

Riverhead: Reminiscing by Dr. Shannon Ryan



Riverhead in Harbour Grace, sometimes just referred to as *The River*, is one of those places that grew naturally and unofficially as fishermen and women stayed over winter while their employers returned to England and Ireland. We know little about the early history of these small groups of settlers but they would have come mostly from the West Countries of England.

The harbours and coves of Conception Bay and the Southern Shore, including St. John's, were visited by European fishermen from the beginning of the 1500s. The Spanish and Portuguese were forced away by the English during the late 1500s leaving only the English and French. The latter, however, concentrated on Placentia Bay and the South Coast in the early 1600s which complimented their growing interest in the St. Lawrence River area. Thus by the beginning of the 1600s the English dominated Conception Bay, Trinity Bay and the Southern Shore including St. John's.

In the early 1600s English merchants founded colonies in Newfoundland beginning with Cupids (Cuper's Cove) in 1610 - which is recognized as the first official colony. Cupids was founded by the *London and Bristol Company*. It experienced mixed success and was restricted by the activities of the pirate Easton who made Harbour Grace his headquarters in 1612 in order to replenish his supplies and manpower. After Easton departed to sunnier climates, Harbour Grace, that is the harbour, became attractive to some for colonization purposes. The Bristol merchants broke off from the London merchants and founded their own company; the *Bristol Company of Mer-*

chant Venturers and during the winter of 1617-18, a number of the Bristol colonists left Cupids and settled in Harbour Grace where they established their colony of Bristol's Hope. The Bristol Company sent out Robert Hayman as the governor of Bristol's Hope in 1618 and he stayed for fifteen months and returned for several summers. He was not an active governor, as far as we know, but he allowed the colonists to operate their fisheries, woods work, agriculture and so on, as they saw fit. (He should receive some recognition - a school named after him, for example.) The Bristol's Hope colony must have thrived because it was described in 1622 as having hospitable people who lived in fine houses. (In 1910 the people of a neighbouring cove, Musketa or Mosquito, adopted the name of Bristol's Hope.)

The early English-Newfoundland cod fishery in the 1600s developed into three branches: The traditional ship fishery whereby ships came annually to Newfoundland with men, boats and supplies, fished from their stages, dried the fish on wooden flakes, and sent it to markets in Spain and Portugal and elsewhere in the early fall. They did not use the fishing ship for actually fishing except in the very earliest years. It made more sense to anchor the ships in the harbour and fish from fishing boats. These boats, holding three to five men, became the catching boats for all three fisheries. The captains of these fishing ships often left men behind to care for the premises (always called *fishing rooms*) and to make preparations for the following year.

The second type of fishery was carried out by people referred to as *inhabitants* who lived in Newfoundland and employed men brought out by the fishing ships. The inhabitants were among those who cared for the stages and flakes as mentioned just above. Their numbers were few in the 1600s but this population gradually increased. The third type of fishery was referred to as the bye boat fishery. In this operation boat owners from England brought out their own boats and their supplies and men on fishing ships and carried out their fishery as did the others but they returned to England in the fall. This type of fishery started in the 1640s while there was a depression in the fishing ship fishery.

Each type of fishery had its own advantages and disadvantages. The fishing ships returned to England each fall so their men were guaranteed to be at home and if captains were fortunate big profits could be made and large shares distributed to the fishermen (always referred to as *servants*). However, if they were late arriving in Newfoundland the following spring they were at a disadvantage in obtaining fishing space. The inhabitants had the advantage of beginning their fishery early in the spring, of being able to engage in some agriculture during the spring and summer and of maintaining their fishing rooms during the winter months. However, inhabitants were cut off from their homes and villages in England and often suffered from

scurvy. Furthermore, they were in danger of losing their property and lives to enemy raids during times of war as happened during the Dutch wars in the 1600s and the French wars during 1689-1713. The bye boat keepers (masters) could come to Newfoundland if fish prospects looked good or stay in England because they owned only boats unlike the fishing ship masters who were forced to go to Newfoundland or leave their ships tied up. However, bye boat keepers found it more and more difficult to hold onto the fishing rooms during times of war because if they did not use a fishing room regularly it could be taken by someone else. Each type of cod fishery had its own peculiarities and during the 1700s population grew as fishermen took up fishing rooms on a regular basis.



We do not know much about unofficial settlements like Riverhead but there is no doubt that some servants stayed behind and lived outside the larger communities like Harbour Grace. They would be young men who had few prospects back in England where life for the unemployed landless could be very difficult. In Riverhead, for example, there was fresh water and trout, salmon, mussels, rabbits, berries and firewood. For people who had no legal access to game and firewood or land in England, Riverhead would look fairly attractive. In addition, they could build their huts anywhere and engage in some basic agriculture and animal husbandry. Fish offal, squid and sea weed (kelp) provided good sources of manure. The people (men) who lived in Riverhead could not fish for cod in that area because there were none available. The only hope they had for cod fishing was to be employed by boat owners in Harbour Grace during the summer months.

Although there were very few women servants coming out to Newfoundland in the 1600s some were employed by the inhabitants to help their wives with the household chores. Few of them would accompany men to Riverhead for the greater number would remain in the Bristol's Hope Colony in Harbour Grace. There was always a severe shortage of women because so few came to Newfoundland and the vast majority of men were single. Thus there was always a demand for women in the better places like the Bristol's Hope Colony.

By the 1700s there were a few English men servants who had moved to Riverhead. As pointed out above, they were poor and would find intermittent work with the boat owners in Harbour Grace depending on the state of the fishery and the economy. However, their employment prospects would not be good because the ship captains, inhabitants and bye boat masters would generally have the men they needed, as pointed out. Nevertheless they eked out a living but needed to take advantage of every opportunity, legal and illegal, that appeared. These people were ignored by the official records (and probably by French raiders as well) so there is not much known about them. The historian, Prowse, (p. 294) records a complaint made in 1755 by the fishing admiral in Harbour Grace and signed by Webber, Parsons, Snow, Martin and Sheppard that people living in huts in Riverhead were destroying sheep and cattle belonging to Harbour Grace inhabitants and that these people were "loose and bad characters harbouring numbers of idle persons." But nothing else has been found indicating any further developments during this period.

By the early 1800s things began to change. The French Revolutionary War (1793-1802) and the Napoleonic War (1803-15) occupied England (usually referred to as Britain by this time). Meanwhile, the demand for saltfish in Spain and Portugal particularly, but also in the West Indies, increased dramatically with prices often rising by 400%. The inhabitant merchants in places like Harbour Grace (and especially Harbour Grace) began to send fishing schooners to the Northern Peninsula where the French had been fishing before the war (French Shore) and these schooners brought their cargoes of salted cod back to Harbour Grace. There was a huge demand for labour, wages doubled, tripled and quadrupled. Because it was difficult to obtain servants in England due to the fact that the Royal Navy needed all the sailors it could get, Irish servants were brought to Newfoundland by the inhabitants who could be described as merchants or planters by this time. The Irish came and because of the high wages, brought wives and families and were guaranteed work in Harbour Grace on the schooners going north.



Then it was discovered that these schooners could hunt seals in February-May. The seal pelts had thick fat or blubber which was rendered into oil for lighting and lubrication back in industrial Britain (for lighthouses, wharf and street lighting and so on). The schooners went north for cod fish during June-September. The fishermen now had two resources - cod and seals -

and were guaranteed almost year round employment. Riverhead became a favourite place for many of these Irish to settle. They did not need fishing stages of their own, like the independent fishermen in Harbour Grace from Bear's Cove to what is now the site of the old Moores premises. In addition, there was fairly good agricultural land on Fishermans Road, Cooper Corner Road, The Hard Path, Spaniard's Bay Road, and parts of the Southside. Thus Riverhead became overwhelmingly Irish and the former residents of Riverhead married into the Irish newcomers and we have today a mixture of Irish and West of England surnames - please note that the English surnames survived because it was a case of English males marrying Irish females.



Riverhead was probably confined, originally, to the small area *Between the Bridges* as the Roman Catholic priests referred to it, or *Riverhead Centre* as it is nowadays called; that is from the bridge by Glavine's former shop and Dawley's bridge. The bridge by the former school was always called the middle bridge. However, there is no doubt

that the earlier people had created the beginnings of the following roads: Fishermans Road, Spaniard's Bay Road, Cooper Corner Road, The Hard Path and the beginnings of the Southside Road.

William Ryan, my great-great grandfather moved in on Fishermans Road in about 1830 - it would only be a path then - and built his house behind the house where the late John Mike Ryan (1912-2008) lived and the remains of his original cellar can still be seen. Edmund Shanahan, my mother's great grandfather built his original house and cellar where the Hurdles now live and the present cellar next to Hurdles is most likely his original cellar. Edmund also took up land east of Ryan on Fishermans Road and his son, Nicholas, built his house in front of Max Short's present house and the old cellar seems to have fallen down in recent years. Meanwhile, McCarthy moved in and claimed land west of Ryan and built his house and cellar a little to the west of my brother Bill's house. Sheehan claimed the land where



Mary Ryan and her husband Jim Durnford live and the remains of the cellar can be seen next to my mother's (Lillian) house. The earlier Irish settlers, Sullivan and Mackay, had already taken up the land across from Edmund Shanahan. There were other bits and pieces of land, including the Reynolds property where Vince Hearn and the late Nick Short built their houses but I am not clear as to the original owners.



Spaniard's Bay Road (now called Harvey Street [extension]) was probably settled at around the same time as were Cooper Corner Road, The Hard Path and the western end of the Southside Road.

In 1815 the Napoleonic War ended and there were two significant developments: There was a major depression and the French fishermen returned to fish on the French Shore. The depression was caused by the revival of the cod fisheries of the French, Norwegians and Americans. Harbour Grace fishermen could no longer go to the French Shore so, instead, they crossed the Strait of Belle Isle and began fishing on the Labrador coast. And they maintained the seal fishery which became more important than the cod fishery at many times during the following decades. Within a few years the Riverhead men claimed land along the Labrador coast and became stationers. Thus they built fishing rooms and hired others to fish for them. Shanahan had a room at Bolster's Rock, Russell at Long Island, Ryan at or near Battle Island, for example. And a few Shanahans bought a schooner and became floater fishermen on the Labrador coast - that is they would sail to different harbours seeking stocks of cod. However, the floater Labrador fishery was more the norm among the Labrador fishermen north of Conception Bay.



The 1820s and 1830s were busy years. St. John's and Harbour Grace merchants demanded local government which was partially achieved in 1832 and then sectarianism became a factor in early elections with rioting and sealing strikes in Harbour Grace, Carbonear and St. John's. But at the

same time Riverhead received a school and road boards were created by the St. John's government to build roads and bridges and to maintain them. In addition small welfare programs provided some relief for the destitute. In 1855 Newfoundland acquired full Responsible Government and the Colony was fairly prosperous.

However, in the 1860s the declining seal fishery created a depression which was exacerbated by problems in the cod fish markets. Many people from Riverhead emigrated to the United States; as did many from Harbour Grace itself and other Conception Bay outposts. The introduction of large steamers into the seal fishery affected the Labrador cod fishery because it was too expensive to build ships for the Labrador fishery with very little else to employ them during the remainder of the year. Therefore during the decades in the latter 1800s there was a decline in the population of Riverhead (and Harbour Grace in general).

A cross-island railroad was started in 1883 and this progressed for the following fifteen years and the first trans-island train reached Port aux Basques in 1883. The railway facilitated the emigration of people to the Boston area but also encouraged their return. The late Edward Russell commuted between Boston and Riverhead for about ten years (and told me



that it cost \$15 one way from Harbour Grace). My grandfather William Ryan and his brothers, John and Michael, did likewise but the youngest in the family, Benjamin, stayed in Boston. William and John worked on the construction of the railway and later as maintenance foremen. Michael returned to the Labrador fishery. Another great-uncle fell from the train on the returning from his first trip to Boston. (He was sitting in the seat with Edward Russell when Edward's father Patrick noticed him missing.) Grandfather Tom Shanahan and his brothers spent many years back and forth to Boston both before and after the building of the railway and Tom became an American citizen in 1896. However, he returned to go back to the Labrador fishery and engage in sealing, mining and work in the lumber woods and moved to Boston for one year in the early 1920s. He never gave up his citizenship papers and during the Great Depression some of his children used them to "return" to the United States as American citizens. Similar stories could be told of many Riverhead families.

Meanwhile, Riverhead built its own church in 1883 and thus spared themselves the journey to Harbour Grace to attend Mass and other services.

In the late 1890s iron ore mines were opened on Bell Island and in the early 1910s the Grand Falls paper mill was started. These two operations provided employment for men, some on a permanent basis but many on a part-time basis when the Labrador fishery finished in the fall.

The Great War (1914-18), now called World War I, caused an increase in the demand for fish as prices rose in Europe but after the war there was a post-war depression. The depression created a struggle for everybody but most of the Riverhead people could supply themselves with basic food products like potatoes, turnips and cabbage and many owned hens, sheep, goats and cows. Many also owned horses for transportation and for getting firewood. And most shared with their neighbours. Of course, the Labrador fishery continued but most families went to the Labrador coast on government steamers which also served as sealing ships in the spring. The records show that exports of fish declined during this depression but that disguises the fact that fishermen tended to keep back more fish when prices dropped. Thus as in all depressions in the Newfoundland fishery, when prices declined people ate more saltfish and potatoes and less salt beef and dumplings - a healthier diet actually.

The Great Depression of 1929 to the outbreak of World War in 1941 was a much more serious depression because it affected the whole world. Markets for fish, iron ore, pulp and paper, and lead and zinc from Buchans, declined and welfare payments (dole) became necessary but the government could not afford to provide much. Our Government voted itself out of office, a unique action for a colonial government. Britain appointed a Commission to run Newfoundland and Labrador and this Commission tried to improve education, and health care and society in general. This form of government lasted until Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949.

People with land to farm were better off, but only marginally. Many people who had acquired electric lights with the establishment of the United Towns Electric Company in 1902 were forced to have their lights cut off and returned to kerosene oil lamps. Meanwhile the United States cut off immigration and people could no longer go there (which is why Grandfather Shanahan's status as an American citizen was so important to his family and three daughters and one son took advantage of it).

The war brought prosperity (and the late Mike Hearn, Northside often told me that Hitler saved Newfoundland). The Americans established major bases in Argentia, St. John's and Stephenville and many smaller establishments elsewhere on the Island and Goose Bay in Labrador. Uncle Andy Short told me that the war ended the Labrador cod fishery because the fishermen just left their property to rot on the Labrador coast and went to work in Argentia and elsewhere. Uncle Ron Shanahan continued at the Labrador with his crew and Uncle Nicholas likewise; Grandfather Shana-



han had lost a leg some years before and was an invalid who died during the war. Grandfather Ryan had lost his job as a railway foreman on the North Shore line (north from Carbonear) as the railway service was reduced but was able to continue his farming and he died during the war in his 80s. His brother John also died during the war but their other brother Michael fished on the Labrador well into the 1940s dying in 1959 at the age of 92 (the same age as

his last child, John Mike, who died in 2008.) As far as I know John Shanahan (Nicholas's son) and Joe Ryan (Michael's son) were the last two of my direct relations who fished at the traditional cod fishery on the Labrador coast. Meanwhile, the Moores family from Carbonear, built a fish plant in Harbour Grace to produce frozen fresh fish and many men and women, young and older, found work there. Interestingly, Dr. Cron told mother and me "that won't always be there" which seemed extraordinary to me at the time but he was certainly right. Another source of employment in Harbour Grace was the establishment of the Koch Shoe Factory, which has changed ownership a number of times but is thriving at present.

Finally, I would like to end this summary of Riverhead by describing *The River* and *Fishermans Road* as I remember them in September, 1946, when I began school. In the case of the school I want to give some information of our school in the 1920s and '30s before I return to 1946. I have a few words to say about the medical, dental and pharmaceutical services as well.

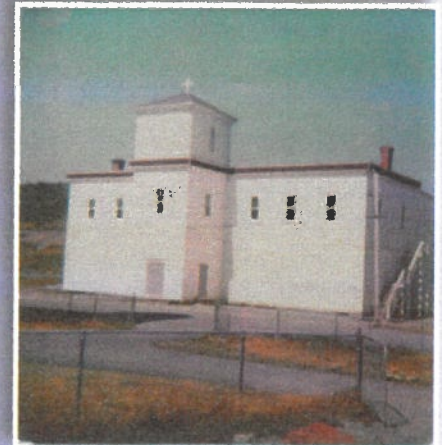
The school and church, both named after St. Joseph, were at the centre of the River. There had been an earlier school which was located across from Walsh's property according to Uncle Mike Ryan; this is still parish property apparently. According to the parish records William Guilfoyle was the Principal (or as they used to say the *high school teacher*) in 1920-21 while Chris Kehoe taught there for the first month that year and Rita Kelly for ten months. [I am using the spellings as they are in the records, which are in the parish archives in Harbour Grace.] Master Guilfoyle was a well-known school master who taught, among other things, navigation, and carried on a business at his residence which was used by his son (the late Joe) as a dwelling house. That same year Albert Walsh taught in the high school and

Neil McCarthy in the junior school of the Harbour Grace Academy. There were many female teachers employed throughout the Catholic school board area during these years but up until the 1950s, at least, female teachers who married were no longer employed.

During 1923-24, Master Guilfoyle retired and Neil McCarthy, or Master McCarthy as we all came to call him, took over the Riverhead high school.

Master McCarthy continued to serve the high school and in 1930-31 his salary was \$540.00 for the 12-month period and Alice Shanahan and Mary Cleary received \$107.28 for six months each. In 1931-32 salaries were reduced because of the Great Depression and in that year Master McCarthy \$405.00 for the year and Alice Shanahan \$160.92, also for the full year. Salaries were cut again the following year, 1932-33 to \$357.80 and \$142.22 for the Master and Miss Shanahan. Incidentally, Brendan Walsh received the same salary in the Harbour Grace Academy as Master McCarthy for that same year. Again all teachers' salaries were reduced the following year, 1933-34, with Master McCarthy receiving \$352.71, but the record for that year does not distinguish where the teachers are employed. In 1934-35, salaries were increased a little, (Master McCarthy - \$467.12) probably because of the new Commission of Government's commitment to Education. In 1935-36, it is again possible to see where each teacher is employed and Master McCarthy received \$483.00 and Miss Shanahan, \$195.00 at Riverhead. It becomes impossible to identify where teachers are employed - all except Master McCarthy because we know where he is - and I am not going to record salaries any further. Up to this point I simply wanted readers to get some idea of salary rates in general; also to show that female teachers received less than male teachers; and to explain the major turnover of female teachers through marriage.

When I began school in September 1946 Master McCarthy was in charge of the high school and would remain there until 1948 when he retired. Miss Vera Power was in charge of the junior school but would succeed Master McCarthy in high school in 1948. The junior school covered grades 1-6 at that time and the highschool, grades 7-11. (Master McCarthy was also the church organist and remained so for years after his retirement from teaching.)





The education system concentrated on the basics. School began at 9:30 and we began with a morning prayer, always on our knees of course, and then we were questioned on our catechism and we used the *Butler's Catechism*, the standard in Catholic schools at that time. Arithmetic or numbers in Grade 1, reading, exercises in printing and recess. Somewhere around there, before or after recess, we were served hot chocolate, called cocoa malt. This had been introduced by the

Commission of Government. (And was discontinued after Confederation.) At 12:30 we went home to dinner (which we now call lunch) and we were back in school at 1:30. English language and writing seem to figure largely in the afternoon classes and as we got older, geography. The junior school was dismissed at 3:30 and high school at 4:00.)

The school was situated next to the church and we were expected to attend *Stations of the Cross* during Lent and we were required to go to *Confession and receive Holy Communion* on the first Friday of each month. Since we had to fast before Communion that meant that we attended Mass at 8:30, went home for breakfast and returned to school. That was always a long breakfast because we took our time doing this and no teacher ever objected to our tardiness on the first Friday. I guess they too savoured a short morning of classes on that day. Of course, I did not make my first communion until later in that school year.



During my first year of schooling Bishop J.M. O'Neill was in charge of the Harbour Grace Diocese and Father E. Shea was the senior priest and Father William Hogan was the assistant priest. (Later Bishop O'Neill moved to Grand Falls taking Father Hogan with him and Father J.M. O'Brien became parish priest in Harbour Grace until his retirement.) At the age of eight I became an altar boy along with the large intake of boys that year - and spent several years mumbling the Latin responses until another junior priest took an interest and taught us to do the responses at least respectfully.

For our medical and dental needs we needed to depend on the town of Harbour Grace. Our family doctor was Dr. Charles Cron who had practised in the area since the mid 1930s. In fact there are records of his interceding with the Commission of Government officials on the need for more assis-



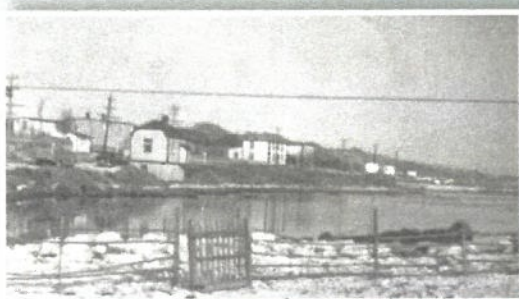
tance. One could visit him at his home/office or call upon him at any time to visit one's home. I have known of him to walk the full length of Fishermans Road in winter for a home visit. He was often assisted by Nurse O'Neill. No matter the weather or difficult conditions he never let anyone down throughout the Harbour Grace area including Upper Island Cove. Mr. Edward

Freeman was the pharmacist and would leave his home at night upon request to go to his drugstore to fill a prescription. My cousin Sam and I went to his house one wet, cold and slippery night because Dr. Cron had been to visit mother and we had a prescription to fill. He read the prescription and remarked that it was not critical that it be filled immediately but "I'm sure she would feel better if she gets it now" and he came with Sam and me to his drugstore and filled it. We were concerned that he would fall on the icy street. Dr. Goodwin senior, and his son, Dr. Roy Goodwin provided the dental service. I do not know if Dr. Goodwin senior was practising then but Dr. Roy was and he was our dentist. My mother told me that he suggested to her that she accept false teeth without paying and to pay at her own convenience. (I should point out that preventative dental care in Riverhead, as elsewhere in Newfoundland, was a long time in coming.)

The following is a description of *The River* in September, 1946, to the best of my ability. The Post Office was located a little to the eastward of the school and was looked after by Nelly Ryan who had to resign when she married Jimmy Barron and she was succeeded by Margaret (Griffin) Cleary. A little east of the Post Office was Aunt Elizabeth Shanahan's house and further east was that of Tim Fahey and his wife Alice (who had been a teacher in the Riverhead school) and their family (both houses gone now.) Further east was the house of Uncle Ron Shanahan and his family (gone now); their second house since they had originally lived on Fishermans Road. And east again was Dawley's bridge.



Returning to the Post Office, we find the beginning of The Hard Path which led up to the railway station. This part was also called the Station Lane and the Post Mistress was required to meet the train and put the outgoing mail on board and pick up the



incoming mail. Back to the Post Office if one proceeded in the direction of the school, one passed Jack Cleary's house; his wife Mary was Edward Russell's daughter and Jack had a bus and provided service between the Southside, through *The River*, and to central Harbour Grace. This was followed by two Coady houses (both gone now); Annie (Whelan) Russell where we remember John Russell and Dot and Reg Coombs living; Hickey (house burned later and was replaced) where Angela Hickey always lived. As a single woman she taught all her life and the Hickeys had a snack bar with a pinball machine and a juke box. Next came the end of Cooper Corner Road; then the Middle Bridge and the school. That covered about half of what we called *The River*.

We crossed Fishermans Road to go to the church. Up behind and at an angle Master McCarthy's house overlooked the church with a walkway to the street. He lived there with his niece Mary Sullivan and her husband Mike Fahey and family. Some years before, the Master had left the older family home far in on Fishermans Road and had bought this house from Captain Dalton who had moved to New York; he had married Grandfather Ryan's sister Margaret. This house had a large parcel of land extending to Fishermans Road where there was another entrance. The Master's niece, Jean Marie attended school with me and she and husband Andrew Peddle built their house on a part of the land that bordered on Fishermans Road. Mike Fahey worked for the parish as a caretaker and carpenter with John Thomey. In later years he became the janitor at St. Francis High School, Harbour Grace, until his retirement. We became good friends while I taught there in 1962 and 1964.



Across from the church on the street side was the house containing a shop lived in and run by Mrs. Bessie Cleary (she built a new shop later).

Her shop did good business; being so near the school for one thing. Next to Cleary's shop lived Pad Joe and Mary Walsh. This was a large house and had been part of major business (by Riverhead standards) when Pad Joe's father was alive. Then came the house owned by Uncle Nicholas Shanahan and his wife Ellie and their son John who lived there up until shortly before his death. This was followed by Uncle John Shanahan's house but I think he had died by then. However, his wife Aunt Maude and their son Bob, with Betty and children lived there throughout my time. Across from Uncle John's house was the Barron house and shop. Jimmy Barron owned the property and his wife having died he had married Nellie Ryan from Fishermans Road. Mrs. Barron ran the shop for many years and because she was my father's cousin and because Gerald and Kevin, her nephews who always went to school with me, that is the place where we spent our small bit of pocket money (15 cents for soft drink and a cheese square; candy bars for 5 or 10 cents - speaking of preventative dental care). Later when we acquired bicycles that is where we left them during school hours. (The house is gone now.) This brings us to Southward Brook and bridge. Across the bridge which was often called Glavine's Bridge, lived Bill and Alice Glavine and their family. Mr. Glavine, who was called Billy by his peers, had a shop and a gasoline pump - at that time the only pump for miles in both directions. In addition he bought blueberries and collected them from berry pickers on the barrens; he son, also Billy, drove the truck bringing pickers to the berry grounds. Both Jimmy Barron and Billy Glavine stocked horse's oats.



Leaving *The River* between the church and school I walked home on Fishermans Road. The first house on the right belonged to Jack Griffin and after he passed away his daughter Margaret and her husband Jim built another that still stands but after Jim and Margaret died it was sold. Next I walked up Reynolds' Hill where Tom Reynolds lived (I think his wife Josephine had died by that time). Josephine's father Thomas was a brother of great-grandfather Nicholas Shanahan and a son of the original Edmund. As pointed out the cellar behind that house is probably the oldest in Riverhead. Tom Reynolds' daughter Stella lived there with her husband Art Hurdle and family. And the next generation of Hurdles still occupy the house and additional houses on the land constructed by Art, who was a most competent carpenter. Art and Stella have both passed away.

As I passed along there were three houses on the left clustered together. Edward Sullivan's where he and his wife Bridget lived with their large family, including the late Joe who was my age and school friend. (The house was torn down and replaced by the present Sullivan house.) Next came the Mackay house where Edward Russell and his wife Frances (Fanny) and their family lived with their family. This was a family of an older generation and the son Eddy was 20 years older than me. We have met Edward (or Ned) before as he commuted back and forth to Boston. In 1946 he was farming and slaughtering pigs and cattle for the community. He had a large black horse and hauled cargo for people and he had been entrusted with a horse-drawn hearse by the undertaker in Harbour Grace for use in the Riverhead area. At that time he had been living in the house where Frances had lived and he tore that down later and built a big one further from the road. That too is gone now. Next to that was the house where Frank Mackay lived. He was an old man and lived in a big house which was at least a generation or more older than him. His wife was long dead and his daughter Agnes and his son John lived there then. After he died and John moved away Agnes (Aggie) had the house demolished and had a small bungalow built. Aggie and John have both passed away and the bungalow is in a state of disrepair. This was the last house on the left side of Fishermans Road in 1946; in fact only three in all.

Leaving Frank Mackay's the road became a lonely place at night because there was not another lighted window until one reached Jack Ryan's bungalow on the right hand side and across the railway crossing. At that time Jack had succeeded his father John as section foreman on the railway and he and his wife Isobel had built that house in the 1930s. Across from it Jack had constructed a speeder house where he kept the gasoline-driven speeder and tools and it was used as a shelter at times for the section men. Next to Jack's house, I passed Grandmother Shanahan's house which was vacant; Grandfather had passed away and now Grandmother lived with us. Next came the ruins of the old Shanahan house, built by Nicholas, and last lived in by his son Uncle Ron who had moved out to *The River* some years before. Then came the three Ryan houses. My grandparents William and



was a follower of St. Peter Claver and collected for the saint's organization on a regular basis. When the local priest complained about his taking money from the parish he appealed to the Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa and was encouraged to continue but I think he stopped going to Mass after that. He was also active in the Co-operate movement sponsored by the Commission of Government and kept its Minutes for some time. After Uncle Lawrence died, Leo, a very kind soul, came to live with us and died in 1988 at 75 years of age. Father had removed the top story of his father's house and later converted it into a summer house for me and my wife Margaret.

The next house was occupied by Uncle Mike and Aunt Alice and their sons Joe and John Mike. Uncle Mike and Joe were fishing on the Labrador while John Mike helped his mother while they were away. As I mentioned before, immediately behind this house was where the first Ryan built his house and the cellar, although very dilapidated now, is probably the oldest, next to the Tom Reynolds/Hurdle cellar, on Fishermans Road.

The third Ryan house I would pass was built by Uncle John Ryan on the story and one half plan as the other two. At that time Uncle John had passed away and Aunt Katy lived there with her son Frank and his wife Catherine (Kit) and family. At that time the family included the two oldest, Gerald and Kevin, who went to school with me throughout our school days. Frank worked on the railway with my father Bernie, and Frank's brother Jack was their foreman on the section which covered Harbour Grace to Spaniard's Bay.



The next house was a very small saltbox where Mike Butt lived. The land had been part of the original Ryan property but this piece had been sold or given to Bill Mahoney. Bill eventually married Mrs. Butt who brought her son Mike with her. Mike always went to the Labrador fishery and in advanced years married Emma O'Neill. Gerald Ryan eventually bought the land after Mike died and Emma remarried and moved away.

The next house was the one the Master had left when he bought the Dalton house. It had been built by his father and was thus of the generation of the Hurdle house. At that time the Master's niece Gertrude Sullivan (a former teacher) and her husband Will Fahey lived there. I do not recall if their oldest daughter, Delores, had been born at that time. Will worked mostly as a fireman on boats.

The last and final house was ours, built on McCarthy property that father's mother had inherited from her father John. It was a bungalow built like Jack Ryan's but larger with a second story. (It has since been enlarged.) Father built it himself but his Uncle John, a good carpenter (and Frank's father - just to keep things straight) helped him to lay it out. However, the United Towns Electric Company would not extend the power line to father's house because they explained it was not their practice. Later the Company relented and agreed to do so if father would put in his own poles which he did. For a number of years, until the Company relented further and replaced father's poles, I always felt somewhat self conscious about our obviously homemade power poles. Meanwhile, to put the economy in perspective, between about 1900 and 1940 Jack Ryan and my father were the only two to build new houses on Fisherman's Road. And the post-war depression and the Great Depression were largely to blame for that. Most men of my father's generation either inherited the family home or went away, there was nothing to be gained by staying unless one was needed at home to look after the old people. Sullivans, Russells, Mackays, Shanahans, and Ryans are evidence of that and the same can be observed in other parts of Conception Bay. To return to my walk home from school in September, 1946, at home with mother was Grandmother Shanahan who lived for a few more years. My sister Angela was born then but other siblings were yet to come along.

Grandmother Shanahan's house did not long remain unoccupied; Mother's older sister, Nell and her husband Andy Short arrived from Kingston to settle in the community. Uncle Andy told me years later how his son Tom had had an attack of appendicitis and Uncle Andy had a very difficult time getting him to the hospital in St. John's and without the train from Carbonear he did not think Tom would have survived. He said he did not want to ever go through that again. The Shorts moved in Grandmother's house and within a few years built their own house on land Uncle Andy bought from Pad Joe Walsh and his mother. This was land that had followed one of the Shanahan women who had married a Walsh at a much earlier time. Sam and Nick Short, my cousins, were two additions to our school and they with Gerald, Kevin and me, were the only school boys from inside Fisherman's Road.



To conclude, on Fisherman's Road today there are many more houses than there were in 1946 but the two that have continued to be lived in continuously since that year is the one still occupied by Mother and the Hurdle house. (My grandfather Ryan's house has been remodelled extensively and is only used in summer.)



~ 1951 Barn Dance Committee, Riverhead, Harbour Grace ~

Richard Doran (treasurer), Andrew Short, Frankie Reynolds, Gerald Burke, Ron Callahan (president), Kevin Reynolds & Father Shea

This concert was held for three nights and proceeds from the concert were approximately \$1200.00.

~ Did You Know? ~

- On June 7, 1891, Bishop McDonald confirmed 72 people at Riverhead.
- In 1901, the community of Riverhead appears separate from Harbour Grace. Census show 12 people at the village, 35 between bridges, 48 at Hard Path, 28 on Cooper Corner Road, 82 on Fisherman's Road and 93 on Spaniard's Bay Road.
- Census taken in 1911 shows the population at 323. Fifteen people went to the Labrador fishery, 15 families were farming and 28 men found work at the Bell Island Iron mines.
- In 1986 the population of Riverhead was 326.
- Riverhead was incorporated into the Town of Harbour Grace in 1989.