crew to be got ready to take over their salmon river. Faced with such ruthlessness, Macy was forced to sign without even being able to consult his partner' (1977, 19). Merchants also attempted to prevent servants from defecting to other merchants, and to prevent them from marrying (Thornton 1990, 108).

Labrador's lack of government meant that anarchy and disorder were common and, following 1763, the regulations of successive governors did little to alleviate the situation. Between 1774 and 1809, coastal Labrador was nominally administered by Quebec, but its distance from Quebec City and the fact that authorities there lacked both naval forces and the political will to provide regular patrols meant that injustice and disorder prevailed (Whitely 1977). British authorities received with incredulity George Cartwright's 1787 petition for a separate government for Labrador, with himself as principal justice of the peace (Whitely 1977, 19–20). By 1793, Newfoundland chief justice Reeves concluded that: 'The coast of Labrador is under the government of Canada [i.e., Quebec]; but the influence it feels from a centre so far removed is very small. In truth there is no government whatsoever on the Coast of Labrador ... It is very much to be wished that some plan be devised for affording to that deserted coast something like the effect of civil government (quoted in Jackson 1982, 13). Given this lawless backdrop and assuming strong and well-capitalized merchant monopolies, replenished by constant supplies of inexpensive imported servant labour, the mercantile system seemed incompatible with permanent settlement. Newcomers (the 'strangers' whom the Pinson/Slade truce sought to exclude) threatened merchant monopolies. Similarly, the arrival of new merchants or transient traders endangered merchant domination since these newcomers allowed planters supplied by one merchant to leak a portion of their catch to another.

Yet we do have evidence, albeit piecemeal, that after about 1800, the Battle Harbour firm of John Slade advanced productive technology and/or berths to former servants – including Alex Hutchings, William Holloway, John Grant, Thomas Peckham, and John Rumbolt – in exchange for some of the seal oil or cod produced. While some of these men may have become permanent settlers, they are not (excepting

Rumbolt, Holloway, and perhaps Akerman) ancestral to contemporary Settlers. This places the timing of permanent settlement – which Thornton ties to merchants divesting property to planters and having women to marry – in question.

So when did the ancestors of today's settlers arrive? If we limit our consideration to the Battle Harbour area and recall that Rumbolt is one of the few ancestors appearing in the Slade Ledgers, we can obtain a tentative answer by comparing the Slade documents from two later time periods, 1832 and 1871. The Moss (1832) diary from 9 February to 7 September contains roughly the same number of familiar Settler names (e.g., Rumbolt, 'Pole' [possibly later Poole], Russell, Allen, Pye) and unknown names. A more recent body of Slade documents, from 1871, reveals an increased number of familiar names. These Slade documents include three lists of Slade planters and servants from 1871. The first list contains the names of twenty-four resident planters supplied to fish cod, most with names associated with the Battle Harbour area. Those appearing on the second, twenty-four 'southern' planters, were Conception Bay men supplied to fish cod, while on a third list, nine Fox Harbour area men, were supplied to fish salmon. This third list mainly contains names associated with the Fox Harbour area. Comparison of these three time periods suggests that most early permanent settlement, at least in the southern portion of southeastern Labrador, occurred between 1830 and 1870. I believe that the chances of planters surviving were increased through trade with transient traders, a subject to which I now turn.

TRANSIENT AMERICAN TRADERS AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

Although distant from many centres of power and affluence, southeastern Labrador was influenced by broader, international forces; one of these was transient trade. Atlantic Canadian regional studies mentioning transient traders often fail to analyse their role adequately. Fortunately, there are studies (e.g., Gosling 1910, 1911; Innis [1940] 1978; and Whitely [1977]) that discuss transient trade. Head (1976) links trade to permanent settlement and Macdonald (1989) shows how the bait trade influenced settlement of the northeast corner of Fortune Bay.

I maintain that in the case of southeastern Labrador, sufficient evidence exists to make the trade/settlement connection. While I admit that this interpretation (or any other) cannot be proved conclusively, there is circumstantial evidence that transient trade undermined the trade monopoly of local merchants. It provided the incipient Settler

population with less-expensive goods necessary for survival and thus allowed them some degree of independence from local merchants. Although the French and Newfoundlanders conducted trade along the Labrador coast, the transient American trade is more important to the early settlement of southeastern Labrador.

Newfoundland trade with the American colonies dates to the early seventeenth century. Americans used Newfoundland as a commodities clearing-house, an entrepôt for illegal trade with Europe. Davis explains that:

Sugar and tobacco, both enumerated commodities, were carried by New Englanders to Boston; thence to Newfoundland; thence to Holland or Scotland. Foreign manufactures returned by the same route. With no settled government in Newfoundland smuggling could not be stopped; a vice-admiralty court was set up there in 1708 but failed to curb what was by then a strong vested interest. Another complaint by the mother country was the spiriting away of colonists and fishermen to New England – headed up in casts to escape discovery – impairing both England’s economy and recruitment for her navy. (1974, 167)

Such trade increased greatly during the second half of the century, primarily because Newfoundland lacked a customs arrangement with other colonies of the British Empire (Head 1976, 111–12). During the decades immediately preceding the American War of Independence, Newfoundland became an increasingly attractive market in which Americans could trade their surplus foodstuffs, replacing western adventurers as suppliers of Newfoundland’s growing resident population (*ibid.*, 102; Kerr 1941, 71).

During the early years of the American fishery, Labrador merchants repeatedly accused American fishers of illegal, aggressive, and disruptive behaviour (such as burning forests, drying fish ashore in settled harbours, seizing cod and salmon berths, and polluting bait grounds with fish offal). Whitely (1977) explains that such complaints were one reason why British officials in St John’s re-annexed the administration of Labrador. However, as Whitely also notes, British authorities were probably more concerned with illicit trade than with other offences allegedly committed by the Americans. After 1809, Labrador merchants (then based in Newfoundland) continued to protest what they considered inadequate British protection against American fishers. Complaints about illicit trade intensified after the Anglo-American Convention of 1818, which created the American Shore (which included Newfound-

land's west coast and the Labrador Coast, from Mt Joly, Quebec, north to Cape Chidley [see Neary 1980, 102]) and confirmed American rights to land and dry fish in unsettled places along the Labrador coast. The American fishery in Labrador grew until about 1840 (Gosling 1910, 373–4) and declined after 1870.

The Americans practised two forms of illicit trade. Newfoundland governor Holloway describes the first form, 'transhipment,' in a 1807 letter to the Privy Council: 'The Americans that fish on the coast of Labrador have long been suspected, and upon good information, of carrying great quantities of provisions as well as other contraband articles, which they sell and barter to the British merchants, who with great facility tranship them in small quantities to this Island [Newfoundland]' (quoted in Gosling 1910, 342). Transhipment required complicity between American fishers and the Labrador merchants who benefited from it. Royal Navy captain James Northey reported that 'when he did try to check the Americans he was often asked to desist by British fishers, who had their own tacit understanding with the Yankees' (Whitely 1977, 24). That the Americans were convenient scapegoats for Labrador fishers is evident in Northey's disclosure: 'If you meet a (British fishing) boat (though scarcely able to swim with the quantity of fish on board) and ask, is fish plenty? The constant answer is sure to be, "oh no Sir, very scarce indeed, the Americans will soon ruin us, they take all the fish"' (quoted in Whitely 1977, 24). The second, and for present purposes more important form of trade, which I call 'planter trade,' undercut Labrador merchants and was, I submit, beneficial to the economic survival of the emerging Settler population. American fishers covertly traded goods duty free with early Settlers. This trade permitted early Settlers to exchange a portion of their catch actually owed a supplying merchant and to enjoy a modicum of economic sustenance which was otherwise difficult to realize. Planter trade occurred throughout the duration of the American fishery (ca. 1783– 1870) but especially from the 1830s to the 1860s.

Governor Keats described the clandestine nature of the American trade:

They [the Americans] are also in the habit of sending Light Ships [i.e., vessels equipped with warning devices] from America to some of the harbours on the Labrador, particularly Labrador Harbour [Quebec North Shore], Red Bay, and Cape Charles, which receive the fish caught and prepared by them on the coast, and take it with what they procure clandestinely from our Boat keepers by

Purchase or Barter, for they come prepared with money and goods for that purpose, and thus become the Carriers of a proportion of our own fish to the Market. (quoted in Gosling 1910, 353)

The American trade circumvented duties and offered Settlers staples as well as liquor (Rendell 1841). Around 1840, several Labrador merchants, including B. and J. Slade, of Battle Harbour, Francis Harbour, and Grady, presented a memorial to the British secretary of state for the colonies, bemoaning their loss through illicit trade and requesting an exemption from Newfoundland duties. There are many examples of this, of which two are representative. In one, Superintendent of Fisheries Tobin writes: 'Owing to the hitherto neglected state of the Labrador coast, Americans have so far encroached on the rights permitted to them by treaty, as to occupy many of the harbors, and become the vendors of all sorts of wares, free of duty, collect fish, oils, and furs, etc., return to the United States with their British exchanges of produce, free of all duties, and thus, in every way undersell the British trader' (1853, 133). Similarly, J. Finlay adds: 'The resident population upon these coasts (the French Shore and Labrador coast), amount to several thousands, and from the traders the chief part of the supplies are drawn, whilst the transient fishermen have an opportunity to dispose of their surplus produce with great advantage to themselves. These adventurers have now monopolized the entire trading business, especially upon the coast of Labrador; they pay neither duties nor taxes of any description, although they unquestionably come within the jurisdiction of this government' (1853, 139–40).

Although we have few accounts from the American perspective, Sabine commented on British allegations that following the War of 1812:

Fifteen hundred American vessels had been engaged in the Labrador fishery alone, in a single season; that these vessels carried and dealt out teas, coffee, spirits, and other articles, on which no duty was paid; that these smugglers and interlopers exercised a ruinous influence upon the British fishery and the morals of British fishermen; that men, provisions, and outfits were cheaper in the United States than elsewhere, and that of consequence British fishermen on the coast could buy what they needed on better terms of the American vessels than on the colonial merchants. (1853, 214–15)

By the mid-nineteenth century, government revenues lost through this 'free trade' led Bowen (1854, 333) and Hamilton (1863, 400–1) to call for

a customs house to tax American traders. Hamilton makes intriguing reference to plans apparently underway for an American Consul at Salmon Bay, Quebec, but suggested instead Cape Harrison, Battle Harbour, or Salt Ponds (north of St Lewis) as these locations were more 'frequented by American schooners' (1863, 401).

Lest there be any confusion about the importance of American trade to southeastern Labrador, I reiterate the American presence between 1783 and about 1850 was heaviest in southeastern Labrador. Only after the mid-nineteenth century did the Americans push further north (Gosling 1910, 413).

Although this evidence demonstrates that Settlers were trading with hundreds of Americans visiting each summer, it is still difficult to access the impact of planter trade. My conjecture that such trade encouraged early settlement requires further research and is rooted both in my perception of inter-merchant rivalry and my view that 'leakage' has been a continuous feature of merchant-fisher relations. In southeastern Labrador, the Americans (and to a lesser extent the French, Nova Scotians, and Newfoundlanders) offered early Settlers the chance to trade part of their catch on the side, behind their main supplier's back, greatly enhancing survival possibilities. I am not suggesting that Settlers ceased dealing with resident merchants – we know they did not – only that they also dealt with transients. In short, American traders created a 'free market' economy which allowed many small planters and former servants to gain some measure of independence and security in their new homeland.

THE FIRST SETTLERS: WHAT IS KNOWN

The greatest historical enigma for southeastern Labrador people (and interested scholars) involves the origin, identity, and circumstances of the earliest permanent settlers. Interest in this topic is shared by old and young alike. When visiting households in the region, I was occasionally handed the cherished family bible containing a few scribbled names and dates, all that remains of the family's genealogy.

Local interest in the past is also reflected in attention given to annual patterns of seasons and events.³ People remember years when the freeze-up occurred unusually early or late, when salmon or cod were plentiful or scarce, or when bakeapples were exceptionally abundant. The local custom of recording significant events (the first coastal boat of the year, the date the bay ice froze, and so on) on the household

calendar also illustrates local interest in past and current events. Indeed household calendars may serve as evidence summoned to resolve lively spats about when this or that event occurred. Regrettably, however, few calendars survive more than a few years; most suffer the fate of other household waste and are eventually 'fired [thrown] in the stove.'

One source of information on early settlement is the collection of ledgers from the Slade company at Battle Harbour. They cover about two decades, spanning the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Although inconclusive on most questions, some of the ledgers contain tantalizing clues which can be related to other sources of information. The Ledgers record that some tradesmen were transitory labourers, remaining in the area and working for successive companies. One example is John Tilsed, listed in the 1793 ledger. Tilsed worked for Cartwright at Ranger Lodge and then for Cartwright's friend Mr Lester at Trinity, Newfoundland, and was re-hired by Cartwright in late May 1785, as a boatsmaster for two summers and a winter at a wage of £37.

Other workers listed in the ledgers may have attempted to fish on their own, but failed. For example, Mr James Macy appears in the 1793 ledger. In 1786 Macy, along with a partner named Dean, suffered ruthless coercion from Noble and Pinson and was eventually forced out of business. Macy's career illustrates the view that the survival prospects of relatively independent former servants and planters were at best difficult.

Then there are those like Samuel Akerman, who may possibly be ancestral to contemporary Settlers. Akerman is among the forty-one men employed by Slades in the fall of 1793. Now Whitely (1977, 21) claims that many of the surnames (Blake, Broomfield, Clark, Ford, Hilliar, Rumbold, Yeatman, and others) found in the ledgers represent the founders of families still in the area. Whitely may be correct but he fails to cite his evidence, and frankly, my computerized data are inconclusive on this question.⁴

By 1794 Samuel Akerman's stint with the Company had lasted some seven summers and six winters; it was to end in the fall of 1796. Also employed for the 1793-4 year was John Rumbold; his year ended 10 October 1794. By 1802, Akerman and Rumbold are no longer listed as salaried Slade employees. The following year, Rumbold is listed with former Slade employee William Holloway in what appears to be a joint venture supplied by Slades. Holloway had worked at Slade's Hawke's Island sealing post as early as 1793 and was a veteran Labrador sealer. (Another Holloway, perhaps William's son or even brother, Benjamin

[1784–1872], is buried at the Catholic cemetery at Cat Gulch, Matthew's Cove.)

William Holloway and Rumbold purchased shovels, nails, and other building materials from the Slades and rented one of the company's fishing rooms at Fox Harbour (St Lewis). The partners appear to be striking out on their own, supplied with essentials by the Slades. By 1804–5, their supplies include two pairs of women's shoes, suggesting that one or both had acquired a female companion. However, by 1806, their partnership had ended, with each man in debt to the Slades. Rumbold fished on his own in 1809 and also conducted a seal fishery at Square Islands. However, the following year he and Holloway again entered into a joint venture with the Slades; Rumbold and Holloway realized half the income from the 249 seals they netted and the Slades received the other half.

Holloway and Rumbold's on-again/off-again joint venture illustrates the difficult transition from salaried employee to supplied Settler. But their case also raises many questions. We know little about the relationship Rumbold and Holloway had with their former employer or what, if any, trade relations the two men had with American or Newfoundland fishers. We also learn that their many years of experience alone did not ensure success. These two experienced Labrador hands teetered on the brink of failure, making it easy to imagine how selling several casks of seal oil or quintals of codfish to some transient buyer might have made the difference. While the antiquity of family names such as Rumbolt indicates that John Rumbold (or another Rumbold) eventually obtained some measure of independence and success, it appears that many other incipient planters fell deeper into debt and eventually left the region. Their case also leads us to ask whether the two men were lineal ancestors of subsequent Rumbolts and Holloways appearing in the computer data, and who the women for whom they purchased shoes were.

One can only make educated guesses about these questions. However, it seems probable that both were related to later Rumbolts and Holloways. After all, a scant seventeen years separates John Rumbolt from Robert Rumbolt (born about 1826), the earliest Rumbolt listed in my computerized Anglican records. However, to again illustrate the difficulties of reconstructing early settlement, the Moss diary entry from 11 June 1832 records that a 'Robert Rumbold came down from his winter quarters' (1832, 13). While this (and the 17 June 1832 entry – 'all the planters arrived this evening [a Saturday] from their winter quarters'

[*ibid.*] clearly establishes that a Settler population was wintering near Battle Harbour by the 1830s, it also raises the question of whether *this* Robert Rumbold was an uncle of the Robert born in 1826 or, perhaps, John Rumbold's brother.

And to return to William Holloway, it is probable that he was the father of Robert Holloway, born near Battle Harbour in 1828 and the earliest Holloway baptized by the Battle Harbour mission. It should also be noted that unlike the surname Rumbolt, that of Holloway disappears from the Anglican records in the late nineteenth century, illustrating another common theme of southeastern Labrador history: individuals and surnames appear in the records, perhaps to fish for a season or more, make their contribution to the region's social and genetic history, and then disappear, either through 'accidents' of marriage or emigration.

And what of the women who wore new shoes in the autumn of 1804? Some possibility exists they were European, but they were more likely Inuit. Inuit in southeastern Labrador? Such a claim challenges conventional notions of Labrador's aboriginal map, which generally shows no Inuit living south of Groswater Bay. And existing aboriginal maps appear to be backed by archaeological findings. Thus, the archaeologist M.P. Stopp and her associates (1991, 1992) report very few potential Thule (late prehistoric to early historic) Inuit sites. Similarly, a 1980 issue of the journal *Inuit Studies* devoted to the question of the southern range of the Thule or Neo-Eskimo shows scholars divided.

On the one hand, proponents of the view that Inuit resided as far south as Quebec's North Shore, primarily during the French regime, including Clermont and Martijn, cite tantalizing historic, linguistic, and cartographic evidence suggesting that historic Inuit did, in fact, reside as far west as Mingan. Their plea is for more study of the question of southern range, and particularly for greater attention to extant French texts. On the other hand, ethnohistorian J.G. Taylor (1980) counters with the view that Inuit wintered along the northern Labrador coast and only ventured south to trade or plunder European posts. At one point Taylor briefly acknowledges that southern Inuit (such as those De Boileau visited at St Lewis) engendered the region's contemporary mixed-blood population, but immediately drops this vital admission and retreats to an earlier time period and to data supporting his position. Strangely absent in the papers of this 1980 collection, even those supporting a southern Labrador Inuit population, is reference to many other sources (such as the reports of Bishop Feild), sources which very clearly show

that Inuit enclaves existed as far south as St Lewis throughout the nineteenth century.

How and when did these enclaves begin? The few Thule sites found by Stopp, and Captain Cartwright's failure to mention a permanent Inuit population, lead me to conclude that these enclaves were not established until the final decades of the eighteenth century. Who were the Inuit who founded them? Quite possibly, founders may have been Inuit banished from Moravian mission stations for diverse moral infractions; enclaves may have been started by Inuit who voluntarily ventured south from central or northern Labrador to populate the region; or they may have been established by northern Inuit middlemen involved with trade with Europeans who decided to remain in southeastern Labrador.

But there definitely were Inuit. An early reference to Inuit comes from an 'Indian Account' (at the time, Indian usually meant Inuit) which appears in the 1798 Slade ledger from Battle Harbour. In it are unmistakably Inuit names (e.g., Shilmuck, Etewooke, Oglucock) listed beside references to seal skins and oil sold to the company (Slade Ledger 1798). Next, is the Reverend Mr Hickson's 1824 description of Inuit and part-Inuit at Dumpling Island, Tub Harbour (Esquimaux Bay-Groswater Bay), and in Lake Melville – where the majority of the estimated 326 people were Inuit – (41) clearly establishing that in the northern part of southeastern and central Labrador, Inuit were both numerous and still living a relatively traditional lifestyle. Less than a decade later, the Moss diary contains several references to 'Indians' or 'Esquime [sic] Indians,' some living at St Francis Harbour, who visited Battle Harbour in February 1832 asking for harp-seal carcasses to eat. One Inuit party had a 'Comatic and 13 dogs' and included Thomas Paul, an Inuk probably related to the contemporary Paul family (Pollo or Paulo) of Port Hope Simpson, whose aboriginal roots are locally thought to be Indian (Innu or Mi'kmaq). The Anglican bishop Feild's mid-nineteenth-century travels between Forteau and Dumpling (outside Sandwich Bay) leave little doubt that the vast majority of women on the coast were either Inuit, mixed (Inuit-European), or Indian, in that order. In 1848, European men outnumbered women 'eight or nine to one' (Feild 1851, 47) and in the bishop's words. 'all the females are either Esquimaux [Inuit] or mountaineer Indians [Innu], or descended from them' (1849, 17). Feild was explicit on exceptions to this generalization. For example, on 8 August 1848 he visited Mr Saunders, who had served as agent for Messrs Hunt and Company for some twenty-one years, at St Francis

Harbour. Feild described Mr Saunders as the 'first lady who ever visited this coast, and, as far as I know, the only female who has come from England to dwell on the Labrador' (1851, 52).

Feild described a large Inuit population at Sandwich Bay, a population more 'intelligent' and 'hardy' than those living further south. Feild attributed this to 'longer acquaintance' and more 'familiar intercourse' with Europeans (1851, 67–8). Once again, Feild observed the effects of acculturation and praised the agent for Hunt and Company for taking 'considerable pains' to 'instruct and civilize the natives' (*ibid.*, 68). According to Feild, the only element of traditional Inuit clothing still worn was skin boots. This can be compared with Hickson's (in Windsor *n.d.*, 37–8) descriptions in 1824 of Inuit between Batteau and Groswater Bay (Esquimaux Bay), where Inuit wore cassocks of purchased swan-skin (heavy woollen flannel, akin to the 'Grenfell' cloth of recent times [Story 1982, 548–9]) during summer, and sealskin clothing in winter.

Another reference to Inuit comes from the Reverend Mr Noble's description of an 'exhibition of the kayak' at St Lewis (Fox Harbour) on 11 July 1859: 'It [the kayak] was light and tight, and ringy as a drum, and floated on the water like a bubble. Under the strokes of the kayaker, it darted forward over low swells with a grace and fleetness unknown to the birch bark canoe' (1861, 195). And W.A. Stearns, visiting St Lewis on 12 August 1882, writes: 'Our men returned to the vessel loaded with spears, bows and arrows, komatik whips, sealskin boots and mittens, and several finely spotted skins. One of the party procured the tusks of a young walrus, two of these animals have been killed by the natives the previous winter' (1884, 289). A few years later Maxwell described southeastern Labrador's Inuit population as follows: 'At various places along the coast north of Battle Harbour, Eskimo half-breeds have established themselves, but there is no large settlement of them till as far north as Cartwright harbour, where a great number are congregated about a post of the North West Company' (1887, 379).

What became of the Inuit of these nineteenth-century Inuit enclaves? We don't know, but there are at least two possibilities: first, they fell prey to disease, and second, they became assimilated. First, as with Lake Melville Inuit, disease could have reduced the size of these nineteenth-century Inuit enclaves, which, I suspect, were never very big. By the fall of 1915, the Reverend Mr Gordon describes old Aunt Nancy Williams, of North River, Sandwich Bay, as being a 'pure-bred Eskimo ... the only one of her race in the whole Bay' (1972, 33). Second, south-

eastern Labrador people were overwhelmed by each summer's arrival of Newfoundland's Labrador fishers. This fishery enabled marital unions between Newfoundlanders and Labrador folk and, consequently, diluted the physical expression of Inuit traits. At the same time, the part-Inuit ancestry of many southeastern Labrador people survives and, as we will see in Chapter 11, has acquired new significance.

The preceding accounts clearly establish that Inuit enclaves existed along the southeastern coast during the nineteenth century. This fact, together with the absence of European women during the early part of that century, leads me to conclude that, as in more northerly parts of Labrador, Inuit women became wives of many first-generation Settler males. Kleivan supports this view when in referring to northern Labrador Settlers, he remarks: 'Down to the middle of the last century a number of people, who had earlier lived for a while around or south of Hamilton Inlet, came north. In some instances these were children of European-Eskimo marriages, which occurred considerably earlier down there than within the [Moravian] mission area' (1966, 92). Bishop Feild's 1848 expedition along the southeastern coast provides a rare glimpse of the ethnic mosaic (which he would later gloss as a 'race of mixed blood, or Anglo-Esquimaux' [1851, 68]) and the mixed marriages of the day. On 9 August 1848, for example, Feild baptized five children at St Francis Harbour. Three of these were described as offspring of an 'Indian' (likely Inuit, as Feild generally referred to Indians as 'mountaineers') mother and an English father (Feild 1851, 54). Three days later, Feild visited two families at Venison Islands. These included a man named Green, the son of a Ringwood (England) attorney. Green 'married' a half-breed woman named Bourne, whose father was an Englishman and mother an Inuk (*ibid.*, 59). This could have been John Green, born about 1824 and the earliest Green listed in the computerized data. That John Green married a woman named Elizabeth, also born 1824. The first of their four children was born in 1844, at Venison Tickle. Unfortunately, my data show no Elizabeth Bourne, although other Bournes, the earliest born about 1817, were then living in the Venison Island area. The surname Bourne disappears from the coast in the late nineteenth century, while the surname Green is still found in the communities of Charlottetown and Cartwright.

Feild visited another ethnically mixed Venison Island family, that of an Englishman named Stevens, who described his wife as 'sort of a half Indian.' Stevens married the woman in 1831 and Archdeacon Wix baptized two of their children the same year. There are several Stevens

(or Stephens) in my computer data. All were born around 1837 in the Venison Islands area, of unknown parents.

At the Hunt and Company post at Seal Islands Bishop Feild encountered five Englishmen; the other residents were 'Indians' (Inuit) and 'half Indians' (mixed persons), crowded into two small huts. One Englishman (apparently not associated with Hunt and Company) had taken a mixed women as his wife. On visiting one of the two native huts, Feild found it was occupied by twenty-three people. The bishop's remarks show that considerable acculturation had taken place; most of the Inuit spoke English without any trace of Inuktitut and had ('cast aside or forgotten their old superstitions' and 'expressed a desire to be properly baptized and married' (Feild 1849, 64).

The Reverend Mr Disney also comments on ethnically mixed unions: 'the number of Englishmen who have married Esquimaux women, from time to time, is very considerable, and this also produces a good feeling between us and the Esquimaux' (1851, 4). Similarly, following his summer cruise between Battle Harbour and Cape Harrison, Commander Preston writes that 'the permanent settlers [of Labrador] are gradually increasing in number, I was astonished to find so many of the English ones married to Indians or Esquimeaux women' (1864, 631).

A penultimate point about unions between European Settlers and aboriginal people. The computer data include a number of persons whose surnames are suspicious. These may have been given by missionaries to native people at baptism or marriage or are Anglicized phonetic versions of aboriginal names. For example, the data record that Thomas Elishoc, born about 1830, married a woman named Harriet, born about the same year. George Ittock, born about 1838, married a woman named Eliza, also born about 1838. William Russell, born about 1836, married Nancy Tuccolk, born about the same year. An unknown male, born about 1853, married Jane Toumishey, also born about 1853, and another unknown male married Jane Kibenock; both were born about 1837. All that can be said about this partial list is that the surnames Russell, Toomashie (Toumishey), and Kippenhuck (Kipenock) survive today, primarily in the communities of Williams Harbour, Cartwright, and Port Hope Simpson, respectively. Contemporary representatives of these surnames exhibit 'native' physical characteristics, as do those with other possibly aboriginal surnames. The Russell-Tocculk marriage is of particular interest insofar as two of the couple's four children (Thomas, born 1859, and James, born 1866) were born at William's Harbour, where the majority of the Russells of southeastern Labrador

now reside. The computer data permit the tracing of some of James Russell's descendants to the present day.

On the other hand, surnames resembling Elishock and Ittiock no longer exist in the region. Their loss may be due to out-migration, genetic drift, or a change of surname encouraged either by missionaries or by individual attempts to assimilate. However, I assume that Elishoc, Ittiock, and/or Tuccolk were Inuit, and made their genetic and cultural contribution to the region.

Finally, possible motivations for and consequences of European-aboriginal unions warrant some attention. The previously explained shortage of European women was clearly the primary reason why Settler males acquired native spouses. Feild's rather moralistic and enigmatic account of the Englishman (or men – Feild ambiguously alternates between singular and plural) who had taken a mixed woman for his wife at Seal Islands implies that the man (or men) felt guilty about doing so. (Kleivan [1966, 100] provides similar historical evidence from northern Labrador of Settlers who felt ashamed for marrying Inuit.) Feild wrote that the (English) 'men confessed that they had only taken the women to live with them as wives, without any form of marriage; but they well knew, they said, the propriety and necessity of the religious service and sanction' (1851, 64). Loneliness and a desire to settle permanently in Labrador probably also explain why Settler males sought aboriginal wives.

This chapter reconstructs the beginnings of early European settlement. Significant differences exist between regions such as southeastern Labrador, the Labrador Strait, or part of Newfoundland. Consequently, arguments imported from other regions may not apply. While arguing that an indigenous source of wives distinguishes southeastern Labrador from island Newfoundland and even the Labrador Strait, it is not advisable to view southeastern Labrador as an isolate. Indeed, my argument for the importance of illicit trade links settlement of the region with broader, global forces. Yet, I also (and regrettably) conclude that many details of early settlement of the region may never be known. This last point is more than an insignificant historical detail: a major concern of many contemporary Settlers is to prove their aboriginal ancestry so as to join the Labrador Metis Association, a new native organization. This chapter shows that miscegenation occurred. My hope is that further research will both reveal additional details and critically evaluate the settlement scenario I have advanced.