

Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA)

Rosaline Power/Fort Amherst Fonds Description

Fonds description written by Anita Best under the co-sponsorship of the Canadian Council of Archives and the Association of Newfoundland & Labrador Archives. Reformatted by Renee Lawrence.

TITLE:

Rosaline Power/Fort Amherst Fonds

COLLECTION NUMBER:

Special Collection Number I.19
Accession Number 90-408

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

27 audio recordings

DATES:

1988-1989

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

Rosalind (Wareham) Power lived at Fort Amherst as a child. In 1990, she decided to interview residents and former residents of Fort Amherst and the neighbouring community of Freshwater Bay about their lives in those communities.

Fort Amherst was built in the 1770s on the southern side of the entrance to St. John's Harbour, primarily to give those involved in the fishery and its related trade a safe harbour in which to seek refuge in case of enemy attack. It consisted of a tower with a barbette battery which in 1782 was armed with four eighteen pound cannon, nine twenty-four pound cannon and four eight-inch howitzers. In 1811 a stone lighthouse was built on a gun emplacement at the Fort. When British forces were withdrawn in 1870, along with all other forces in British North America, the installation was allowed to fall into ruin except for the lighthouse and a fog gun (ca. 1885) which fired every hour during daylight fog, with a horn sounding between firings. Fort Amherst was restored somewhat in preparation for both World Wars with a defence battery (1914) and a clearing to the west of the fort which became the site of a barracks (1939) built to house ninety men and two officers of the Canadian Forces. Fort Amherst suffered more damage from Nature than from war; storms and salt water damage ruined the original stone lighthouse and the old fort, and a new lighthouse was built in 1954. The community called Fort Amherst by local residents consisted of a small number of families and their dwellings located near the lighthouse and along the Southside near the harbour entrance.

Freshwater Bay is an abandoned fishing settlement located on Freshwater Bay, an inlet of St. John's Bay, southeast of St. John's Harbour. Called Frinouse or Frinquire on early French maps, it is likely that European fishermen were operating from there in the 1500s. The first record of a permanent settlement is the 1857 Census, which shows eleven households and sixty-five people engaged in the fishery and domestic agriculture with 13 acres under cultivation and some livestock being kept. 1935 is the last year the community appears in the Census: nine people lived there then, the rest probably having moved into St. John's in search of wage labour as the shore fishery declined. Some families continued to maintain summer homes there throughout the early Twentieth Century, and it became a popular spot for residents of St. John's to have picnics and outings. In 1977, a Portuguese vessel, the Vasco D'Orey caught fire in St. John's Harbour and was towed outside the harbour to burn. The beach at Freshwater Bay received most of the debris from this unfortunate incident. In the 1990s, clean-up efforts were renewed by the East Coast Trails Association who recognized it as an essential section of their Nature Trail network on the Avalon Peninsula.

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The fonds consists of interviews with residents and former residents of Fort Amherst and Freshwater Bay. The subject matter pertains to the community history of Fort Amherst and Freshwater Bay, from

the 1920s to the 1990s. Informants are residents or former residents of these communities. They include Etta Wareham, Leonard Wareham, Rose Tucker, William Morgan, Nellie Ennis, Vivian Blake, Bert Wareham, Elsie Wareham, Elsie Bauld, Norman and Alma Farewell, Albert and Frances Benson, Will and Rita Ennis, Nellie Power, Robert Pearcey, Elaine Stamp, Irene Dale, Walter Meadus, Melita Dalton, Helen Guest, Jim Guest, Dorothy Lewis, Captain Harold Stone, Lillian Bussey, Bill Fizzard, Sam Tucker, Robert Sheppard, Jr., Clementine Roberts, Frank Hutchings, Joan Hutchings, Bill Tucker, Edward Edgecombe, Marion Mullay, Jennie Thistle, Jim Janes, John Healey, Joan Donegani, Isobel Antle, Ida Wareham, Eva Wareham, Byron Cooper, Bob Avery, Ann Hendsbee, Queen Driscoll, Gordon Morgan, Louise Morgan, Sarah Benson, Max Manuel, Jenny Manuel, Ethel Abbot, Daisy Hiscock, Art Bugden, Mark Sampson, Beatrice Sampson, Kathleen Walsh, Margaret Ennis, Mary Perks.

RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS:

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FINDING AID AVAILABLE:

Indexes available for audio recordings

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LANGUAGE:

English

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Title based on creator and contents of fonds