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## “Hard Racket for a Living” — Making Light-Salted Fish on the East Coast of Newfoundland

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### Résumé

*Ce document décrit le séchage du poisson, dernière étape du traitement de la morue dans l'industrie de la pêche en eau salée à Terre-Neuve. Trois thèmes ressortent de ce travail : la quantité remarquable de main-d'œuvre qu'il exige, la complexité des techniques et connaissances requises, et le rôle essentiel des femmes dans l'art de « faire du poisson ». L'évaluation de ce travail par les intéressés indique des opinions apparemment contradictoires : certains le caractérisent, avec le mode de vie qu'il entraîne, comme un labeur purement ingrat, alors que d'autres se le rappellent avec satisfaction et même plaisir. L'auteur souligne cette dernière opinion, négligée, et s'attelle ainsi à la tâche de réexaminer les idées reçues d'universitaires ou de bureaucrates sur l'industrie de la pêche et sur les hommes et les femmes qui y ont œuvré.*

### Abstract

*This paper describes drying fish, the final phase in the processing of cod in the Newfoundland salt fisheries. Three themes regarding this work emerge: its remarkable labour intensiveness; the complex techniques and knowledge required; and the key roles women played in “making fish.” Fishing people's evaluations of this work indicate seemingly contradictory positions: one typifies it and its way of life as sheer thankless toil, the other recalls these with satisfaction, even pleasure. I highlight the latter, neglected view and so begin the project of re-evaluating received academic/bureaucratic interpretations of the salt fisheries and the women and men who worked in them.*

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The processing of fresh cod into dried salt cod, known as “making fish,” is a poorly understood and understudied realm of work and working in Newfoundland.<sup>1</sup> Along with the actual harvesting of cod, making fish dominated everyday life in communities all around the island into the late 1950s. Given the importance of the salt fishery to Newfoundland from the sixteenth century onwards, it is surprising that no full treatment of the complex steps and techniques required by this processing work, or of the equally complex occupational and social organizations that developed over centuries to carry it out, has been attempted to date.<sup>2</sup> This state of affairs is especially grievous given the fact that the memories of many of the women, men and children who worked in the industry are quickly fading and within ten to twenty

years will be all but gone. This paper explores the final phase of salt-fish processing — the washing and drying of salted fish — and in doing so I hope to illustrate the difficulties and complexities that the work entailed.

My research has focussed on processing in the light-salted, hard-dried sector of the salt fishery as it was carried out in communities in Trinity and Conception Bays, particularly the town of Bonavista. This work has taken the techniques and goals of occupational folklife analysis as a starting point for inquiry.<sup>3</sup> I have combined oral historical and ethnographic methods along with documentary research to attempt to understand how the everyday working world of the Newfoundland salt fishery operated and in turn how that world intersected and intersects with broader social, cultural and

economic spheres. In the main though I have been concerned with the evidence, memories, perceptions, and words of women, men and children who participated in the work between roughly the 1920s and the 1950s, and their words figure here prominently. Patrick O'Flaherty has written of the people who lived in the salt-fish era: "They inhabited a separate universe of back-breaking labour which cannot be understood by anybody who did not live in it."<sup>4</sup> I believe this to be essentially true, and as much as possible, I will let people who did experience this universe speak for themselves. Transcriptions also highlight that my work has been authored as much by the people quoted here (who gave freely and generously of their time and expertise) as it was by me. The people who helped me are, in no uncertain terms, the active co-authors of this work.

Axiomatic to my understanding and to the presentation of fishing people's "evidence" is the assumption that a complex of facts, ideas, analyses, interpretations, and patterns of meaning and understanding emerge from their talk and in their thoughts about their work and lives.<sup>5</sup> In relation to the particular work of drying fish, three themes emerged: the arduous physical demands of the work; the complex knowledge and expertise required to carry it out; and the central role that women played in both. I will explore the first two of these themes, but in doing so the key roles that women played in

the processing of salt fish will become very clear.<sup>6</sup> These explorations bear out the truth that during the summer months "women lived on the flakes," a sentiment expressed by a number of people I talked with and by various commentators.<sup>7</sup> Another commentator summed it up in relation to an expression used in his own community: "The men ketch [sic] it and the women make it'.<sup>8</sup>

The harsh toil demanded by the salt fishery has been evocatively captured by Patrick O'Flaherty in his short essay, "Looking Backwards: The Milieu of Old Newfoundland Outports."<sup>9</sup> Time after time, the men and women I talked with described the toil involved in the salt fishery in all sorts of telling ways. People talked of a past of unimaginable hard work, regularly using words such as "slavery" and "murder" to describe it, recalling the labour demanded by that world with ruefulness and, on occasion, bitterness. Evocations of exceptionally long hours and tremendous exertion were the norm.<sup>10</sup> These stories were complex markers meant to alert me, the listener, to the historical reality of hardship and grinding manual labour (generally for very little reward). The people who told them were trying to explain hardship and labour that could not be demonstrated or imagined by those who were not part of that world. There was however another side to the story.

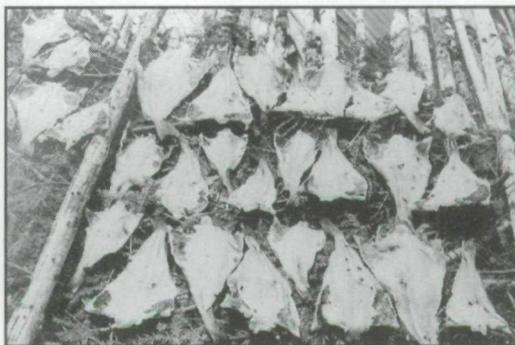
**Fig. 1**  
*Levi Abbott's flake,*  
*flake ramp and store,*  
*Mockbeggar, Bonavista.*



John Burnett has written of agricultural work, and I assert it is equally true of making fish, "Traditionally regarded as an unskilled occupation, farm work in fact demanded many and varied kinds of skill, acquired not by formal apprenticeship but by equally long experience."<sup>11</sup> It is clear from the women and men who washed and dried fish in the inshore light-salted sector that a number of the steps involved required the complex, even expert knowledge derived from years of experience and traditional knowledge, passed from one generation to the next. Burnett has also commented that though much of their work was "monotonous drudgery...on the other hand, they lived in village communities, worked with a measure of independence, spent their days in the open air and were part of a social system which provided an ordered and structured life."<sup>12</sup> These statements reflect very closely the realities of the

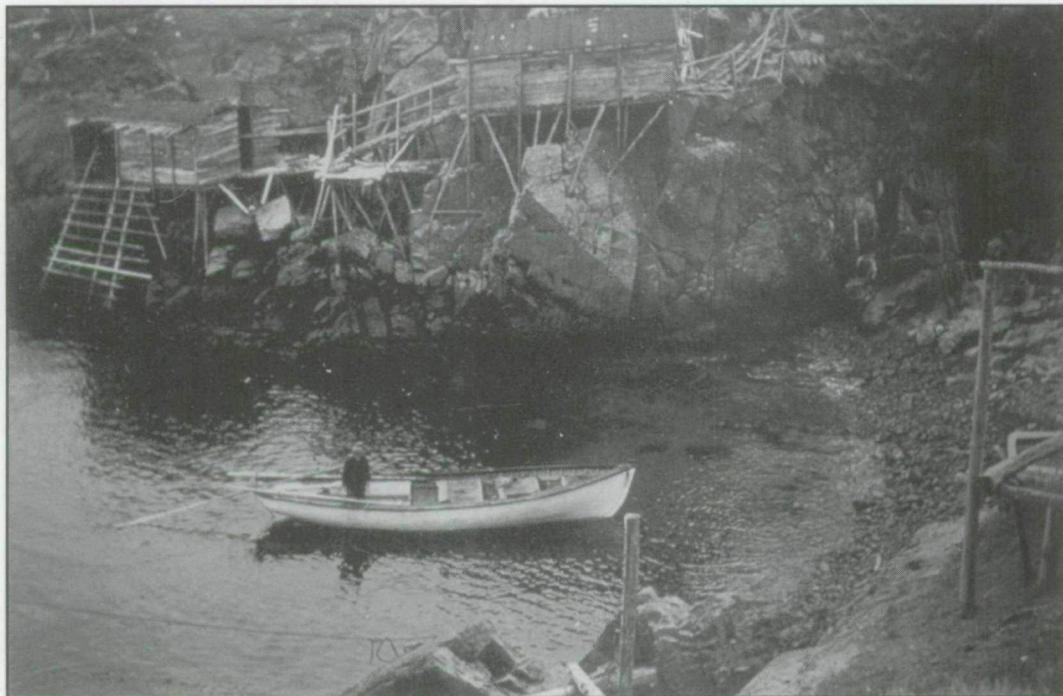
salt fishery as described to me. Though the work was extremely hard and people lived close to subsistence much of the time, there were benefits and clearly positive aspects to this way of living. The paradoxical nature of life in the salt fishery so described must be continually kept in mind in any attempt to evaluate that way of life for its participants.

Processing salt fish subsumed every step that followed the moment fresh round fish was unloaded from a boat at a stage head, and taken into the "splitting stage," through to the moment that the salted, dried final product was sold to a merchant for export to various markets around the world (see Figs. 2 to 4).<sup>13</sup> Between these moments there were two distinct phases of processing: first came cleaning, splitting and salting, which called for speed and dexterity in order to get fish off the water, gutted, headed, well-split and under salt as quickly as possible



**Fig. 2 (far left)**  
Round codfish on the floor of Dan Greene's stage, Tilting, Fogo Island.

**Fig. 3 (left)**  
Cleaned, split, salted, and drying codfish on a flake in New Bonaventure, Trinity Bay, ca 1977. (Courtesy Brian Miller and the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive)



**Fig. 4 (below)**  
Splitting stage, stage head, and salting stage, Old Cove, Cape Bonavista, ca 1940s. (Courtesy Wilson Whiffen, Bonavista)

to minimize deterioration. The second phase, washing and drying, constituted a distinct set of practices, as laborious as the cleaning and salting, but differing in key respects. Drying salt fish required the careful application of a large body of traditional knowledge over a period of weeks. Continual assessment of weather patterns; the amount of fish at various drying stages; the state and quality of that fish; and the people available to carry out the various tasks involved in the extended drying process were all necessary.<sup>14</sup>

The following concise description of making “pickled fish” (the class of fish made in Bonavista) by Wilson Hayward provides a fine starting point for the more elaborate discussion on the intricacies of the various steps of the process.

*Pickled fish was the best...it was a different fish altogether...’twas not so much salt into it...you [could] take it out [of salt] we’ll say in 3 days, 4 days, even if twas there in 5 days, twouldn’t hurt — but you usually take it out in 4 days and you wash it, you wash it all clean, and you take it on your flakes, you spread it on the boughs — we used to have our flakes covered with flat boughs — you know you take the limbs off the trees...now during the summer the leaves used to drop off when they’d dry and...then the wind blow up underneath it, up through the boughs and that on the flakes, you know, you make excellent fish — you take it up in what they call faggots first, 3 or 4 fish on each other, and then when it dry a bit more, you put it in bigger faggots, you cover it over. Then after a couple days, good drying days, you put it in a pile, what they called a pile — he’d be round. And you keep it there then for a couple days, you cover it over with the*

*rinds<sup>15</sup> you cut off of the trees you know and that. You cover it over, now it used to work there, and when it come out of that it would be flattened right out, you know, and the fish’d be worked and that, you spread it out then, you carry it in your store, then and good bye, then until you get ready for to ship...you put it out before you shipped. We used to have the flakes full and we spread it on the beach and carry it down on the beach and that then we have trucks come from the merchants you know on horse and cart.<sup>16</sup>*

The first two steps of washing and lugging fish were particularly onerous and for the most part disliked by those who had to do them.<sup>17</sup>

Washing fish was sloppy, dirty and heavy work that involved the constant hauling of copious amounts of water and a tremendous amount of bending to work on the fish. Sea water was usually used, but in locations where fresh water was readily available and seawater was at too great a hauling distance, fresh was frequently resorted to. Both Bride Fitzgerald and Mary Ann Martin helped haul fresh water from nearby streams to wash fish. This was heavy enough work in itself. Mrs Martin said that nearly everyone in Grates Cove, where she grew up, used fresh water to wash the fish that came out of the salting phase.<sup>18</sup> Women in Bonavista who did use sea water had the extra hauling distance from the stage head back to the salting stage.

Fish in Bonavista was most often washed in tubs, generally of the puncheon variety, which were large, had wide openings, and accommodated a good many fish at the same time. Washers used various tools and implements with which to scrub and wash, including scraps of fishing net, old *vamps* (woolen socks), scrubbing brushes, cloths, and *brin* bags nailed together, fastened to a short handle. The most usual was a clean scrap of cloth, frequently cotton. Mary Ann Martin’s family of Grates Cove used cloths, and mops that men made in the wintertime.

Fish had to be washed to remove a number of substances. First of all, washing removed pickle and any remaining salt. If left on the fish, this salt could lead to salt-burn when the fish was being dried, leaving it white or “pickly” as Bulgin describes it.<sup>19</sup> Blood stains were also scrubbed off, as well as various kinds of slub or “scurf” that coated fish at different times of year. A practice sometimes called *whitenaping*,<sup>20</sup> might also be carried out before salting which involved scraping off the black skin on the napes of the fish. Figure 5 depicts three

**Fig. 5**  
Three salt fish, one of which has been “whitenaped.” (Courtesy Brian Miller and Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive)



fish, one that has been partly whitenaped and two that have not. Those who whitenaped improved the quality of, and price received for, their fish.

The amount of pickled fish that was washed out at any one time depended on how much fish was being caught. According to one person I talked with, an operation with three or four women making fish could wash anywhere between two and ten butts of fish a day. With two and a half *quintals* (125 kgs)<sup>21</sup> per butt, from five to twenty-five quintals (250–1 275 kg) of fish might come out of salt on a single day — though Laura Whiffen recalled that her crew washed out an average of five to twelve quintals (250–600 kgs) of fish per day.<sup>22</sup> At the point of washing, the fish still weighed nearly twice its eventual dry weight, so a crew washing out ten quintals (500 kg) would be shifting over 2 200 (1 000 kg) pounds of fish.<sup>23</sup> These amounts varied in relation to the size of the fishing operation.

After the fish had been washed and scrubbed it was called waterhorse or waterhorse fish. During this stage, which lasted from the moment of washing through the first three to five days of drying, the fish were still very green (that is, wet), very fragile, and susceptible to a number of conditions that could damage fish, especially in the first day or two after being washed. Laura Whiffen remembered her mother-in-law Martha's advice regarding waterhorse fish (and fish in general): "Mrs. Whiffen used to say to us: 'You handle that now' — 'cause they was great big ones — 'You handle that now like you handle your baby.' That's what she'd tell us. I never forgot that."<sup>24</sup> With even one or two good drying days, fish would harden out of this precarious state and into the next stage.<sup>25</sup> From that point on fish needed less acute "mothering," but a series of steps still had to be followed to ensure a proper and full curing to produce a high quality fish. At each stage in this process, fish makers again had to regularly check the state of the fish and the weather and adjust the drying accordingly. With excellent drying conditions fish could go from waterhorse to being ready for sale in about ten to twelve days.

To begin the waterhorse phase, the fish was often placed in a pile of the same name in the "stage" (Fig. 1) to drain for varying lengths of time, although some crews would not drain waterhorse fish at all. The draining was carried out for a number of reasons. The pile of fish pressed itself out and Willie John Randell of Bonavista stated "well that would be so good

as 4 or 5 hours drying time." Draining fish also lightened the load that had to eventually be carried up onto a flake. Most crews would pile waterhorse fish for at least a few hours and many did so overnight. Bride Fitzgerald and her mother often left fish for twenty-four hours. They washed it out one morning and put it out the next.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the most important reason waterhorse fish was made into piles in the stage was to provide temporary storage. If the weather was too damp and a load of fish needed to be taken out of pickle and washed in order to prevent its souring or becoming too salty, then the waterhorse piling was resorted to.

Unfortunately, fish could only be stored in such piles for three to four days before serious deterioration set in. The two main threats were the onset of slime caused by bacterial action and the possibility of fly spits — that is, fly eggs laid on green fish, especially in the thick meat of the nape. Slimy fish was the more worrisome because at this stage flies could only get at some of the fish in the top layers of the pile. A precaution taken to ward off both was the casting of small amounts of salt through the waterhorse.<sup>27</sup> If bad weather persisted, more drastic steps were taken to salvage the fish. These included re-salting and then re-washing entire loads. This, of course, lowered the quality of the fish.<sup>28</sup>

When the weather co-operated, the step following the draining of the waterhorse fish was to carry it out and up onto the flakes for its first spreading; so began the drying. Along with a good many others, Laura Whiffen characterized the carrying of the waterhorse as the hardest physical work of all.<sup>29</sup> In certain fishing rooms around Cape Bonavista (and elsewhere on the island), it was nothing short of brutish — carrying fish up over 30-metre verticals was not uncommon. Willie John Randell of Bonavista recalled some of the places people ended up making fish: "Sometimes you had to carry it about probably a couple hundred feet or whatever up the side of a cliff. If you'd seen the places what people had to take it you'd say 'How was it ever done?' you know, 'how'd them ever do it?' eh, tough work eh?"<sup>30</sup>

In the Bonavista area, in addition to hauling waterhorse fish up over cliffs, it had to be carried up onto "flakes" that were anywhere from two and a half to six metres high. The flakes for spreading fish were generally of the old English variety and fish was carried onto them by way of ramps (Fig. 1). High flakes involved more labour to them and to work on, but were thought to be better for air circulation.<sup>31</sup> They were

constructed of *longers* laid over horizontal supports in turn held up by *posts* and *shores*.<sup>32</sup> Heber John Keel of Bonavista estimated that his family's flake was about 30 metres by 30 metres, but flake sizes and numbers depended on the land available and the size of the operation.

Up to the 1950s, flakes were a dominating feature of the landscapes of most fishing communities. Wilson Hayward of Bonavista, along with so many others, described his family's fishing spot in Red Cove as being literally clogged with flakes to the point that one man had a flake that was built right up to and covering one side of his house. In the forty years since the demise of the salt fishery, the flakes, fish stores and houses have disappeared from those same landscapes (and many others) to such an extent that one cannot tell they were ever there.

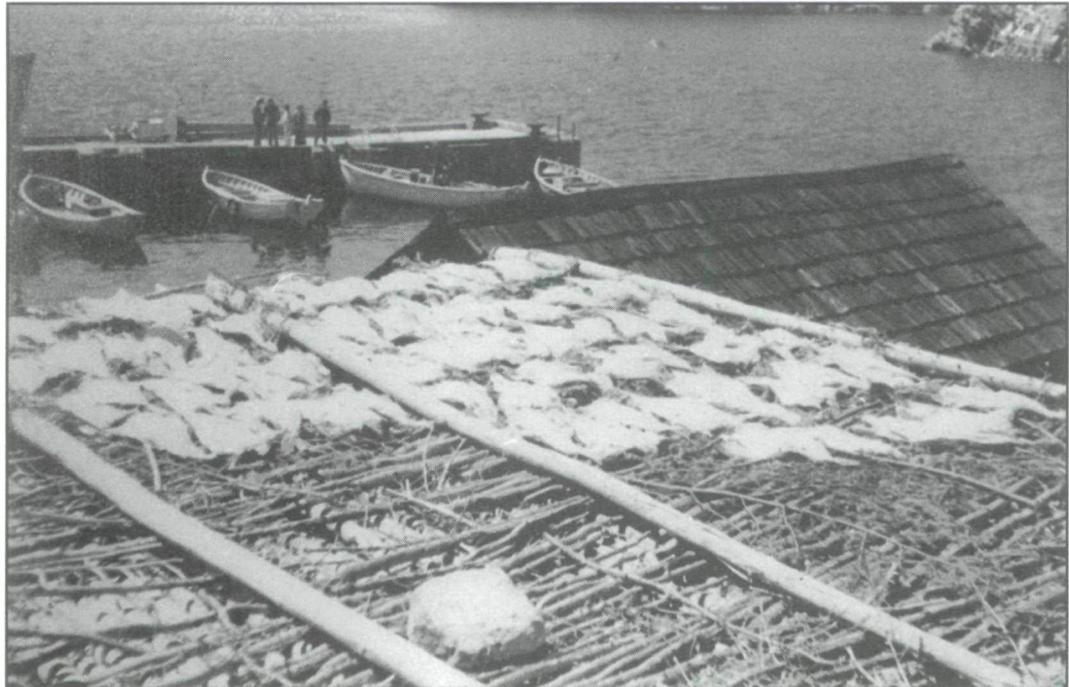
Boughs and a number of other materials were used for drying fish on the flakes (Fig. 6). Spruce boughs were used and held in place by loose *longers* laid over them in such a way as to create rows on the flake upon which to lay fish. These were sometimes called "lists,"<sup>33</sup> or "panes" and are visible in Figure 6.<sup>34</sup> Laura Whiffen also noted that boughs had to be dried for waterhorse fish. Green sappy boughs might potentially stick to and leave a residue on the fish. "You wouldn't put waterhorse fish on no green boughs."<sup>35</sup>

William Wells of Change Islands wove his boughs through the loose "lungers" that defined the lists and left them there to "fry" and lose their needles in preparation for the laying of fish.<sup>36</sup> Figure 6 depicts pickled waterhorse fish on a flake in New Bonaventure, in Trinity Bay in the late 1970s. The fish are lying on boughs that still have their needles (which had turned red with drying in the original colour photo). In other places in Figure 6, most of the boughs are thicker and have few if any needles and the boughs are held down by the *longers* that define the lists. These slightly thicker boughs served to elevate the fish and allow more wind and breeze to get around the fish. The boughs with needles protected the delicate waterhorse from the rougher boughs and hot or less airy *longers*.

As fish dried it became more resilient to contact and heat and could be laid on these rougher surfaces without much risk. Women and men brought waterhorse fish up and onto dry boughs generally at a certain spot on the flake reserved for fish at this stage in its drying. Laura Whiffen described this spot as being the likeliest to receive wind and near the edge of the flake closest to the water where it was likely to remain the coolest. Again, Figure 6 depicts this arrangement.

Waterhorse fish were laid out flat and placed carefully in their lists or panes. Figure 3 illustrates one such list. Note the pattern of spreading — heads and tails — allowing more fish to

**Fig. 6**  
Waterhorse fish drying on end of flake nearest water, New Bonaventure, ca 1977. (Courtesy Brian Miller and Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive)



be spread. Note also how close the fish are spread to the edge of the seaward side of the flake. Care has been taken, with one exception, to lay the fish “fair in the list” as Mary Ann Martin describes below. None of the fish in this list have been laid directly onto an un-boughed longer (in this photograph the method of layering boughs is also clear).

Mary Ann Martin (MAM) recalled the careful spreading of waterhorse fish and how her parents and grandparents did not allow the children to do much of this painstaking work because they were not careful enough:

*Then when they'd wash out that [fish] after a few days they'd bring it out then on those hand barrels, used to call it, and take it up on the flake with — flake was a nice little bit from the salt house and then they'd just put it in on the flake for overnight and in the morning then they'd go spread it all out you know on — and they had boughs all over...the flake. And they had like longers going out through like that [gestures] like made up — lists they used to call it.*

*This is what the older people [said] — “Now put it right fair in the list” ‘cause [if] the fish wasn't all stretched flat you know ... [then] it wouldn't dry [properly] and be twist up. It [had to]...be all flat...right flat.... the flake was made out of longers you know, and then those longers put through in- like- like drills you'd see in a farm...*

*Well sometimes we'd [children] go with her, not very often because we wouldn't be as particular as she would be, you know, 'cause she understood it more than we did. But if we got it down, that was it, you know, you'd be flicking it from one side to the other, but she didn't- she wouldn't have that! If you'd break a fish or break the tail of it or the side or anything,*

*Mark Ferguson (MF): So she'd be doing it almost all by herself, would she?*

*MAM: Oh yes — she wouldn't have us in her way.*

*MF: So she'd keep both flakes going herself?*

*MAM: Oh yes!<sup>37</sup>*

Waterhorse fish was spread carefully on its back on its first days of drying out. Spreading fish on its face during the drying time of day at this early stage could lead to it breaking apart along its sound-bone.<sup>38</sup> When it became drier and stiffer, the backs of the fish were then also turned up to the sun. During the nights at this stage of the process, fish were at first singly turned over, face down, and their skins formed



**Fig. 7**  
*A faggot of fish on a flake in New Bonaventure, ca 1977. (Courtesy Brian Miller and Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive)*

a protective layer from the elements. With progressive drying, fish began to be piled in the evening into what were called *faggots* (Fig. 7), which increased in size as the days and nights passed. Faggots were like the waterhorse pile that facilitated the draining of the fish just after the salt was washed out of it. They were constructed with their first tier back-down and the rest of the tiers back-up and fish were laid heads and tails on each tier. The pile tapered up to a single fish as it rose and this last fish was generally a larger one and formed the top overlapping shingle of the faggot. The shingling effect served to keep water out of the pile.<sup>39</sup> If the weather was good in the morning, the faggots would be spread again.

Drying techniques for fish appear at first glance to have been a simple set of spreadings and pilings to keep fish safe and to keep it drying. Drying was, however, characterized by a good number of subtleties and peculiarities of process and technique. For example, in the waterhorse phase it was better to have good drying days spread over that period rather than consecutive ones, so that for an interspersed day or two the fish could be put in faggots to press out or “sweat” — that is, have water forced gently out of them.<sup>40</sup> Bennett March’s family would pile their fish on the third day regardless of the weather in order to let it sweat before the sun crusted it over and sealed moisture in.<sup>41</sup>

At a certain stage, usually after a week or so, with four or five good days of drying (with the odd day or two of “sweating”), fish would go into either very large faggots or more usually what were simply called “round piles” to “work.” These piles were described as being a half metre or so in height, sometimes a little

higher if a pressing effect was desired. They were a metre or so in diameter, and contained, according to Wilson Hayward, up to about three quintals (150 kg) of fish.<sup>42</sup> Their shape was said to resemble round “hay stacks” or “hay cockes.”<sup>43</sup> A good deal of skill was required to make and then cover a solid weather-resistant pile of fish with rinds.<sup>44</sup>

In his initial summary of making pickled fish, Wilson Hayward described this piling process as a flattening of the fish, implying that more moisture was being taken from them. At another point he also described the “working” of fish in the round pile as a “seasoning” and a “toughening up.”<sup>45</sup> Laura Whiffen explained that the purpose of the round piling was to allow the fish to “work...to get good.”<sup>46</sup> MacPherson describes piling as having two beneficial effects: first it forced water out of the fish, which was then dried off with the next spreading. It also gave the face of the fish a smooth or “even” surface.<sup>47</sup>

The first time the fish was round-piled, it would stay in the pile for a good while, approximately a week. Then they would “open the pile” and spread the fish for a day, putting it back into its round pile in the evening. It would stay in that second round pile a certain length of time (based of course on how the fish was drying, but possibly three or four days), be spread again, potentially piled again and so on. Each piling would gently press more water out of the fish. It would “sweat” and the spreading would dry that moisture up.<sup>48</sup>

At a certain point the fish would be dried to the satisfaction of the shore skipper and her crew. This would be judged by look and texture. Most people described the effect of salt coming out of the fish onto its surface leaving a “floury” appearance but no actual residue that could be brushed off.<sup>49</sup> Fish could then be shifted off the flake and into the store until it was possible to ship it. If that shipping was not for a few days or more, then before the final shipment the crew might take it out of the store and spread it one more time to give it a touch of drying or “colour them up” (as Budgell put it), for the culling or grading session that preceded its sale.<sup>50</sup>

This technique of colouring the fish up (particularly in places where fish was held in stores until the end of the season<sup>51</sup>) was the last technique applied to the fish before it was shipped to the merchant. The drying phase lasted anywhere from two to three and even up to six weeks depending on the weather. Jenette Frost claimed fish could go from salt to dried in twelve days

with constant attention and hard work.<sup>52</sup> This seems a little on the brief side but possible with excellent weather and a cure tending a little to the greener side. Willie John Randell of Bonavista stated that drying in average weather would take around two weeks.<sup>53</sup> In 1676 Downing described a drying process nearly identical to that pieced together here from memories of the 1920s to the 1950s. If one adds up the number of days, the drying period in his description lasted three to four weeks. Anspach’s description echoes Downing’s and the makers’ of Bonavista.<sup>54</sup> Different lengths of drying time might reflect the requirement of softer and harder cures demanded by different markets at different times; and also, variations over the centuries in the reliability and quality of transportation. The less reliable and less dry the ocean-going vessels that carried fish to markets in Europe and the Caribbean, the harder and drier the salt fish required.

From the moment waterhorse fish arrived on the flake, continual attention was required to assess the fish and weather — a variable beyond their control. The shore skipper would constantly make judgements about whether they should move the fish on from one stage of the processing to the next, taking into consideration the weather, the people available, the amount and state of the different loads of fish at various different stages in the drying process on the flake and in the store. This attention, ongoing decision-making and the resulting adjustments were critical to the quality of the final product. With passable weather, people’s forecasting abilities, their skills in drying and their knowledge of salt fish, good fish makers could produce high-quality salt fish through the summer and fall. They had an intimate understanding of how fish dried and needed to be handled, how it behaved in different weather conditions at different points in the drying process, what the dangers were that threatened it, and how to ward off those threats to its quality. A number of these threats and techniques for avoiding or halting them are worth examining.

The overarching threat to fish was inappropriate weather. Damp and rainy weather could delay waterhorse fish from getting out on the flake and, in later stages of drying, it could drastically interrupt the drying schedule causing a number of problems — for example, the threat of slime and flies to waterhorse fish. Rain could also damage the face of well-dried fish exposed to it. In the later stages of drying, damp or rainy weather continued to be of concern because a fungus condition called “dun” could

set in,<sup>55</sup> and dried fish dampened by rain was still at risk of becoming maggotty from fly spits. Equally vexing, hot, sunny, windless weather could also be problematic. When fish was in the waterhorse stage and such weather struck, a condition known as sunburn was a very real threat.

When warm damp or wet weather struck in the midst of drying fish in round piles, fish could only be left so long without there being a good chance that a condition known as dun might set in. Vera and Jabez Ryder of Bonavista described how this condition was avoided by her and her sisters-in-law one particularly rainy summer using a method known as “packing” or “packing back” fish. They also describe dun fish, mention fly spits briefly, and finally discuss the hard work that women had to do:

*Vera Ryder (VR): So we used to bring the fish — bring the fish up on the flake, we'd do the fish, and sometimes — one summer it was raining all one summer — we couldn't make the fish and we had to pack it all down the flake. We were there packing fish so's it wouldn't get spoiled. People had a lot of bad fish. Moira, Jabe's sister — I didn't understand it — but she did, she knew what to do with it. So she'd be packing it all the summer and we had no bad fish. Used to do it good see, take it up...the air gets through it eh...well [they'd pack fish] perhaps once a day. You go out and look at it, and if you see it getting spoiled, you scrub it, you see dun getting on it or anything, you scrub it. You scrub it off, 'cause you take them [bad fish] out, you know?...That summer was bad...you couldn't hardly make no fish.*

*MF: Now what's dun now? What is dun fish?*

*VR: Dun is bad...*

*Jabez Ryder (JR): It's bad boy; spotty eh.*

*MF: Spotty?*

*JR: Mm-mmm.*

*VR: [continues] it gets something on it, it grows on it you know.*

*MF: What colour are the spots?*

*VR: Like brown sort of you know...bad see.*

*MF: And you'd scrub that with a cloth or something...*

*VR: Yeah a brush, you'd get a brush and water...and put salt in the water...dry it again, it'd be all right then...It's like spits — maybe you was going to put the fish on the flake...get fly spits in it...You gets fly spits in the fish — you have to go get salt water then. Sometimes you put your fish on your flake, it's a real*

*hot day, wasn't it Jabe? Perhaps it'd be all fly spits, or nearly all of it wasn't it? Then you had to go and get the salt water and put it on to kill those maggots and try to cure it. It's hard work...I'm telling you.*

*MF: And that...the women were doing that...*

*VR: Oh yeah, the women would do that...*

*JR: They had it worsser-<sup>56</sup>*

Packing back fish involved unmaking a pile of fish and immediately remaking it; this allowed the fish to air out a bit as well as “opening” the fish pile, so that fish would not be “snugged together” as Laura Whiffen (Vera Ryder's mother) put it.<sup>57</sup> The technique was employed either for fish in round piles on the flake or for fish that had already been completely made and was waiting in the fish store for shipping. As noted, it aired the (dried) fish out and kept the dun at a minimum. Various fish makers, including Vera Ryder, spoke of combatting dun with scrubbing and washings while others, including Heber John Keel, stated that once dun had set in, there was little you could do to remove the little spots that formed in the flesh. Either way the condition lowered the grade of the fish when it was culled, so it did not fetch a great price when graded. Dun fish was very likely to be culled as “West Indie” and shipped to those markets in the Caribbean. When the dun was not too bad, the other alternative was to use the fish for home consumption.<sup>58</sup>

Once the waterhorse fish got out onto the flake for the first few days, a small amount of rain was less of a problem to that fish than hot, sunny, still days. Once a certain level of dryness had been achieved, faggots would be covered by rinds overnight and the more diligent fish makers would be careful to ensure that no rain ever got on the “face of the spread fish,” as the following discussion with Laura Whiffen and her son Doug describes.

*DW: Mom and them get it out of the rain, or any — if they did get some rain, like I said, it didn't rain that much as, and if you got your rain they were — [LW: You'd double it up] run and double their fish.*

*LW: Double up our fish on the flake...You know, put two in two and three, like that [makes gesture]...*

*MF: The waterhorse fish you're talking about?*

*LW/DW: Yeah, yeah, yeah right.*

*MF: If there was a dwigh or whatever... [LW: Yes, yeah]*

DW: Yeah, if it [fish] was a little bit on the dry side eh.

LW: My. Poor Mom. Pap would eat- Pap would be eating his dinner, he wouldn't go. [DW: No.] He'd- boy- he eats his dinner: "I won't go!" "Why don't you go get the fish Joe?"...Mam'd run and take up the fish...Well he wouldn't.

MF: [interrupting] And she would double it up [LW: yes] just if there was a shower

LW: Yeah, so fish wouldn't get it on the face, yeah

MF: He- he couldn't be bothered, but she was more whatever about it.

LW: Yeah, yes, right.

DW: She didn't want no rain on the fish eh, but a little rain didn't hurt fish—rain, them summers it didn't hurt fish because, well, in lots of cases, it was only a shower.<sup>59</sup>

This excerpt indicates again that in the making of fish women frequently took the greater part of the responsibility for it. But in many cases everyone would pitch in, knowing that the quality of their fish could make a great deal of difference to their earnings and standard of living in the coming year. This quick work was only required in times of the sudden rain showers known as "dwichs."<sup>60</sup> Everyone — women, men and children — rushed to "scrabble up" the fish.<sup>61</sup>

Flies that laid their eggs in the meat of the fish, spawning maggots, were another threat to the quality of the fish. Vera Ryder described the effect and one cure above. Generally, following a few days of rain or dampness, fish makers had to watch out for the tiny maggots, especially around the napes of the fish where the meat was thickest and therefore the least penetrated by salt. Depending on the severity of the "fly blows," as Stan Handrigan of Grand Bank called them, the whole load of fish might be washed completely over, and waterhorsing begun again.<sup>62</sup> This affected the quality of the fish's face and, as with sunburnt fish, often fetched lower prices. If caught in time to preserve the fish, but too late to make their sale worthwhile, these fish were also kept for domestic consumption.<sup>63</sup>

Hot still days were another major threat to salt fish, mainly in the waterhorse phase. The sun would literally burn or partially cook the fish, resulting in a condition called sunburn. It would then break apart as it continued drying and was prone to other problems. Bennett March described it well:

If you get the hot weather and you get it burned...you get the sunburned fish when you get the really warm, the hot days in the summer with no wind or anything...you get it out and you get it caught in that, you could end up with a lot of fish sunburned. And really all it is is cooked underneath the skin. And once it get sunburned then you could never make it...the skin on the back of it always had a sticky — no matter how much you dried it, it always had a sticky feeling and it always leave your hands black...A sunburned fish — you could take hold to the fin that runs up the centre of the back and you lift it practically all out...not worth the trouble of weighing it off.<sup>64</sup>

A key requirement for drying waterhorse was a cool and windy spot.<sup>65</sup> Willie John Randell stated that people with flakes by the water tended to put their waterhorse fish on the areas of the flake nearest to the water. Breezes would be cooler there. For those without such beneficial flake locations, the area of the flake exposed to the most wind was chosen.<sup>66</sup>

In many communities around the island, shore crews would try to find some means to arrest the effects of sunburn. Some crews were careful not to carry freshly washed waterhorse fish out until after the heat of the day had passed.<sup>67</sup> Another simple method was to lay boughs over the fish in order to shade it to some extent.<sup>68</sup> Many women had various kinds of sheeting or fabric to place over the fish to shade it even further. Laura Whiffen's mother-in-law used various materials including old quilts that she would hang from fence pickets that were wedged into the longers of the flake.

And I used to spread the fish and carry it up with Mother, poor [in Newfoundland the word "poor" is commonly used to mean "deceased"] Mrs. Whiffen, we spread the fish. And sometimes, then when we'd get that out and that, it'd be hot, you know, there'd be some days it'd be real hot, so we had to cover over with — perhaps we'd have old quilts or old somethings, you know and we'd stick up four pickets, like that — put over it — and the sun wouldn't burn the fish. The sun'd burn it see, yeah, split it abroad, yeah. Big thick fish, great big ones then, you know, not fish like it's going now...big, great big fish yeah.

MF: And the sun would split them right down?

LW: Right down, if you didn't have something to shelter them.<sup>69</sup>

This seems to have been a fairly widespread practice in one form or other. Lily Budgell wrote of a technique from Change Islands almost

identical to the one used by Martha Whiffen,<sup>70</sup> and Heber John Keel mentioned “damaged cotton” being used in relation to a poem about the salt fishery that he had read:

*Old people used to call it damaged cotton — stuff you could buy it in rolls eh, rolls, rolled up same as canvas only it was right thin stuff eh...dark — dark colour and it twas damaged eh, pink here, blue somewhere else and you know...old people used to call it damaged cotton — and this is what ah, the merchant said ‘He should have used some cotton...’ [in poem style] to cover up the fish from the sun you see...spread it over see?...’Cause I know my grandmother did down there. They had the boughs see, when they see it was getting warm, wind drop, they bough their fish over, put the boughs on top of the fish...try to save it so...so it wouldn’t spoil eh...but that was the killer — it was the waterhorse...not the real dry, it wouldn’t hurt that, it was the waterhorse see? Wet when it came out.<sup>71</sup>*

Sunburnt fish was not necessarily inedible and in fact some people liked its taste.<sup>72</sup> If it was salted correctly in the first place, it was fine for eating.<sup>73</sup> Many kept it for their own tables, knowing that the condition of the sunburnt fish would only get the worst price if they tried to sell it.<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

Making light-salted fish made prodigious day-to-day labour demands on the women and men who carried out the work. The work required remarkable endurance, physical toughness, commitment, and diligence at every step of the way. A myriad of methods, techniques, skills, and know-how were necessary to make fish well. Various steps involved in the drying process required remarkable amounts of traditional complex knowledge. Careful attention and commitment to detail, complex decision-making and resulting adjustments to the process in response to changing variables, most particularly the weather, were the order of the day if good fish were to be made. I have tried in this short paper to capture and evoke both the qualities and quantities of this work, but many things have not been included: I have not commented on how women in fishing crews organized the work or their shore crews.<sup>75</sup> I have not shown how fish making and related tasks fit into the daily and seasonal regimens of activ-

ity in salt-fishing communities.<sup>76</sup> When one takes into account all of the other demands and tasks of everyday life in a salt-fishing community, the quantities of sheer toil take on a miraculous quality. As Jabez Ryder nicely summed it up: “Hard racket boy...hard racket for a living — and now — you don’t want to ‘move’ for a living now.”<sup>77</sup>

People laboured hard and long striving to get ahead through the fishing season, but generally they managed to maintain a standard of living just above subsistence. Men and women worked constantly to ensure that their families remained as far above that line as possible. Yet despite the tremendous physical demands and meagre returns, many of the women and men I talked with recalled with pleasure various aspects of their work. There is no denying this fact. Many enjoyed being outdoors in the sunshine and fresh air, engaged in work that was varied and complex enough to remain interesting. Further, men and women were independent as far as their work schedules went — a benefit that many appreciated a great deal. Though the regimen was incredibly busy, people were free for the most part to see to their own needs in their own time — to get a meal, to look after their children, to care for the elderly, to tend their gardens and so forth. Many were very proud of the top-quality salt fish they produced through skill and hard work. It was certainly more interesting and less “tiresome”<sup>78</sup> than the mechanized repetitive work of the fish plants that came later.

With good weather, hard work and know-how, large quantities of very fine and valuable salt cod were produced each year. The fish makers and people in the community knew excellent salt fish when they saw and ate it. There was great satisfaction in producing near perfect fish — the golden-amber hue of a well-dried, clean, thick, perfectly split and with-a-little-flour-showing-on-its-face fish — the choice Spanish fish. It is entirely sensible that one astute scholar, David Alexander, has typified both the product and the work required to make it as “a handicraft.”<sup>79</sup> There is no question that the production and product of making fish and the challenges it posed were satisfying for many people who worked in the salt fishery. They rightly took pride in their abilities and achievements. The complexity of their work should neither be characterized nor dismissed as rudimentary or primitive drudgery.

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and the Newfoundland Museum and their permission to use interview materials I gathered for them. My research has been generously supported financially (and otherwise) by The Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), research groups, departments, archives, deans, and individual professors at Memorial University of Newfoundland and by the Northern Sciences Training Program. I gratefully acknowledge all of their support.

## NOTES

1. The term commonly used for cod fish in Newfoundland is simply "fish." Other species are called by their common names, for example, salmon, herring, caplin. Whenever the term fish is employed on its own, the reader can safely assume that cod is implied.
2. Only a few thorough studies of the everyday practices of contemporary and historic Atlantic Canadian fishing cultures have been carried out and they focus largely on harvesting (for example, Aliette Geistdoerfer, *Pêcheurs acadiens, pêcheurs madelinots : Ethnologie d'une communauté de pêcheurs* (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1987); Marcel Moussette, *Fishing Methods Used in the St Lawrence River and Gulf*, History and Archaeology ser. 22 (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, 1979). Academic studies that deal mainly with the everyday practices of processing salt cod in Newfoundland are even rarer. "The House that Poor Jack Built," Gerald Pocius's essay on the salt processing of cod and its architecture on Fogo Island and my own M.A. thesis (the basis of this article) are perhaps the only concentrated academic inquiry into those practices, post 1850 (Gerald L. Pocius, "The House that Poor Jack Built: Architectural Stages in the Newfoundland Fishery," in Larry McCann with Carrie MacMillan, eds., *The Sea and Culture of Atlantic Canada: A Multidisciplinary Sampler* (Sackville: Centre for Canadian Studies, 1992), 62-105; Mark Ferguson, "Making Fish: Salt-Cod Processing on the East Coast of Newfoundland — A Study in Historic Occupational Folklife" (Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1996). There are also a number of significant bureaucratic studies of the salt fisheries in this century. Only two of these provide thorough information and analysis of the practices of making salt fish — MacPherson 1935 and the Newfoundland Commission of Enquiry into the Seafisheries...1937 (hereafter referred to as the "Newfoundland Commission 1937.") MacPherson's scientific report is particularly detailed and provides some of the best documentary explanations of salt-fish processing. He notes that his is "probably the first attempt at systematizing the rule-of-thumb methods..." of the practices of the salt fishery. (N. L. MacPherson, *The Dried Codfish Industry*, Reports of the Newfoundland Fishery Research Laboratory 2, no. 4 (St John's: Division of Fishery Research, Newfoundland Department of Natural Resources, 1935): 9; Newfoundland Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador Other than the Sealfishery, 1937, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador Other than the Sealfishery, 1937* (St John's: Dicks & Co., 1937).
3. I take my lead from the emically based occupational folklife work of Robert S. McCarl, "Occupational Folklife: A Theoretical Hypothesis," in Robert H. Byington, ed., *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife* (Los Angeles: California Folklore Society, 1978), 3-18, and "Occupational Folklife: An Examination of the Expressive Aspects of Work Culture with Particular Reference to Fire Fighters" (Ph.D. diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980); Maggie Holtzberg-Call, *The Lost World of the Craft Printer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and Timothy C. Lloyd and Patrick B. Mullen, *Lake Erie Fishermen: Work, Identity, and Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990). The best of these have as a guiding tenet the principle that any academic or externally applied interpretation or model that is constructed must be grounded in and on the observations, perceptions, interpretations, and models of the people with whom we academics work (Gerald L. Pocius, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 7-10).
4. Patrick O'Flaherty, "Looking Backwards: The Milieu of Old Newfoundland Outports," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 10, no. 1 (1975): 3-9.
5. Holtzberg-Call, *Lost World*, 20. Lloyd and Mullen, *Lake Erie Fishermen*, xxiv.
6. The role of women in the Newfoundland fishery has been frequently underrated, minimized and ignored (as it has been in many other realms). Men have historically and traditionally been the authors and subjects of most academic and popular analyses of occupation, society and culture. It is not surprising to find therefore an imbalance vis-a-vis studies of harvesting fish (a male sphere by and large) versus those of processing fish (often a female sphere). Fortunately in the case of the fisheries, the imbalance is slowly being addressed (see Barbara Neis, "From 'Shipped Girls' to 'Bride of the State': The Transition from Familial to Social Patriarchy in the Newfoundland Fishing Industry," *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* 26, no. 2 (1993): 185-211; and Marilyn Porter, *Place and Persistence*

- in the *Lives of Newfoundland Women* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993), for excellent bibliographies), but there is still a large gap to be closed.
7. Mr. Bennett March, interview with author, NFM-30. The citation form "MF-2/3" refers to the tape-ordering system I used to organize my research materials. This number NFM-30 refers to tape 30 (an interview with Mr. Bennett March) of the "NFM" collection of fieldwork tapes from interviews conducted for the Newfoundland Museum. The other interviews alluded to in this article are identified by the prefix "MF-" and consist of interviews I conducted for my thesis research. All tapes and related research materials have been deposited into the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) in St John's and can be accessed there. Gertrude Crewe, "Past and Present Fishing in Bonavista," Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive MS.81-379 (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1981), 14. *Flakes* were large walk-on wooden platforms where fish were dried. See Fig. 1.
  8. Lloyd E. Bulgin, "The Inshore Cod Fishery of Twillingate: Methods of Catching, and the Customs and Practices in the Curing and Drying Process," Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive MS. 78-198 (St John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1978), 91.
  9. O'Flaherty, "Looking Backwards."
  10. One woman spoke of how the summer fishery and garden work were so demanding and so important economically that they took precedence over all other concerns, even, at times, the immediate short-term needs of children. This was not overly harsh and it was for these children's long-term welfare that the fish and gardens had to take this precedence. In many families, children were expected to help out with all kinds of work from the young ages of six and seven. This served the dual purpose of accomplishing more work and of beginning their apprenticeship in the rigours of the life they too would eventually be leading.
  11. John Burnett, ed. [1974], *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1924), 30; and George Sturt [1923], *The Wheelwright's Shop* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Some may argue that equating the work involved in the salt fishery with such skilled crafts and the status associated with them is at best stretching it, at worst, romantic and vaguely ludicrous. Certainly, with making salt fish, these status distinctions are less applicable. Every fishing family made fish all summer long, and every man, woman, and child involved was — in folkloric parlance — a tradition bearer. As for skill levels, a good deal of the work was simple, unskilled manual labour — hauling, lifting, lugging, washing, turning, moving, piling, and unpling thousands and thousands of kilograms of fish, day in, day out, year in and year out — labour that is not particularly amenable to romanticization or for being valorized as a skilled craft, or for distinguishing star tradition bearers.
  12. Burnett, *Useful Toil*, 30.
  13. Round fish is fish direct from the water that has not been processed in any way — cut, gutted, headed or split. Stages were the structures in which much of the processing of salt fish was carried out. Fish were unloaded from boats at the stage, a part of which was built over the water in order to allow the boats access. All stages were connected either directly or by a bridge to the land. The stage head was the part of the structure furthest out over the water where boats unloaded their catches. The stage head had a very broad ladder constructed from poles (called *strouters*) and rails that allowed access between the stage and the boat. See Fig. 4 for a photo of typical stages and stage heads.
  14. Lily E. M. Budgell, "The Art of Making Fish in Change Islands, Notre Dame Bay, as told by William Wells," Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive MS.79-466 (St John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979), 11.
  15. *Rinds* were fir-tree lengths of bark peeled completely off and used to cover piles of fish a few days along in the drying process.
  16. Wilson Hayward, NFM-35/36/37.
  17. Brian Miller, "Fish Making in Communities in Trinity Bay: In Reference to the Habits of Aunt Lizzy and Uncle Joe," Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive MS.79-377 (St John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979), 13.
  18. Mary Ann Martin, MF-1.
  19. Bulgin, "Inshore Cod Fishery of Twillingate," 88.
  20. MacPherson, *Dried Codfish Industry*, 25–6.
  21. The quintal was the 112-lb (50-kg) unit weight by which dried salt fish was bought and sold.
  22. Laura Whiffen, personal communication with author, 1995.
  23. With other heavier salted fish, which lay in salt for many weeks at a time, much larger loads could be washed out at the one time, sometimes up to fifty quintals (2 550 kg). G. M. Story, W. J. Kirwin, J. D. A. Widdowson, eds., *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed. (St John's: Breakwater, 1995), 602.
  24. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
  25. Bennett March, NFM-30.
  26. Bride Fitzgerald, MF-6/7.
  27. MacPherson, *Dried Codfish Industry*, 40; Bulgin, "Inshore Cod Fishery of Twillingate," 85.
  28. Lewis A. Anspach, *A History of the Island of Newfoundland: Containing a Description of the Island, the Banks, the Fisheries, and the Trade of Newfoundland, and the Coast of Labrador*, 2nd ed. (London, Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1827), 440.
  29. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
  30. Willie John Randell, NFM-38/39.
  31. Anspach, *History of the Island*, 435–436.
  32. Posts are self-explanatory and shores are posts set slanted into the ground as a support for whatever structure of which it is a part (Story et al., 477). See Fig. 1.
  33. Mary Ann Martin, MF-1.
  34. Miller, "Fish Making," 14.
  35. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
  36. Budgell, "Art of Making Fish," 6.
  37. Mary Ann Martin, MF-1.
  38. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.

39. *Ibid.*; Anspach, *History of the Island*, 436.
40. Bennett March, NFM-30; Anspach, *History of the Island*, 437.
41. Bennett March, NFM-30.
42. Wilson Hayward, NFM-35/36/37; also Laura Whiffen MF-14/15 and Catherine A. J. Warren, "The Description of Curing Fish in Several Communities: St Vincent's, New Bonaventure, New Perlican, Grates Cove and Hare Bay," Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive MS.79-587 (St John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979), 56-57.
43. Anspach, *History of the Island*, 437; Bulgin, "Inshore Cod Fishery of Twillingate," 96; John Downing [1676], "The Manner of Catching and Making Drie Fische in Newland [sic]," Egerton MSS.2395, British Library, London, 565-566; Warren, "Description of Curing Fish," 56-57.
44. Budgell, "Art of Making Fish," 9; P. K. Devine [1915], *In the Good Old Days!* (St John's: Harry Cuff, 1990), 22; Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
45. Wilson Hayward, NFM-35/36/37.
46. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
47. MacPherson, *Dried Codfish Industry*, 40-41.
48. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
49. Budgell, "Art of Making Fish," 11. How a pickled or light-salted fish looked when it was "done" drying depended on what degree of dryness was required or requested by the merchant and his export market in a given year.
50. Budgell, "Art of Making Fish," 11; also Anspach, *History of the Island*, 441; Mary Ann Martin, MF-1.
51. As in Grates Cove (Mary Ann Martin, MF-1).
52. Jenette Frost, "The Traditional Method of Salting and Drying Cod in Grates Cove, Trinity Bay," Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive MS.79-544 (St John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979), 21.
53. Willie John Randell, personal communication with author, 1995.
54. Anspach, *History of the Island*, 435-37.
55. MacPherson, *Dried Codfish Industry*, 45.
56. Vera and Jabez Ryder, MF-4/5.
57. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
58. Anspach, *History of the Island*, 441.
59. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
60. Wilson Hayward, NFM-35/36/37; Devine, *Good Old Days*, 23.
61. Anspach, *History of the Island*, 437-38.
62. Stan Handrigan, NFM-44; also Melita Guy, MF-17/18.
63. MF-6/7.
64. Bennett March, NFM-30.
65. Bulgin notes that the best drying weather was sunny with winds from the west and northwest. The worst was hot and humid (p. 95). William Wells stated, "The fish dried better if over the water and also didn't get sunburned so easily." One of his flakes was actually built out over the water (Budgell, p. 6).
66. Willie John Randell, personal communication with author, 1995; also Budgell, "Art of Making Fish," 7.
67. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
68. Heber John Keel, MF-2/3.
69. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
70. Budgell, "Art of Making Fish," 8.
71. Heber John Keel, MF-2/3.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Laura Whiffen, MF-14/15.
74. Bride Fitzgerald, MF-6/7.
75. Ferguson, "Making Fish," 128-36.
76. Devine, *Good Old Days*, Ferguson, "Making Fish," Hilda Chaulk Murray, *More than Fifty Percent: Woman's Life in a Newfoundland Outport, 1900-1950*, Canada's Atlantic Folklore and Folklife ser. 3 (St John's: Breakwater, 1979); Porter, *Place and Persistence*.
77. Jabez Ryder, MF-4/5.
78. As Laura Whiffen, who did both kinds of work, put it (personal communication, 1995).
79. David Alexander, *The Decay of Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965*, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies 19 (St John's: ISER, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), 75. But a mass produced one. In 1894 light-salted fish accounted for approximately 41% of the total catch of just over a million quintals (50 million kg) of fish. In 1911 it accounted for 64% of just over 1.2 million quintals (60 million kg), and in 1921, 68% of just over 1.3 million quintals (66 million kg). Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1894, 1911, 1921, 1935. St John's: J. W. Withers, Colonial Secretary's Office, Department of Health and Welfare. In 1935 it accounted for approximately 75% of the total catch (no total catch figure given) (Newfoundland Commission, 1937, 112).