

PRESERVING NEWFOUNDLAND PLACE NAMES

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In the spring and summer of 1990 and 1991, a research group of the English Language Research Centre (ELRC), a unit of Memorial University of Newfoundland's Department of English Language and Literature, conducted interviews in almost every community in Placentia Bay, the largest of Newfoundland's bays, collecting data for a proposed pronunciation dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador place names.

While the project was exploratory, research in Newfoundland names is not something new for Memorial. In 1971, Dr. E. Ronald Seary, the then head of the Department of English, published his *Place Names of the Avalon Peninsula of the Island of Newfoundland*. In 1976, he published the *Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland*. His career at Memorial University, beginning in 1954 and ending with his death in 1984, is represented by an impressive series of publications on family and place names.

In 1985, Mrs. Gwen Seary donated all Dr. Seary's records and work-in-progress to the ELRC and it was decided that his work would be continued. By 1989, a seven-year programme of research that would eventually encompass all of Newfoundland and Labrador had been designed. A pronunciation dictionary of Newfoundland place names with an accompanying atlas showing locations would be the main end product.

While much has been written about Newfoundland place names, most of it has been from the perspective of the professional geographer, the dilettante etymologist or the interested layperson. Professional geographers such as Dr. Gordon Handcock, though thoroughly committed to Newfoundland toponymy, have not sought the linguistic features of place names as they are used within speech communities. Earlier writers such as D.W. Prowse, Bishop M.F. Howley and Agnes M. Ayre provide fascinating collections and observations but these and most of their interested contemporaries were neither trained linguists nor geographers. Occasional writers such as Dr. John Hewson writing on Micmac place names and Dr. W.J. Kirwin on the pronunciations of specific toponyms analyze and discuss in modern linguistic terms but such informed observations are scanty and limited to a small number of names. Dr. Seary's work is the only attempt to collect and study Newfoundland place names systematically on a regional scale, though his work was limited to data on maps, charts and other printed sources.

The reasons for undertaking such an enterprise at this time go beyond a commitment to carry on Seary's work. Newfoundland is undergoing rapid change. In 1921, there were over 1300 recorded communities scattered throughout the 404,418 square kilometers of the Province. In 1986, the census takers recognized less than 800. Over 500 communities disappeared in the intervening 70 years. As the number of communities dwindle, a permanent break with the past is occurring. The names of the old settlements and districts, the traditional fishing rooms and berths, the shoals, islands, lakes and rivers are not being passed to the next generation. The residents have been moving into new speech communities and the linguistic features which identify their ancestors as from England, Ireland and France, for example, are being replaced by those which are increasingly closer to Standard English. Improved education, with its reliance on the written word for authority, increased exposure to media which use standardized forms of English and immigration of people from outside the province who hold influential positions in

the community are causing the younger generations to move away from the traditional Newfoundland pronunciations.

During the 1990 and 1991 research periods, supported by funds and support-in-kind from both within and outside Memorial University, a pilot study under the supervision of the author was conducted in Placentia Bay. In the spring and summer of 1990, two field-workers conducted interviews in almost every community of Placentia Bay. A third interviewed resettled Placentia Bay informants living in the St. John's area. In the spring and summer of 1991 another team of field-workers interviewed informants from additional resettled communities and from communities inadequately done in 1990. Representatives from 77 communities, including most of those resettled since the mid-1950's, when the Newfoundland Provincial Government's resettlement programme began in earnest, between Cape St. Mary's on the southwestern side of the Avalon Peninsula and Cape Rosey on the southeastern side of the Burin Peninsula, were interviewed. Tapes ranging from one-half hour to two and a half hours were made for each person (usually two per community), and data sheets completed for each name. Over 6,700 names were collected and the places were located by informants on field maps.

Beginning while the first field-workers were still collecting, the research team and several assistants commenced organizing, analyzing and keying the information into a managing database. Research assistants trained in phonetics, using field tapes, have transcribed each toponym in IPA script as well as in a modified version of a phonographically consistent Roman/English alphabet, designed by Lee Pederson for the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States Project. Each place name has been assigned longitude and latitude coordinates based on the identification on the field maps.

At the beginning of September, 1991, the first draft of the dictionary part of the Placentia Bay volume was completed. A working draft of the atlas part of the volume was run soon thereafter, bringing the two-year pilot project to an end.

The dictionary, as it was conceived and developed, will provide for each collected place name two transcribed pronunciations, one narrow IPA transcription and a transcription based on Pederson's Automatic Book Code system (which makes fairly technical phonetic information available to virtually any person familiar with the Roman/English alphabet). Each name has been given latitude and longitude coordinates and an NTS (National Topographic Series) map number. Each name will be assigned the appropriate atlas page number.

Having tested collecting techniques, research materials and database recording systems to the satisfaction of the research group, and gotten a good understanding of costs, Hollett and his field-workers will proceed, contingent upon funding, to research the south coast of Newfoundland in 1992, the west coast in 1993 and the Great Northern Peninsula in 1994.

LINGUISTICA ATLANTICA

Style Guide

The following few guidelines are intended to ensure a degree of consistency in the format of submitted manuscripts:

- Forms cited as linguistic examples within the text appear in *italics* (or underscoped if italicization is not possible). Glosses, if any, are in single quotation marks (' and '), with no comma separating cited forms from glosses.
- Punctuation marks always follow quotation marks unless the punctuation is an integral part of the quoted matter.
- Bibliographical references for theses, journal articles and book chapters should follow the format indicated below.

Guide Stylistique

Pour assurer une certaine mesure d'uniformité dans les manuscrits, les auteurs sont priés de bien vouloir suivre les quelques normes suivantes:

- Les formes citées comme exemples linguistiques dans les textes sont en *italique* (ou soulignées si l'italique n'est pas possible). Les traductions des formes citées paraissent entre guillemets simples (' et '), sans virgule entre formes citées et traduction.
- Les signes de ponctuation suivent les guillemets, sauf si ceux-là font partie intégrante des formes citées.
- Les références bibliographiques pour une thèse, un article dans une revue savante ou un chapitre dans un livre devraient être conformes au format ci-dessous.

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