The Anatomy of Newfoundland Place-Names

E. R. SEARY

NEWFOUNDLAND PLACE-NAMES have not gone unnoticed in the past, but it is only in the last three years that an attempt has been made to study them systematically, as part of an investigation into Newfoundland linguistics conducted by members of the English Department of the Memorial University of Newfoundland under the direction of the present writer.

Pioneer work was done by the late Archbishop M. F. Howley in a series of articles entitled "Newfoundland Name-Lore," published in *The Newfoundland Quarterly* from 1901 to 1914–15. Unfinished as it is, and sometimes capricious and coloured by local patriotism, Howley brought to it an unsurpassed knowledge of Newfoundland which has placed his successors heavily in his debt. More commonly, Newfoundland place names have received a popular, uncritical treatment, as from H. L. Keenleyside who, writing of what he calls "the delightful and imaginative quality of Newfoundland nomenclature," goes on to say:

> In no other country with which I am acquainted is there so great a variety of unusual place-names. Studying the map of the Island is a constant source of delight, surprise and entertainment. Even when the names are homely, or when, as in some cases, they verge on the repulsive, they are never common and are saved from vulgarity by an imaginative quality that gives them an essential element of propriety. And when, as so often happens, the name embodies an intrinsic beauty of sound or ideology, the result is close to perfection. Where, for example, could one find more perfect names than *Winterland*, *Calence Point*, *Topsail*, *Blue Pinion*, *Maiden Arm*, *Colinet*, *Rolling Cove* or *Lance Amour*?[1]

[1] *Canadian Geographical Journal*, XXIX, 6, December 1944, p. 255.

That Newfoundland place names are worthy of more serious attention becomes apparent when we consider their linguistic bases – in English, French, Portuguese, Micmac, Gaelic and perhaps Scandinavian, the circumstances of their imposition, their variety and kinds.

The imposition of place names followed closely on the discovery, exploration and settlement of Newfoundland. Even on the earliest maps, of the first decade of the sixteenth century, names appear which are still significant, though it would often be rash to attempt close identification of an early and present-day location. The early cartographers had but a hazy notion of the configuration of Newfoundland – its many deep bays and inlets led them to believe that it was an archipelago – and only after about a century of map-making did it come to be represented as an island having something of the shape we know, with names beginning to occupy fixed positions. For instance, the *Cabo de boa ventura* on the "Cantino Chart" of 1502 is in the south of Newfoundland, but *Bonauentura* (a cape or an island) on the "Olivieriana" map of 1505–08 is on the East Coast. Even in the latter part of the eighteenth century, knowledge of the West Coast was incomplete and one name especially, Point Riche, was still foot-loose, being found at points as far apart as north of Ingornachoix Bay (where it properly belongs) and Cape Ray.

Since most of the early maps showing Newfoundland are of Portuguese origin, it follows that the nomenclature in them is likely to be largely Portuguese, and we find that even when maps are of, say, Italian or French origin, the names are often taken, in varying degrees of accuracy, from Portuguese prototypes. Also, since the East Coast from Cape Race to Fogo was virtually the only part of Newfoundland known to early explorers, it is along this part of the coast that Portuguese names are chiefly concentrated.

Two names on La Cosa's map of 1500 [1508–10], *Y verde* (cp. Bay de Verde) and *S. luzia* (a name now obsolete in Newfoundland), are a reminder that the Portuguese did not confine their discoveries to the New World. They also occur in the Cape Verde Islands, 300 miles off the west coast of Africa, discovered in 1460. In the Windward Islands of the group, we also find an island Branco (Port. *branco* – white), an old name of a cape in Newfoundland in the Riccardiana Homem map of 1533–4; another island Razo, "the flat

island;" and an island Boa Vista, though the Newfoundland Bonavista probably first occurs in its French form, *Cap de Bonne Viste*, after Cartier. Among the Leeward Islands is a Fogo (Port. *fogo* – fire, flame), the name of an island in "Miller No. 1" of 1516–22.

The "Cantino" Chart of 1502, in addition to *Cabo de boa ventura*, has also one of the names the Portuguese gave to Newfoundland, *Terra del Rey de Portugall.*

Vespucci's map of 1502–06 has the other Portuguese name for Newfoundland, *Terra Cortereal*, the land discovered by Gaspar Corte Real in 1501; and *Capo raso* – the level, low, flat cape, – Cape Race, the first name to be given to and retained by any definite place in Newfoundland.[2]

In the "Kunstmann No. 3" map of 1502–06 is *Ilha de frey luis* – the island of Brother Lewis, surviving today as Cape Freels (the Cape Freels north of Wesleyville).

The "Olivieriana" map of 1505–08 has also a *Cauo de la spera*, now Cape Spear; and a *Riuo de los Bacolaos* (Port. *bacalhao* – cod), a name which survives both in its Portuguese form in Bacalhao I. (west of Change Islands, near Fogo) and in a French adaptation of the Portuguese in Baccalieu I. at the entrance to Conception Bay.

Other names in the first thirty years of Portuguese maps showing Newfoundland are *B. de Comceica* (Port. *conceiçao* – conception) in Pedro Reinel, 1516–20; *R. fremoso*, (from Port. *fermoso* – beautiful), which gives Fermeuse, and *C. de San Francisco*, which gives Cape St. Francis, both in "Miller No. 1" of 1516–22; and *Farilham* (Port. *farelhao* – reef, steep rock, steep little island), which becomes Ferryland, in Verrazano, 1529.

The incidence of French names in Newfoundland is so vast that little can be done here but to show the earlier stages of their imposition and to comment on names of more than usual interest. Although the transatlantic voyages of the Bretons go back to the time of the discovery of America, the first record of French nomenclature is found in the *Remiesè Relation de Jacques Cartier de la Terre-Neuve 1534*, the account of Cartier's expedition along the coast of the Northern Peninsula to the Straits of Belle Isle

[2] Harrisse, *Découverte et Évolution cartographique de Terre-Neuve*, London and Paris, 1900, p. 43.

and along the coast south of Labrador. I have already mentioned *Cap de Bonne Viste. Haure Saincte-Katherine* may be noted because, despite its having apparently been known thus to Cartier, the name has survived in a Spanish or Portuguese form, Catalina. *Hable Karpont*, "named from its resemblance to *Le Kerpont* which occupies an exactly similar position between the island of Bréhat and the French coast to the west of St. Malo,"[3] has come down in the spelling Quirpon (dating from Bowen's map of about 1742), but retains in local pronunciation [kapun] a memory of its old form. The *Brief Récit* of Cartier's second voyage in 1536 contains *Hable Rougnose* (? Fr. *rogneux* – scruffy, mangy, as of rock covered with weed, slime and shells), which, after more than common vicissitudes, has at last settled into Renews.

After 1600, as the French went ever further afield, their influence on Newfoundland nomenclature correspondingly grew. Names in the Northern Peninsula become more numerous. Le Vasseur in 1601 records on the South Coast such typically French-sounding names as *Plaisance*, *Chapeau Rouge*, *Trou à l'asne*, *La Belline*, *B. du S. Esprit*, and on the West Coast *C. raye*, *S. Ioan*, *R. dognon*, *R. double*. In 1612, Champlain, the first hydrographer to explore French possessions in America, marked on the South and Southwest Coasts *C ste marie*, *trépasés*, *Plesence*, *Ille st pierre*, *Port aux basques*, *Baye ste claire* (twice) and *Cap de raye*. By 1790, when Michael Lane published his map showing the results of surveys of the whole coast of Newfoundland (except for the stretch between Cape Bonavista and White Cape), French names are to be found almost everywhere round the island, side by side with English names and of the same variety. Prowse, however, states that "there is not a solitary foreign name in Trinity Bay."[4] Several French names, especially in the south, are of Channel Islands origin.

The first English word to appear as a Newfoundland place name, Penguin, was recorded in a letter from Anthony Parkhurst to Hakluyt of the 13th September 1578, from which *OED* quotes the following passage:

> There are... many other kindes of birdes store, too long to write, especially at one Island named Penguin, where wee

[3] Biggar, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, Ottawa, 1924, p. 10.

[4] *History of Newfoundland*, London and New York, 1895, p. 19 note.

> may driue them on a planke into our ship as many as shall lade her. These birds are also called Penguins, and cannot flie.[5]

"Penguin" appears two years later as *Y. de Penguin*, in a context wholly Portuguese, in Dr. John Dee's map of 1580. Bay of Bulls is the next English place name to occur, in a map of 1592 ascribed to Thomas Hood.

---

[5] Since "penguin," according to *OED* is of obscure origin, the following note may not be out of place.

"It appears," states *OED*, "that the name was first given to the Great Auk or Gare-fowl [*Alca impennis*] of the seas of Newfoundland, still called in French *pingouin* or *pinguin* (1600 in Hatzfeld-Darmesteter). But it was soon applied also to the birds now called *penguins* [*Spheniscidae*], in French *manchots* (found by Drake at Magellan's Straits in 1578), which have a general external resemblance to the northern bird, though, in the opinion of zoologists, widely removed in structure..."

A lengthy note on the word concludes with dismissing as "merely unsupported conjectures" such supposed derivations as from Latin *pinguis* – fat, or from "pin-wing" referring to the rudimentary wings; and objects to a Welsh derivation, *pen gwyn* – white head (attributed to the Welsh men who accompanied Drake), on the grounds that the Great Auk did not have a white head (though it had white spots in front of the eyes), and that there are "obvious historical difficulties [*sic*], which some would remove in part by supposing the name to have been originally given by Breton fishermen."

Two aspects of Parkhurst's statement, however, may deserve more attention than they apparently received: (i) it is an "*Island* named Penguin" – not a bird, and (ii) "These birds are *also* called Penguins" – as if the bird were named after the island and not the island after the bird.

What, then, is the significance of *penguin*? It seems to be a compound of two elements that occur in place names in Brittany: *pen* – head, as in *Penmarch* – horse's head (a name, incidentally, found on Detcheverry's map of 1689 as *Pesmarq*, for the Horsechops near Oderin in Placentia Bay), and *guen* – white, as in *Ménéguen* – white mountain. *Penguin* is then "white head," a Breton description of a physical feature.

It remains to be added that Parkhurst's Penguin I., the only place in Newfoundland where the Great Auk nested, was visited by Cartier, a Breton, in May 1534; that Cartier called it simply *Isle des Ouaiseaulx* (Bird I.) and the birds themselves, *Apponatz*; and that to the westward of Escape Point, its eastern extremity, is a steep cliff which, I am told, appears white from the sea. The sequence, name of feature > name of island > name of bird whose nests covered the island, seems not impossible. The present name, Funk I. – stinking island (from the bird droppings), dates, as far as I have been able to ascertain from Cook and Lane's map of 1775.

The argument, of course, needs elaboration and may crumble under scrutiny: I present it for what it is worth – if only an etymological *jeu d'esprit*.

The first map to contain any large number of English names and names adapted or translated from French, is that of 1626 by John Mason, governor of Newfoundland from 1615 to 1621, published in *The Golden Fleece* by Sir William Vaughan. In addition to names familiar from Portuguese maps, such as C. S. Francis, Bay of Conception, Ferriland, and Formose, Mason's map is chiefly notable for names designating contemporary plantations and settlements. – North Favlkla'd, Availona, Bristol's Hope; for Vaughan's own Welsh and exotic nomenclature – Cambriola, Glamorgan, Pembroke, Cardigan, Colchos, Rhenus, Breehonia, of which Prowse remarks that "not a vestige of these colonies now remains; all the fantastic names... with the exception of Baltimore's Avalon, have disappeared from the maps;"[6] and for what I believe is the first designation of an inland feature, "A great Lake or Sea unknowne, discouered by Captaine Mason."

Some later seventeenth century maps relieve the tedium of extracting names from them by such readings as "Consumption Bay" for Conception Bay in the chart of John Seller, published in his *English Pilot* 1671, a version which persisted for many years, and "Hole rude" for Holyrood in William Hack's *Description* of about 1690.

English cartography of Newfoundland started late and came into its own only in the latter years of the eighteenth century, but the work of Cook and Lane, in its thoroughness and accuracy, more than compensated for earlier shortcomings and provided the first documentary evidence of many new names.

Champlain's recording of the name Port aux Basques in 1612 may be taken as evidence that the Basques knew, and were known in, Newfoundland by that date. As the great and at first the only hunters after whales and walruses in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, although they also fished for cod, they were numerous after Cartier's discovery of walruses on the Magdalen Islands (1534), and they may have frequented Newfoundland waters as early as 1530.[7] Juan de la Cosa, Columbus's pilot, who drew the first map showing Newfoundland in 1500, was a Basque.

---

[6] *History of Newfoundland,* p 19.

[7] Rogers, *Historical Geography of Newfoundland,* Oxford, 1911, p. 26. These were French Basques.

Two maps of the latter half of the seventeenth century, both by men from St. Jean de Luz, those of Denis de Rotis 1674 and of Pierre Detcheverry 1689, include a number of names of Basque origin which with the passage of time have undergone a transmogrification into forms which appear to be French but have no significance in French. Three of them may be singled out for comment. The modern Port au Port derives from *Apphorportu* (de Rotis) or *Orphor portu* (Detcheverry). It is accepted that the element *-portu* is "harbour;" but *opor* has been variously rendered as "wooden bowl or vase," giving an interpretation on the lines of "milk-bowl harbour," accounted for by La Roncière because "tant le calme y regnait,"[8] and as "holiday" – not in the sense of "festival" but as a rest from work on account of, for example, bad weather – leading to Lafon's interpretation of "port of rest in time of storm."[9] Port au Choix, from *Portuichoa* (de Rotis) or *Portichoa* (Detcheverry) is "little harbour." Port au Bras, however, which appears to be formed similarly, has apparently neither a Basque origin nor any significance in Basque. It is, of course, in a totally different locality from Port au Port and Port au Choix. Ingornachoix, from *Annguachar* (Detcheverry), appears to contain the Basque *angura* – anchor and, perhaps, *-char* – bad. It is not unlikely that some of the seemingly incomprehensible names in old maps may be due to the effects of Basque influence.

I have as yet made no attempt to grapple with the Gaelic and Scandinavian elements in Newfoundland nomenclature.

There remain of other non-English elements in Newfoundland place names, those names from Indian languages which may be of greater antiquity than any of the others; for "the Micmac claim to have had some knowledge of Newfoundland from remote times [and] they speak of a branch of their people... who lived on the southern and western coasts before the eighteenth century, and to corroborate this they give an old nomenclature of landmarks in various parts of the island in Micmac."[10] As far as I know, Micmac names given to places on the coast have never been used by the

[8] "Le premier routier-pilote de Terre-Neuve (1579)" in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, Vol. 64, Paris, 1904, pp. 116–125.

[9] Privately communicated. Lafon is Professor of Basque in the University of Bordeaux.

[10] Speck, *Beothuk and Micmac*, New York, 1922, p. 26.

white population of Newfoundland, but some have survived in the interior. Among them are: *Annieopsquotch* – ? "rocky mountains;" *Meel Paeg* Lake – "many bays" or "crooked," recorded by Cormack in 1822; *Ebbegunbaeg* Lake – "low bay;" *Medonnegonix* Lake – "village half way," above Belle Bay; *Kaegudek* Lake – "on the top," that is, above Medonnegonix Lake. Some of these names are found in Micmac areas on the mainland of Canada.

One allegedly Beothuk name – the only one I have come across – was recorded by Jukes in 1842: Shannoc (or Sheernock) Brook, *Shannoc* being the name by which the Beothuks knew the Micmac.[11] It is now called Noel Paul's Brook, probably after a Micmac guide or hunter.

Names from the Beothuk and Micmac languages, however, by no means mark the whole extent of Indian influence on Newfoundland place names. Such names as Indian Arm, – Bay, – Bight, – Brook, – Burying Place, – Cove, – Island, – Look-Out, – Pond and – Point; Red Indian Lake; Wigwam Brook and Point; Ochre Pit Cove – all seem to point to contacts between Indians and white men, as may Bloody Bay and Rencontre. Though practically all the names are English, there is one notable example of French contact in Salvage [sæl'veidʒ], which recalls Mr. T. S. Eliot's note to *The Dry Salvages*: "The Dry Salvages – presumably *les trois sauvages* – is a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. *Salvages* is pronounced to rhyme with *assuages*."[12] Among personal names of Indians are Mary March Brook, Mary March being a Beothuk woman captured in 1819 at Red Indian Lake and so named from the month in which she was captured;[13] Joe Jeddores Pond, named in 1905 by Millais after his Indian guide, "the only man who had ever been there;"[14] Benoit's Brook and Cove, probably after a family of French Micmacs who had hunting territories from White Bear River to Round Pond, Bay du Nord;[15] and Matthew Pond, probably after a Micmac chieftain, Matthew Mitchell.[16] As an example of an Indian name being translated into English, we find Cormack recording that Pipestone Lake was "known to the Micmac Indian by the Indian

[11] *Excursions in and about Newfoundland*, London, 1842, Vol. II, p. 238.
[12] *Four Quartets*, London, 1944, p. 25. [13] Speck, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–51.
[14] *Geographical Journal*, London, Vol. XXVIII, 1906, p. 388.
[15] Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 132. [16] Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

name for it, Stone Pipe Lake, from their procuring here verde antique [an ornamental serpentine rock] and other magnesian rocks out of which they carve or chisel tobacco pipes."[17] In contrast to the English Harbours, Portugal Coves, Frenchmans Coves, Spaniards Bay and Port aux Basques, there are, apparently, no place names containing either "Beothuk" or "Micmac." As far as I know, no Indian names were recorded before Cormack in 1822.

The changes that foreign names in Newfoundland have undergone, fall into two broad classes. In the first are those made by the cartographer ignorant of the language of the map which he is using as a prototype, who makes an error in transcription or translation, though the error is usually rectified later. Examples of errors in transcription are such as Harrisse noted in the Sebastian Cabot map of 1544, where the nomenclature is defective on account of bad readings by Cabot who perhaps did not know French, or by the Belgian engraver who did not know Spanish, giving, among others, *Onsemilyogines* for *Onze mille virgines*;[18] or the reading *Fogs* for Fogo on the Jacobsz map of 1621, repeated as *foggs* in Mason's map of 1626. Cartographers have been inveterate plagiarists, and not least of their fellows' mistakes. The most striking howler in translation that I have found, is in Blaise Vion's map of 1699, in which Southwood's (1675) Tickle Harbour is rendered *H[avre] chatouilleux*, though "Tickle" in Newfoundland usage, as defined by *NED*, is the name given to a narrow difficult strait or passage.

The other kind of change tends to arise in common usage from deficiencies of speech, hearing and comprehension on the part of people unaccustomed to foreign names or unwilling to accept them. These changes eventually find their way into written records and receive permanent recognition. Some foreign names in Newfoundland have remained unchanged in spelling and virtually unchanged in pronunciation, as *La Hune* and *La Scie*; but many, perhaps the majority, seem to have undergone some change or other.

Some have retained their original spelling but have received a new pronunciation: *Bréhat* [braha], *Colombier* [k'aləmbɪə], *Cremaillière* [krɪ'malɪə]. Some have received an anglicised pronunciation and a new English spelling which approximates to the new

[17] *Narrative of a Journey across... Newfoundland*, ed. F. A. Bruton, London, 1929, p. 52. [18] Harrisse, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

sound: Cape Race, Ferryland, Oderin [o'dɪərɪn] from *Audierne*, Fermeuse. The new word may be significant or not. An example of a foreign name becoming gibberish in local usage is recorded by Anspach who, at a loss to find the meaning of a name that sounded like *Washeltoraw*, at length discovered that it was *La Vache et le Taureau*, the name of a group of rocks near Cape St. Marys, now usually called Bull and Cow Rocks.[19] However, I have no evidence that *Washeltoraw* ever received the distinction of appearing on a map. Sometimes the original and a translation stand side by side to designate the same place, so that *Bay de Loup* is also officially Wolf Bay, or *Boisée I.* is known locally as Woody I. The original may persist in one place and an anglicised form in another, as in *Barachois* and Barrasway or Barrisway. Sometimes the foreign name is unacceptable, so that the official *Bouleaux Bay* is locally known as Sparkes Bight. Some have acquired a foreign form different from the original as with *Catalina* and with the Basque names put into pseudo-French. Some appear to be, say, genuine French, but defeat any attempt to find them in dictionaries, as with *Frauderesse* and *Querre*. Such a name as Mose Ambrose appears to be a near-phonetic rendering of some forgotten name.

Lacourcière[20] has pointed out that places receive names in one of two ways: by deliberate imposition, that is by known persons who impose them with some measure of "authority," and by a process of spontaneous creation or collective usage.

We know the authorship of many Newfoundland place names deliberately imposed from evidence left by the author himself or deduced by historians and biographers.

In Hakluyt, for instance, we read:

> In the yere of our Lord 1497 John Cabot... discovered that land which no man before that time had attempted, on the 24 of June, about five of the clocke early in the morning. This land he called Prima vista, that is to say, First seene, because as I suppose it was that part whereof they had the

[19] *A History of the Island of Newfoundland*, London, 1819, p. 326.

[20] In the analysis that follows, I find that I have followed close on the heels of M. Luc Lacourcière's observations on Canadian place names, published in "Toponymie canadienne" in *Études sur le Parler français au Canada*, Québec, 1955, pp. 199 to 220.

> first sight from the sea. That Island which lieth out before the land, he called the Island of S. John upon this occasion, as I thinke, because it was discovered upon the day of John the Baptist.[21]

In Guy's accounts of his explorations in Newfoundland in 1612, he writes:

> [We] came that nighte to the harbour... which we call Flagstaffe Harbour, because we fownd theare the flagstaffe throwen by the savages away.[22]

Cormack tells us: "I have used the customary privilege of giving names to the lakes and mountains I met with in this hitherto unexplored route, and these are in compliment to distinguished individuals and private friends."[23] During the present century, a number of places have been re-named by the Newfoundland Nomenclature Board and by the Canada Post Office.

Those other names, imposed by collective usage, like the old ballads, defy any attempt at ascribing authorship to particular persons. Like Topsy, who knew no father or mother, they "grow'd" until they were old enough and respectable enough to find a place in society, in the maps which are the *Who's Who* of names that have arrived.

To decide into which of these two classes any name falls is possible only with direct evidence showing deliberate imposition, and from the circumstances of Newfoundland history and settlement such evidence is often lacking.

Of the kinds of names that occur in Newfoundland, it may first be remarked that many place names in Newfoundland are names that also occur elsewhere, particularly in France and England. Such names would seem to have been given for a variety of reasons – a real or fancied resemblance seen in a physical feature, patriotism, nostalgia – who can tell? So we find that Bréhat on the Northern Peninsula, with the Bréhat Shoals offshore, recalls Bréhat

---

[21] *The Principal Navigations*, Glasgow, 1903–04, Vol. VII, pp. 145–6.

[22] *The New World. A Catalogue of an Exhibition of Books, Maps, Manuscripts and Documents held at Lambeth Palace Library between 1 May and 1 December 1957.* [London] Lambeth Palace Library, 1957, p. 61.

[23] "Account of a Journey across the Island of Newfoundland" in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*, Vol. X, October–April 1823–24.

and the Bréhat Shoals in Brittany. Cape Race probably recalled to some Portuguese navigator Cabo Raso at the mouth of the Tagus. Flamborough recalls Flamborough Head in Yorkshire. Chapeau Rouge is said to owe its name to the inn, Le Chapeau Rouge, in Bordeaux, where sailors used to forgather to settle their affairs,[24] though the name may be descriptive of the feature. Oderin recalls Audierne in Finisterre; Harbour Grace – Le Havre de Grace; Old and New Ferolle – Ferolle in northern Spain, near Corunna; Melrose – Melrose in Scotland with its associations with Sir Walter Scott; Bordeaux I. – Bordeaux in France or Guernsey.

Even commoner, perhaps, are places named after persons, of which the following varieties may be noted.

There are names of persons associated in some way or other with Newfoundland – governors, explorers, clergy, traders, Micmac guides and hunters.

The governors have given their names generously. In Alexander Murray's *Report of the Geological Survey* for 1866, he informs the governor that Mount Musgrave was "called so in honour of your Excellency's recent visit to this part of the country,"[25] and Musgrave also gave his name to Musgrave Harbour and Musgravetown. Sir John Glover was generous in another way: Glover I. was originally Sir John Hawley Glover I.

Of places named after travellers and explorers, there are two insignificant islands – Jacques Cartier I. and Cabot I., though in 1886, with the concurrence of the Governor-General of Canada, Cabot received an additional honour when the hitherto unnamed strait which separates Cape Breton Island from Newfoundland was styled in the Admiralty Charts, Cabot Strait.[26] There are also Mount Cormack and Lake Cormack, named by Millais in honour of his eminent predecessor; and Millais himself had his lake – one which he discovered in 1902, which, he tells us, Mr. Reid of the Newfoundland Railway "kindly expressed a wish to name after myself."[27]

---

[24] Harrisse, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxviii, lxi.

[25] *Geological Survey of Newfoundland*, London, 1881, p. 84.

[26] *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, New Monthly Series, Vol. VIII, 1886, p. 101.

[27] "On some new Lakes... of Newfoundland" in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXII, 1903, p. 311.

As for the clergy, the Nomenclature Board renamed one of the several Cuckold Coves after Canon Dunfield; and Bird Island Cove became Elliston after the Rev. William Ellis, a Methodist minister, who, in April 1814, preached the first sermon to its Protestant inhabitants.[28]

Of ordinary inhabitants – John Peyton of Twillingate, a friend of Cormack's, the man who captured Mary March, is remembered in Mount Peyton. Greenspond is said to take its name from the first two settlers, Green and Pond, who, if this is correct, had apparently settled there before 1701 when the name first appeared (as Greenpond) on Moll's map. About 1832, incidentally, morality there was "at such a low ebb that Greenspond was usually nicknamed the 'Sodom of the North'."[29] And Joe Batts Arm – and Brook and Point? One would like to believe that they were named after Joseph Batt, who was sentenced to receive fifteen lashes for stealing a pair of shoes and buckles valued at seven shillings and sixpence, about 1754, at Bonavista.[30]

A smaller class of names – and rightly so – is of people of little or no interest or importance in Newfoundland. Port Saunders, Keppel Harbour and Hawke Bay would seem, for example, to celebrate a trio of English admirals of the eighteenth century of whom, I believe, only Saunders had any association with Newfoundland – as commodore and Commander-in-Chief of the Newfoundland station from February 1752 to ? April 1754. These names were probably given by Cook. Still less fitting were many of the names given by Cormack – Gower's Lake, Emma's Lake, Richardson's Lake and so forth – but most of these are now obsolete, except for King George IV Lake.

Names of religious significance, especially names of saints, go back to the earliest map of La Cosa (1500 [1508–10]). They have been given for various reasons. Hakluyt, it will be remembered, believed that Cabot named the Island of St. John because it was discovered upon the day of St. John the Baptist. Names such as St. Barbe, St. Julien and St. Lunaire recall traditions and places associated with Brittany. More recently such names have been given

[28] Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, St. John's, 1919, p. 142.

[29] Lench, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

[30] Pedley, *The History of Newfoundland*, London, 1863, pp. 86–88. On p. 88, Pedley calls Batt "John Batt" but twice previously had called him "Joseph."

sometimes arbitrarily and injudiciously, as Archbishop Howley observed about St. Joseph's – a name given by Fr. Morris because he did not like the old name of Gallows Harbour, with the result that Newfoundland had then three St. Joseph's, a source of further confusion to a Post Office already embarrassed with repeated names.[31]

Most of the names which appear to recall an incident are not as well authenticated as Bishops Falls, which Jukes records in 1842 as "so named from the present bishop of Nova Scotia having visited the place;"[32] though it is not impossible to hazard a guess at the kind of circumstance which might lead to a place being called Bloody Bay or Cinq Cerf Bay or Mistaken Point or Canaille Cove. There is evidence for the imposition of some of these names: Eclipse I. is the island from which Cook observed an eclipse of the sun on the 5th August 1765; Mount Misery was the place where Cormack spent an unpleasant night on the 16–17th October 1822, when storm-bound.[33]

Occupations provide a number of names: Admirals and Petitmaitre recall the practice of the fishing fleets in having the first captain to arrive in a harbour at the beginning of the season as a controller of affairs for the season. Tilt, Anchor, Freshwater, Boat, Bateau, La Hune, Schooner are all words associated with fishing and seamanship.

Animal names, fish, flesh and fowl, both English and French, are very common, ranging from Cape Anguille to White Bear Bay, and from Mosquito to Camel I. Vegetation gives Birch, Gooseberry, Hay, Mint, Onion, Indian Tea. Minerals – Chalk, Ochre, Sand, Serpentine, Shingle.

Size is indicated by Great, Big, Little, Long, Petty. Colour by Verte, Blue, Brunette, Green, Grey, Muddy, Red, Noir, Rouge, White, Black. Shape by Bell, Clapper, Flat, Square, Platte, Table, Narrow, Topsail, Sugarloaf, Butterpot. Position by any number of Northeast, Northwest Arms etc.

Names indicating phenomena are varied: Aquaforte, Rattling (i.e. with many rapids), Pigeonnière, Columbier, Fogo, Éboulement, Ragged, Rocky, Split, Funk (stinking).

---

[31] Howley, *op. cit.*, Article XXXII. [32] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 134.

[33] *Narrative of a Journey across... Newfoundland*, p. 63.

Finally there are the metaphorical names: Breakheart, Blow-me-down, Come-by-Chance, Heart's Content, Heart's Desire, Heart's Delight, as well as others which would correct any impression that Newfoundland has been named by young ladies.

There are, of course, several more observations that could be made on Newfoundland place names – on obsolete names, on the repetition of names, on Newfoundland topographical terminology in general, to name but three – but the foregoing sketch should serve to show that if, according to Rostaing, toponymy is "l'objet d'études passionées, sinon sérieuses,"[34] then Newfoundland toponymy is particularly deserving of much more detailed study than it has yet received[35].

[34] *Les Noms de Lieux*, Paris 1954, p. 6.

[35] This paper was presented in November 1957 as an address to the St. John's Branch of the Humanities Association of Canada.

Memorial University of Newfoundland.