



*Figure 1: Canadian National Railway train in Harbour Grace*

## **OUT OF THE PAST: OUR HISTORY**

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Located on the Avalon Peninsula portion of Newfoundland, the scenic town of Harbour Grace has a deep and rich history spanning almost 500 years. From the pirating fights of Peter Easton and the pioneering flights of Amelia Earhart to historical sites and buildings, Harbour Grace has long been the centre of excitement, adventure and beauty.

The town, founded by Francis I of France in 1517, is thought to have derived its name as a transfer from Harve de Grace, the name used for LeHarve, France. W.A. Munn stated that the community was named by "fishermen from the English Channel who knew well of LeHarve de Grace, the sea port town of Paris at the mouth of the River Seine."

Channel Island fishermen had connections to Newfoundland from early on in history. It is thought that even before John Cabot's discovery in 1497, the fishermen were driven to the shores of the island while they were on their way to Iceland. Channel Islanders are known to have been fishing in Newfoundland waters in the early sixteenth century. By 1550, Harbour Grace was a thriving fishing community comprised of these men. The first houses in the town were built near the fishing grounds which extended from Carbonear Island in the North to Feather Point in the south. The first known resident was Robert Tossey of Dartmouth, England

who was settled here in 1583. Of the early visitors to the town, none was as famous as the notorious pirate, Peter Easton.

Easton, who is still regarded as one of history's most successful pirates, is actually thought to have come to Newfoundland in 1602 as a loyal English seaman and officer. He served as Commander of a small fleet doing convoy duty for the Newfoundland fishing fleet. It is during this time that he is said to have rescued the "Irish Princess" Shelia NaGeira from the Dutch. At his time of service, the English were at war with the Spanish, but when the war ended in 1604 the English navy was disbanded and Easton turned to piracy. Sailing the eastern seaboard of North America he terrorized ships, robbing them and adding to his wealth and fleet. In 1610, Easton established a fort in Harbour Grace which is thought to have been constructed in the vicinity of the present day museum.

One of the legends of Peter Easton tells us that while returning to Harbour Grace on one occasion, he was attacked by five Biscayan and French pirates just off of Harbour Grace Island. Easton was aboard the Great Spanish Galleon, *St. Sabastian*, which is said to have been carrying the greatest treasure ever to have been captured on the Carribbean Sea. The warfare which ensued was described as the greatest battle ever fought in Conception Bay. During the clash, Easton sunk the largest ship of his attackers, the *St. Malo*, by forcing it onto Eastern Rock. In commemoration of the battle, Eastern Rock was renamed to Easton's Rock.

In 1612, Easton and his 500 men and nine ships plundered the Avalon, causing 20,000 pounds of damage. He later sent out three convoys in hopes of being granted a pardon from the English crown. Two of these requests were granted and he was pardoned in February and November of 1612. Unfortunately, word of the pardons did not reach the "Pirate Admiral", who remained in Newfoundland until 1614 when he decided to set sail for VilleFranché, Savoy, a free port for pirates. Later in his life, Easton married a woman of noble birth and attained the prestigious title of "Marquis de Savoy." It is unknown what happened to him after that.

Today the Conception Bay Museum has a plaque which stands in memory of Peter Easton. It reads:

Peter Easton "The Pirate Admiral" fortified this site in 1610 and made Newfoundland his base until 1614. He defeated a French squadron in 1611, recruited 5,000 fishermen from this colony into his crews, and raided foreign shipping as far as the Caribbean. In 1614 he intercepted the Spanish Plate Fleet at the Azores, captured three treasure ships, and divided an immense fortune among his crews. He was twice pardoned and invited home by James I, but he retired instead to Southern France where he became Marquis de Savoy and lived in great splendor.

Easton was not the only such pirate wreaking havoc on ships in the area at that time. Henry Mainwaring, another well known pirate, also roamed the waters around Harbour Grace in the early 1600's. Mainwaring attended Oxford where he was presented with a B.A. at the age of 15. Following this, he served as a trial lawyer, soldier, sailor, and author before turning his attention to pirating. In 1611, at the age of 24, Mainwaring was given a commission from Lord Admiral Nottingham to track down the 'arch pirate' of Newfoundland, Peter Easton.

After leaving port, however, Mainwaring decided that robbing Spanish treasure ships would be much more lucrative than chasing pirates. His attacks on other ships were successful and made

him very rich. Even though he was a pirate, Mainwaring refused to take any English ship or allow others to do so.

In 1614, Mainwaring came to Newfoundland, a place which he referred to as the best place for a pirate captain to refit his ship and gather a new crew.

While in the area, Mainwaring used his powerful fleet to attack ships and steal wine, fish and provisions. At one point he took 10,000 fish from a French vessel in Harbour Grace. When he left Newfoundland on September 14th, 1614, he took with him about 400 mariners and fishermen, some who decided to volunteer and others who had the decision to volunteer made from them by Mainwaring.

In 1616 Mainwaring was pardoned for his offences in return for giving up piracy. After rescuing a Newfoundland trading fleet near Gibraltar he was knighted for his services. Mainwaring left the Navy in 1639 with the rank of Vice-Admiral.

Years later, Mainwaring backed the losing side of the English Civil War. As a result of this decision the once powerful pirate lost everything and ended up dying in 1683, poor and forgotten by those of his time.

In 1615, Captain John Mason began his six year term as governor of John Guy's colony. He "carried on a fish business in Harbour Grace prosperously," surveyed part of the coast, and defended the rights of the settlers. In 1620, Mason received a commission to suppress piracy.

Throughout the 1600's, the fishery and the community continued to prosper. As in other centres with a great deal of summer activity, Harbour Grace had a small proportion of winter inhabitants who cared for properties, and in 1675 when Commodore Sir John Berry conducted his census, the year-round English population totaled 36. The summer population in 1677 fluctuated between 330 and 550. In January 1697, Harbour Grace had 100 men, 14 houses, 15 shallops and 7,500 quintals of fish.

By the late seventeenth century the French were at war with the English. In 1696 Pierre le Moyne D'Iberville was commanded to destroy the English settlements in Newfoundland. In November he took his forces to St. John's and from there they attacked the fishing communities of Conception Bay. Total losses during this raid amounted to \$190,000.

In the early eighteenth century the French made life for the English in Newfoundland very difficult. In 1705, a failed attempt was made by the French to capture Fort William in St. John's. The French then made their way back to the shores of Conception Bay traveling from Holyrood to Harbour Grace, murdering residents and destroying property as they marched. Damages in Harbour Grace from this attack totalled 38,000 pounds.

In 1715, Harbour Grace was a well established community and the economy was beginning to diversify with ship building growing in importance. Hundreds of boats were fitted out from Harbour Grace and this industry translated into valuable employment for the men during the winter months.

During the middle of the century, important English firms were building up businesses in Harbour Grace. By 1750, the Webber family of Boston set up business in the community and made strenuous efforts to encourage a whale hunt in Conception Bay. At the same time, the firm of Coughlan and Hooper, already carrying on business in Harbour Grace, were among the first

to establish sealing stations in Labrador. During this period, Harbour Grace accounted for approximately one eighth of the entire Newfoundland fishery.

The Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence both took their toll on Harbour Grace. In June 1762 the French captured Harbour Grace, which was recaptured four months later by the English forces under the direction of Baron Alexander Colville.

The beginning of the American Revolution resulted in the fishery being plagued by American privateers and Newfoundland's trade with New England getting cut off. In 1780 the privateers made several attempts on Harbour Grace, none of which were successful. The town was being defended by resident officers and soldiers of the British Military centre which was established in Harbour Grace in 1770 and by local volunteer companies. Despite being unsuccessful in their attempts to conquer the town, the privateers did manage to cause much hardship on the areas fishing industry. A Harbour Grace missionary reported that in 1777 shipping had been cut in half and by 1779 not even one tenth of the vessels arrived due to privateers.

The end of the war brought a rapid increase in total activity, but saw a decrease in the landings of the inshore cod fishery. Three bad fishing years and the entire collapse of the fishery in 1790 left the residents in distress.

Around 1800, George Kemp, the British MP for Poole, requested that a customs house be built in Carbonear. However, an official sent out to investigate the project decided that Harbour Grace would be a better location for such a building due to its status as a primary port. Upon that decision, a stone customs house was constructed in Harbour Grace by George Tapp. This building is still standing today and now operates as the Conception Bay Museum.

In 1812 the United States and Britain went to war. Consequently, the bank fishery fell off due to attacks on American Privateers. The end of the Napoleonic Wars two years later led to a decline in fish market prices causing a short period of depression and destitution.

Harbour Grace, however, was getting back on its feet by 1815. Shipbuilding yards were producing vessels in excess of 300 tons. During this time, cod and seals were being caught in increasing numbers. The growth of the sealing industry resulted in changes in social customs, provided additional winter work in building the boats, and added to the wealth of Harbour Grace. Using a newly developed method of rendering seal oil in boilers over heat, Harbour Grace soon excelled in the production of this oil. An influx of Irish immigrants in 1825 added to the town's population and commerce.

As the community continued to grow, the demand for passenger service increased. Thomas Ridley of Harbour Grace and James Clift of St. John's began a service with the packet boat Express during the 1820's. Cabin passengers on the service were charged ten shillings for the trip while those in steerage paid five shillings. Letters cost sixpence each.

The town's prosperity encountered a serious setback at 3 p.m. on August 18th, 1832 when fire erupted. Flames were spread quickly by the wind, soon reaching a building which had gunpowder in the loft. The explosion which followed sent embers in all directions causing fires to break out in several other locations. This fire was devastating and it almost totally destroyed the business community as only three merchantile establishments survived. Also claimed by the fire were several retail stores, the Episcopalian Church, three hotels, a dozen public houses, and 100 homes. Over 600 people were left homeless.

The town, however, rebuilt from this fire and in addition to building new houses and businesses they widened the streets to 60 feet. By the mid-1800's there was once again considerable mercantile activity. Cod was still seen as the only real source of wealth, the seal hunt and shipbuilding became sources of pride and rivalry. In 1857 Harbour Grace's population totalled 5,095 residents. Roads now connected many of the communities in the region of Harbour Grace and, apart from a short ferry ride, mail was being delivered by road.

The now thriving community was once again devastated by fire as on April 12th, 1858, "Toussaint's Fire" (named as such because the fire originated at Toussaint's Hotel) broke out leveling "all houses on Water Street from the corner of LeMarchant Road to Victoria Street." This fire burnt for 3 hours. Fifty families were left homeless and many of the mercantile establishments which gave supplies to the fishery were demolished.

The town rebuilt again and by 1857 there were 48 merchant establishments located here.

The 1860's were disastrous for all of Newfoundland. There was a decline in the seal hunt and a collapse of cod and herring fisheries. Fishermen were forced to depend upon the government to pay their debts and merchants were therefore put through a tough financial situations.

In the 1870's and 80's the town's industries started to rebound and progress. It was reported that in 1873 the town showed the largest catch of fish that Newfoundland had ever seen. The Bank Crash of 1894 put a halt to this progression. Drafts drawn through some Newfoundland banks were refused acceptance, leaving merchants with large stocks of fish which had to be paid, but no money to pay with. A number of the businesses which had been major parts of Harbour Grace's economy closed, never to reopen again.

As years passed, the town's prosperity continued to decline. Adding to the problems was the opening of the iron mines on Bell Island which saw approximately 200 men give up the fishery in favour of a more stable income of \$50 a month. The impact of this can be seen in the town's 1921 census which showed a population of 2,661 inhabitants, down from 5,184 in 1901.

Shipbuilding was extensive in Harbour Grace during the second decade of the 1900's and during the winter months, ships were refitted and repaired. However, the area's fishery was still poor.

By 1935 the population had once again dropped now totalling 2,215. It was in that year that W.J. Browne wrote: "Today, the waterfront is almost deserted, and her factories lie dormant, and the offices... are empty and dusty."

The fishery showed no signs of improvement during the 1930's and 40's. Then, when it seemed things could not get any worse, fire struck again. The fire siren sounded at around 1:30 p.m. on August 17th, 1944, as fire broke out in the vicinity of the waterfront. The immense heat caused several gasoline filled drums to explode. Flankers, driven by a strong breeze, ignited other sections of the waterfront, causing troubles for the firefighters who had to decide what section to concentrate on. Firefighters from other communities arrived around 4 p.m. to assist in the battle. Men passed water filled buckets along the waterfront in an attempt to combat the flames.



*Figure 2: Scene after the fire on Water St*

Finally, six hours after it began, the fire was extinguished, leaving in its wake destruction in the range of two million dollars. This wiped out the majority of the business firms and for nearly 20 years the community struggled to make a comeback.

A freezing plant was opened by S.W. Moores in 1948 as an attempt to establish a presence in the United States fish markets. This attempt failed and by 1956 the fishing industry had an over supply. By the 60's, however, demand for frozen fish picked up again and four new stern trawlers were purchased as part of what had planned to become a twenty-trawler fleet. Unfortunately, the plans never reached maturity as the Harbour Grace plant was closed down by its non-resident owners in 1968. Ocean Harvesters Limited later purchased the plant which by 1973 was the only major employer in the town.

Regardless of the financial situation of the town at any given point throughout history, religion has always played a major role in Harbour Grace. Prior to the 1760's however, religious observance was unknown as Sunday's and Monday's were all alike on the merchant's wharves.

A riot is noted in The Colonial Records of Harbour Grace in 1764 as a group of Irish Roman Catholics assembled, "riotously...to destruct the peace of our Lord the King.. and upon several persons... did make assault." The offenders received lashes and/or fines. In 1775 several people were convicted of having Mass said at their homes. The offending people received such punishments as having their homes burnt down, their fish rooms demolished, their possessions sold, receiving fines, or being expelled from the island.

The first priest known to have been stationed in Harbour Grace was Rev. Patrick Phelan. Although the exact year of his arrival is unknown, he was here in 1784 and was stationed in the mission of Harbour Grace. In September 1799, while making one of his two annual visitations to

his parish, Phelan drowned off Grate's Cove when the boat he was travelling on capsized in a storm. All passengers and crew died and only Phelan's body was recovered. His remains were brought back to Harbour Grace where he was buried in the old cemetery in the centre of the town.

In 1806 Rev. Thomas Ewer took charge of the Harbour Grace mission. During this time a wooden chapel with a tower approximately 100 feet high was constructed. By 1830 the mission had become a parish.

The wooden chapel was later torn down and excavation was under way for the construction of a new Roman Catholic Cathedral in 1844. The corner stone was laid by Bishop Mullock in 1852. Stone for the new church was brought from Kelly's Island, granite from Scotland, marble from Italy, brick from Hamburg and timber from the United States.

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception was completed in 1887. It was the last building to be seen by fishermen as they left port and the first to welcome them safely home on their return. Only two years after completion, on September 2nd, 1889, it was destroyed by fire. Entirely paid for, it was valued at \$350,000 but it carried no insurance.

A new cathedral, built in Gothic style, was begun immediately. Ten years later, in 1899, the church opened for the first time. It was declared a Registered Heritage Structure by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador on May 25th, 1991 and it is still in use today.

Protestant religious denominations, particularly the Church of England, were encouraged in the town. The first Church of England chapel in Harbour Grace was built in 1764 - two years before the arrival of the first clergyman, Rev. Laurence Coughlan.

The Church of England church was a small wooden structure, but in 1816 it was totally destroyed by a fire thought to have been caused by arson.

A new building was under construction and almost completed when fire struck again demolishing the building.

In 1817 another church was started, but a heavy gale of wind reduced it to rubble, causing a loss of 200 pounds in labour and materials.

Yet another was started and finished at a cost of 3,870 pounds. This church was destroyed by the fire of 1832. The corner stone for St. Paul's, the oldest stone church in Newfoundland, was laid by Governor Henry Prescott on July 28th, 1835. The church was opened for services on July 9th, 1837 and was consecrated by Bishop Aubrey Spencer on July 4th, 1840.

The parish in Harbour Grace was served by many clergymen who are remembered for their contributions to Newfoundland history.

Rev. Laurence Coughlan, for instance, is credited with the introduction of Methodism to Newfoundland. However, he was ordained in the Church of England and was a Church of England clergyman while explaining the Wesleyan philosophy.

The first official Wesleyan preacher in Harbour Grace was John Stretton, a merchant who settled here in 1771. The first Methodist church in Harbour Grace was a small chapel built by Stretton at his own expense. It opened on August 31st, 1788.

Harbour Grace became a separate circuit under Ninian Barr in 1817, and in 1820 steps were taken to erect a new church to replace Stretton's chapel. The new church was used for 30 years. On February 7th, 1850, the church, which had just undergone extensive repairs, was destroyed by fire leaving a debt of 100 pounds. No insurance was carried.

John Munn, a leading merchant, encouraged the hearts of his financially weaker neighbours and arrangements for the construction of a larger church began. A year later, the new church was completed.

This, their third church, was destroyed by fire on February 7th, 1904. The building was valued at \$9,000, but it carried only \$3,000 insurance. Only days after this fire, the congregation decided to start a new church as soon as possible. The corner stone for this new building was laid on July 28th and exactly six months later, on January 28th, 1905, the new church was opened. It was re-named Harbour Grace United Church in 1925.

Unfortunately, this church was one of many buildings which were left in ruins after the fire of 1944. Six years later, on August 29th, 1950, the Coughlan United Church was opened. This church is still in use. Located near the church, in memory of Rev. Laurence Coughlan, is the Coughlan National Historic Site.

Interest in the Free Presbytery is thought to have dated back to 1848 when Rev. Hugh MacLeod, a deputy of the Free Church in Scotland, preached in the Methodist chapel in Harbour Grace. In May 1854, John Munn wrote to the Free Presbytery of Halifax stating that the Presbyterians of Harbour Grace had decided to form a parish.

Within a year of this, Alexander Ross was appointed to work in Harbour Grace and on Sunday, May 20th, 1855, the Free Kirk was opened at a cost of 800 pounds. By 1857 the congregation numbered 75 and by 1869 this number had more than doubled to 177.

The four main branches of the Presbytery of Halifax supplied a number of ordained missionaries, none of whom stayed in the town for a long period of time. It was during this period that the former Free Kirk became known as St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. By 1915, St. John's was the only Presbyterian church in Newfoundland which had a minister.

In 1925 the remaining eighteen families in the congregation of Harbour Grace voted against a union with the Methodists to form a United Church. At this point, the Munn family withdrew their financial support. In 1940 the church building was dismantled and reassembled in Carbonear.

Often tied to religion, Harbour Grace's political history is extremely turbulent. Prior to 1832 there was no form of elected government in the area as instead order was maintained by fishing admirals and magistrates appointed by naval governors. A small wooden courthouse was built in 1672, but it was considered inadequate by 1783. A new structure was built in 1808, eighteen years before the Supreme Court of Newfoundland was established. In 1830, the cornerstone was laid for the stone courthouse which is still in use today. The emergence of politics in the area led to many instances of violence and chaos which gave the newly built courthouse much use.

A riot broke out during the 1836 election when a large crowd of people from Carbonear carrying banners, sticks, pickets, and other weapons, marched into Harbour Grace chanting, "Down with Tories! Down with the Merchants!" When they made it to Harbour Grace, the group collided with supporters of Harbour Grace candidates Thomas Ridley and Robert Prowse. Violence



erupted causing many injuries and a great deal of property damage. As a result, both Ridley and Prowse withdrew from the election. During a by-election in 1840, violence flared again resulting in several people being shot, several homes being destroyed, and the polls closing. The election was voided and the seat went empty.

The election of 1859 received a low turn-out due to violence. During that election the poll book was stolen, one candidate resigned, and two liberals were declared victorious despite the fact that one, James Prendergast, had fewer votes than the opposing candidate Robert Walsh, who resigned under protest the day after the election due to fear for the safety of his supporters and family.

When it was time for another election in May 1861 the fear of violence was so great that the magistrates requested a military detail be sent to town. The request was refused and riots broke out in the town. A by-election was called for November, and this time the military responded to the town's request for assistance. On November 12th, Captain Gwynne, Lieutenant Mechem, Lieutenant Mashim, three sergeants, and a detachment of troops from the 62nd Regiment in St. John's were dispatched to Harbour Grace. Surprisingly, this election, along with elections for the next several years ran relatively smoothly.

On Boxing Day, 1883, the hostility that was forming between the Protestants and Roman Catholics came to a boiling point. It was on this day that approximately 400 - 500 members of the Loyal Orange Association held their annual parade through the town. It was during their march around the town that a group of 100 to 150 men from Riverhead formed in an attempt to prevent the Protestants from passing through the lane from Harvey Street to Water Street because they felt that the Orangemen were encroaching on their territory. From this confrontation came five deaths and 17 injuries. Resulting from this event, known as the Harbour Grace Affray, nineteen people were arrested and brought to trial. Due to conflicting evidence and suspected perjury, all charged individuals were acquitted. The apparent failure of justice set the stage for the campaign of 1885 which saw citizens being urged to vote along religious lines rather than party lines. The Reform Party, consisting of exclusively Protestant candidates contesting exclusively protestant districts, promised to return to a clean government and no amalgamation with Roman Catholics. On that campaign promise, the Reform Party won the election. The 1885 election was the last to see violence on voting day.

Education was one of the major benefits of the advent of churches in Harbour Grace. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent missionaries to Newfoundland as early as the first decade of the 1700's and they operated and maintained schools on the island for over a century.

When Rev. Coughlan was succeeded by Balfour in 1772, a school was established which operated sporadically until 1803.

Governor Gambier visited the community in 1802 and he encouraged the starting of schools. Because the children were employed in the fishery during weekdays, Sunday schools were considered "a most immediate utility." Such a school was established in 1803.

During the 1800's many schools were set up in the area, the majority of which were run by the churches. By 1884, Harbour Grace had three Church of England schools, two Methodist schools, and five Roman Catholic schools.

School was held from 9 a.m. to noon and from 2 p.m. to 4:40 p.m. from May 1st until October 31st. From November 1st to April 30th school began at 10 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. Students were divided into three classes depending on their qualifications. There were seven weeks of holidays - three in the middle of summer, three at Christmas and one at Easter.

Students were also granted a holiday on the day of the best known sporting event in the area, the Harbour Grace Regatta. This event was established in 1859 when Edward L. Oke, the lighthouse keeper, decided to challenge Captain Walsh and his crew to a three mile race. The two crews would race in a whale boat from the Point of Beach to a Bouy off Long Beach in Harbour Grace. Besides bragging rights, the winner of the competition would receive a purse of \$25. Despite trailing early, Oke and his crew won the race soundly. The next year a regatta was held in St. John's to celebrate the visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), and the Harbour Grace Standard suggested that a similar event should take place at Lady Lake.

Organized by the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Company, the first of these events took place in 1862. A large crowd of spectators turned out for the event on Tuesday, July 22nd and bands played throughout the day for the amusement of those in attendance. Missing from the crowd, however, was Mr. Edward Oke who had drowned while crossing the ice between Harbour Grace and Harbour Grace Island just five months before.

The attendance for the Harbour Grace Annual Regatta, along with the participating crews, increased dramatically over the years. At one point the attendance levels reached an estimated 7,000 spectators and thirty-four crews. It was not until 1971 that the traditional whale boats used in the races were replaced by the modern lightweight racing shells.

Since the first regatta, no other crew has won more championship races than the Williams Brothers. Records show that this crew amassed an outstanding nine consecutive championship wins.

The regatta in Harbour Grace continues to take place annually, making it the second oldest continuous sporting event in North America.

The town's regatta was covered by newspapers in the area which began publishing in 1820 when John J. Ryan started *The Rising Sun*. In 1828, the *Harbour Grace and Carbonear Weekly Journal and General Advertiser for Conception Bay* was started by Thomas W. Ball. The *Conception Bay Mercury* was registered in 1837 by publisher William S. Comer, but its first date of publication is unknown.

*The Weekly Herald* was started by Charles St. John in November 1842, and in 1850 the *Harbour Grace Standard and Conception Bay Advertiser* (later *Standard and Conception Bay Advertiser*) was established and it continued to be published under a series of owners until the late 1930's. The *Conception Bay Man*, which ran for three years, was founded in 1856 by Henry Webber.

The Harbour Grace airstrip is another of the town's news makers. In 1927, Fred Koehler, a representative of the Stenson Aircraft Corporation of Detroit, was in Newfoundland looking for a suitable location for a hopping off place for an around the world flight. He selected Harbour Grace as the best location for such a site and on August 8th work began on the project. Using horses and carts, along with some machinery supplied by the government, workers cleared the area of bushes, large stones and rocks. Just weeks later, on August 27th the Harbour Grace

Airstrip was complete. Measuring 4000 feet long and 200 feet wide, it consisted of a smooth gravel surface which was completely flat except for a 4% decline on one third of the field. This decline was later found to be of great assistance to aircraft taking off with heavy loads. On the east end of the field was a low bluff which acted as a landmark for puzzled flyers. At the time of its construction it was the first civilian airport in North America to be built for transatlantic flying.

Even prior to the establishment of an actual airport, the town was chosen to be the starting point for many attempts to cross the Atlantic. Most of these attempts were unsuccessful.

It should be noted that the first airmail in Newfoundland was also received in Harbour Grace before there was an airstrip in place as on February 24th, 1922, Major F.S. Cotton landed in the ice filled harbour to deliver mail from St. John's.

The first plane to use the airfield was the "Pride of Detroit" which landed on August 26th, 1927, the same day which workers had completed the site. Piloted by William E. Brock, who was accompanied by Edward F. Schlee, the "Pride of Detroit" left Harbour Grace the next day continuing their around the world flight. On September 16th, the pair landed in Tokyo, Japan, only to be arrested as spies and returned to the United States by ship.

In the early days of flight, the Harbour Grace Airstrip was the starting point of many famous voyages. Of those who took to the skies from the airstrip, one of the most celebrated figures was Amelia Earhart.

Amelia's first flight out of Newfoundland was as a passenger aboard the "Friendship" on June 17th, 1928. The plane landed the next day at Bury Port, Wales, making her the first woman to cross the Atlantic by plane. The role she played in that flight was not a major one as bad weather kept her from taking the controls, forcing her to remain just a passenger. Upon landing, she played down the accomplishment describing herself as having been little more than a "sack of potatoes" during that flight which lasted 20 hours and 40 minutes.

At 7:20 p.m. on May 20th, 1932, Earhart climbed aboard her Lockheed Vega and used the Harbour Grace airstrip as the starting point for another flight into the history books. Approximately 15 hours after take off, despite having encountered a storm, fog, and a malfunction which caused flames to shoot from her exhaust, she reached Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Apart from making her the third person to have flown across the Atlantic, this flight allowed her to lay claim to the accomplishment of being the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. The incredible ambition of Earhart allowed her to tackle all obstacles which got in her way as time after time she entered the records books, sometimes even breaking her own records in the process.

In 1937 she attempted to become the first person to fly around the world at the equator. Prior to the flight, she had told reporters that this would be her final "stunt" and that once it was completed she was going to live a quiet life. At 7:42 a.m. on July 2nd, her panicked voice was heard saying "...gas is running low." This would be the second to last message that would ever be heard from one of the greatest pioneers of aviation, as moments later her plane disappeared over the Pacific, never to be found again. Despite one of the greatest search and rescue efforts of the time, not even a single clue was discovered and her disappearance remains a mystery today. One of the greatest measures of her fame is that she is as well known today as she was during her life.

Although Earhart's flights are possibly the most recounted to have begun in Harbour Grace, there are many other notable flights.

On September 5th, 1927, the Canadian monoplane, *Sir John Carling* with Captain Jerry Tully and Lieutenant James Medcalf aboard landed at the Harbour Grace airstrip. The next day the men took off for London, England. The people of Harbour Grace were the last to see the "Sir John Carling" as it never made it to its destination.

The *Sir John Carling* was one of three planes which crashed that week during their attempts to cross the Atlantic. *Old Glory* and *Sir Randolph* also failed in their attempts to conquer the Atlantic by air. The *S.S. Kyle* was sent out in search of the missing planes, but only the wreckage of the *Old Glory* was found.

On October 19th, 1929, Urban F. Diteman landed his monoplane, the "Golden Hind" in Harbour Grace. Three days later he took off from the airstrip. It was presumed at the time that he was heading towards the United States, but a note left by him stated that he was going eastward to England. Soon after takeoff, a report was received that he was passing over Cape St. Francis at an estimated speed of 140mph. He was soon to become the next fatality.

On August 24th, 1932, Clyde A. Lee and John Bochon climbed aboard the *Green Mountain Boy* after a stop over in Harbour Grace. The plane took off from the Harbour Grace airstrip in an attempt to complete a flight to Oslo, Norway. Like many who had taken off before them, the men and the plane were never to be seen again.

On October 26th, 1936, James (Jimmy) Mollison landed in Harbour Grace six and a half hours after taking off from New York. He departed from Harbour Grace at 5:10 p.m. on October 29th and landed in London, England 13 hours and 18 minutes later. Upon landing, Mollison became the first man to have flown directly to London without having to make a forced landing on route.

By the end of 1936, the fame and glory associated with flying the Atlantic were fading fast. As a result of this, Mollison's flight was the last time the Harbour Grace airstrip was used as a final take off point from North America.

The Harbour Grace airport served early aviators for nine years. Of the 20 flights which were attempted from Harbour Grace, there were eleven successful, four unaccounted for, two crashed on take off, two were aborted for undisclosed reasons, and one crash landed off the coast of Ireland.

During World War II, the Royal Canadian Navy established and operated a High Frequency Detection finding station on the airfield. The site served as the perfect location for such a device and throughout the war it intercepted countless enemy messages and provided valuable information on enemy submarines.

Following the war, the airstrip was left to deteriorate. In 1977, through the efforts of the Harbour Grace Historical Society, it was restored to usable condition. In 1999, after years of being considered abandoned, the airstrip was reinstated to official international aerodrome status under the designator of CHG2.

In 1993, as recognition of the part which Harbour Grace played in international aviation, the family of Roger Pike donated a CF-QB1 air plane to the town. The plane, now named *The Spirit*

of *Harbour Grace* stands as a reminder to residents and visitors alike of the contributions the town made to early flight.

At its present location, *The Spirit of Harbour Grace* stands just in front of another tourist attraction. The S.S. *Kyle* was launched on April 17th, 1913 by Mrs. R.G. Reid, wife of the President of the Reid Newfoundland Company. The *Kyle* was named in accordance to Fleet Tradition, as the vessels in the Reid Coastal Fleet were all named for Scottish towns. The ship was to join the Reid Newfoundland Coastal Fleet to provide a Labrador region with its first regularly scheduled service. Crowds would gather to welcome her as she approached isolated coves and settlements. In addition to passengers and cargo, the *Kyle* also carried a doctor whom the people would receive medical attention from. Known to many Newfoundlanders as the "Bulldog of the North", the *Kyle* was not the largest ship in the fleet, but it was the fastest and was said to have been the strongest because it was strengthened for ice.

The ship began working with the Canadian National Railway in 1923 when they took over the duties of the Reid Newfoundland Company's coastal/railway service. She played a vital role in World War II as she was called on to carry Newfoundland troops to the mainland to join Canadian troops in preparation for the battle on the front lines in Europe.

From there, the *Kyle* was sold to Halifax/New York Partners Arctic Shipping, where it was renamed *Arctic Eagle* and used in the seal fishery. It was sold for \$100,000 to Fred Earle one year later. Now rechristened as the *Kyle*, she went back to work in the sealing industry. In 1967, after a collision with an iceberg, the *Kyle* was taken out of service so that a decision could be made about her future. During this time, on February 4th, 1967, a violent storm broke out consisting of powerful winds and waves. It was during this storm that the *Kyle* was torn from her moorings and blown to Riverhead, Harbour Grace. In most instances, a ship blowing unmanned in a storm would be wrecked along the rocky shore, but this was to be the fate of the *Kyle*. Seafarers and fishermen alike are of the opinion that the *Kyle* was not meant to sink to an underwater grave. Instead, they feel that the beloved ship was safely guided to its resting place by the "seaman's ghost" which selected a place in the harbour where she would live on in people's hearts and minds, never to be forgotten.

Faced with an expensive salvage operation after the storm, the owners decided to flood her hull to prevent further drifting. Since that day, the *Kyle* has sat at the foot of the harbour where she now serves as a tourist attraction and continues to attract crowds.

The Kearney Tourist Chalet was built in 1995 and is located near the *Spirit of Harbour Grace*. This structure is a replica of the "Beacon Light" which was used for the design at the centre of our flag which is featured on the cover of this book. The chalet is named after Michael Condon Kearney who built the lighthouse at the Point of Beach.

Operating from June to September each year, visitors to the chalet can obtain information about Newfoundland and Labrador, purchase souvenirs, postcards, or maps. In 1998, a "Kyle" room was attached to the chalet containing artifacts and information about the S.S. *Kyle*. Located outside of the chalet are two history boards, one of which was donated to the town by the Johnson Family Foundation. One of these boards contains information pertaining to the S.S. *Kyle*, while the other contains information regarding the town of Harbour Grace.

In the years since our first settlers landed here in the 1500's, Harbour Grace has been visited by pirates, pioneers, princes and princesses amongst others. We invite you to add your name to the list of people who have enjoyed our community.