



The lost portrait (left to right) Tooklavinia, Caubvick, Attuiock, Ickongoque, and little Ickeuna (Royal College of Surgeons of England collection).

The lost portrait

The second in a series of columns by Dr. Marianne Stopp, an historian at the Historical Research Branch, Parks Canada. She has worked as an archaeologist in southern Labrador for over twenty years and is the author of The New Labrador Papers of Captain George Cartwright.

Many years ago I began my study of Captain George Cartwright and his eventful years on the coast of Labrador between 1770 and 1786. In the course of that work I became familiar with the well-known story of the five Inuit who voyaged with Cartwright from Cape Charles, Labrador, to London, England, in 1772. Their names were Attuiock, his youngest wife Ickongoque, their infant daughter Ickeuna, as well as Attuiock's younger brother Tooklavinia and his wife Caubvick. During their eight months in England, these Inuit became somewhat famous. Under Cartwright's care they experienced an entirely different way of life that included seeing the sights of London, riding horses, dining in English homes, but also being gaped at by crowds of curious onlookers. London soon became so overwhelming that Cartwright eventually took the group to his family's home at Marnham in the countryside near Nottingham. Their visit ended tragically, however. Just as the group was to leave Plymouth for Labrador in May 1773, one by one the Inuit began to fall ill with smallpox. Except for Caubvick who recovered from the virus, all were dead by July and were buried at Plymouth. One of the saddest and most expressive entries in Cartwright's three-volume *A Journal of Transactions and Events During a Residence of Nearly Sixteen Years on the Coast of Labrador* describes the moment when he arrived at Cape Charles and had to convey his terrible news to the many Inuit gathered there awaiting the return of their companions.

Six images of these Inuit are known to exist. The best known is the pair of full-figure pastel drawings of Attuiock and Caubvick by

Nathanial Dance that have appeared in many publications on Labrador's history. These were commissioned by the famous zoologist Sir Joseph Banks who enjoyed the Inuits' company on several occasions. They remain in the possession of one of Banks's descendants in England. Smaller portraits of the heads of Caubvick and Attuiock were copied from Dance's work in 1792 and given as gifts by Banks to his good friend and colleague J.F. Blumenbach at the University of Goettingen in Germany along with the famous oil painting of Mikak. Another small drawing of an Inuit woman was found among the new Cartwright papers and can be seen in my book *The New Labrador Papers of Captain George Cartwright*. The existence of a sixth portrait of the entire group of Inuit was long known but never found. In a 1790 letter to Joseph Banks, George Cartwright asked him for a copy of "the picture, which you had taken of the Indians." Cartwright hoped to publish this image in his journal but was later deterred by the cost.

The group portrait has been missing for at least a century, perhaps longer. The historian A. Lysaght, author of *Joseph Banks in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1766*, searched for it in the 1960s. I, too, tried to track it down over the years. Various clues suggested that it could be at the Royal College of Surgeons in London, but letters and e-mails came to nothing. It speaks to the benefits of digitally cataloguing museum collections when in early 2008 I "discovered" the lost portrait on the new on-line database of the RCS. I shall never forget the seismic moment when all five Inuit appeared on my screen. There they were, like spirits come to finally greet me after so many years of researching their lives, and after so many years of being lost.

The old adage "one thing leads to another" was proven true not long after completing my study of the Inuit. In another search of the digital universe I learned of the existence of a series of letters writ-

ten by George Cartwright's sister at the time of the Inuit visit to Marnham. With the help of Greg Mitchell at the Labrador Metis Nation, copies were obtained. Catherine Cartwright's letters contain detailed descriptions of the appearances, personalities, and experiences of the five Inuit while they were in England. This information has allowed us to identify the figures in the group portrait and has added significant new information to George Cartwright's journal about Labrador's rich history.