



# History of the Lane/Heffern House, Salvage, NL

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## Introduction

The Salvage Fisherman's Museum (alternatively, the Lane/Heffern House) was designated a Registered Heritage Structure by Heritage NL March 20th, 2020 due to its historic and aesthetic value. Supposedly the oldest surviving home in the area, the museum building was constructed sometime in the mid 19th century by members of the Lane family who lived in Salvage by 1830.

Early records list Charles Lane (1861-1937) as its owner, and various community histories list the date of construction to 1862, 1873, and circa 1880s. This article attempts to place the building into historical context, and to offer an explanation for the conflicting dates of construction.



*Fig. # 1. Photo of the Salvage Museum.*

Local tradition maintains that the Lane/Heffern house is one of the oldest buildings in the area; the Fisherman's Museum is also one of the oldest community museums in Newfoundland. Founded in 1969 by the Heffern family, the Fisherman's Museum ran for several decades and was a popular tourist attraction. The museum was forced to close for a period of time after ownership was transferred between several parties. As of 2021, it is open seasonally, and under revitalization by the Salvage Museum Committee.

## Site and Location



*Fig. # 2. Map of Salvage Bay, including Bishop's Harbour and Salvage Harbour. The Lane/Heffern house is identified by a red point. Map by Maryssa Barras*

The building is situated in what was once the separate community of Bishop's Harbour. It sits back from the shore, back from the modern road in a garden area populated by berry bushes, lilacs, and apple trees, at the top of a small hill. The back of the building

lines up along a small, but steep, drop, and a stream which runs along the east side of the structure. The front of the building faces the flatter garden area, and to the east side there is a long porch and boardwalk addition, and a small, recently-constructed shed.

Originally, the building was surrounded by a series of subsistence gardens which the Lane family used to grow staples and keep livestock, including a horse. Patsy Janes, a Heffern descendant, notes that before the building turned into a museum, part of the flat surrounding area was used as a grazing field for sheep, and that there was an 'inside garden' on the inland side of the road, as well as a sheep house.

## Historical Context of Salvage and the Eastport Peninsula



*Fig. # 3. Historic photo taken in Salvage in the early 20th century. "Women on a Fish Flake." The Rooms, Collection Item, E 36-52*

Historically and archaeologically, the Eastport Peninsula has been host to human settlements and activity for at least 5000 years by a variety of Indigenous cultural groups, including the Maritime Archaic, the later Groswater and Dorset, and most recently Beothuk peoples (Carignan 1977; Tuck 1976).



There is some evidence to indicate early English settlement in Salvage and its neighbouring communities as early as 1672 (Major 1982), but any settlements dating to the late 17th and early 18th centuries were impermanent (Handcock 2002c). The first permanent settlements on the Eastport Peninsula began to emerge in the 1780s in Salvage and Barrow Harbour, although the earliest ancestors of present day families did not arrive until about 1820 (Major 1982).

Salvage consists of two main harbours, Salvage Harbour and Bishop's Harbour, in a sheltered bay surrounded by small neighborhoods. While these neighborhoods were occasionally recorded as different towns they have always formed different components of the single community of Salvage, which one historic account describes as a spider's body connected to smaller nearby settlements by legs (Handcock 2002a). Throughout the 19th century the Eastport Peninsula enjoyed a period of stable growth, with Salvage and Bishop's Harbour reaching a peak population of 591 residents in 1891 (Newfoundland Colonial 1893:122).



*Fig. # 4. Two people looking over the Town of Salvage in the mid-20th century.*

Throughout the 20th century Salvage, like many other remote Newfoundland communities, began to experience a decline in population in response to the decline of the Newfoundland fishery. By 1935, Salvage's population had declined to only 192, and Bishop's Harbour to 81, for a total population of 273 (Newfoundland Department 1937).

It is during this period of population fluctuation and industry change towards tourism that the Heffern family, who had purchased the Lane house and property in 1946, converted the building into a community museum.

## Construction and Building Description

The Salvage Fisherman's Museum has undergone extensive renovations over the years, reflecting changes in its use as a family home and museum.

Early records list Charles Lane (1861-1937) as its owner, and some community histories list the date of construction to 1862. Charles Lane could not, however, have constructed the building in 1862 when he was 1 year old, which means either he did not build the home or the 1862 construction date is incorrect.

Gordon Handcock has proposed a slightly later construction date of circa 1880:

Regarding its construction date, I agree that ca. 1862 is probably inaccurate. In researching and writing up some background information a few years ago I came to the conclusion it was most likely in the 1880s, just before Charles and Adelaide married in 1889. I feel that the earlier date accords with his birth and was mistakenly drawn from it. I say the 1880s because Charles was 28 years when he married and probably built the house before then. At that time it was customary for a young man even in his late teens and without the prospect of an immediate marriage to build a house or, at least, start to build. For various reasons houses were built over a period of several years. Based on these considerations (and the house design itself, it once had an open fireplace) I came to the tentative conclusion it was built in the 1880s. I found no clue that it belonged to Henry Lane (Handcock, pers.)

In November 2020, new data was collected by a Heritage NL field team consisting of Dale Jarvis, Maryssa Barras, and Andrea O'Brien. Assessment of the foundation and floor beams of the building (Fig. #5) suggests that the building was originally constructed as a smaller house, before being remodelled into its current, larger, shape. Thus, it seems likely that the house was constructed in two phases. First: a small, square one-and-a-half storey (possibly) gabled house with large walk-in chimney constructed in the early to mid 19th century. Second: a major remodel to a ¾ Georgian floorplan, larger, rectangular two-storey, steeply pitched gable house.

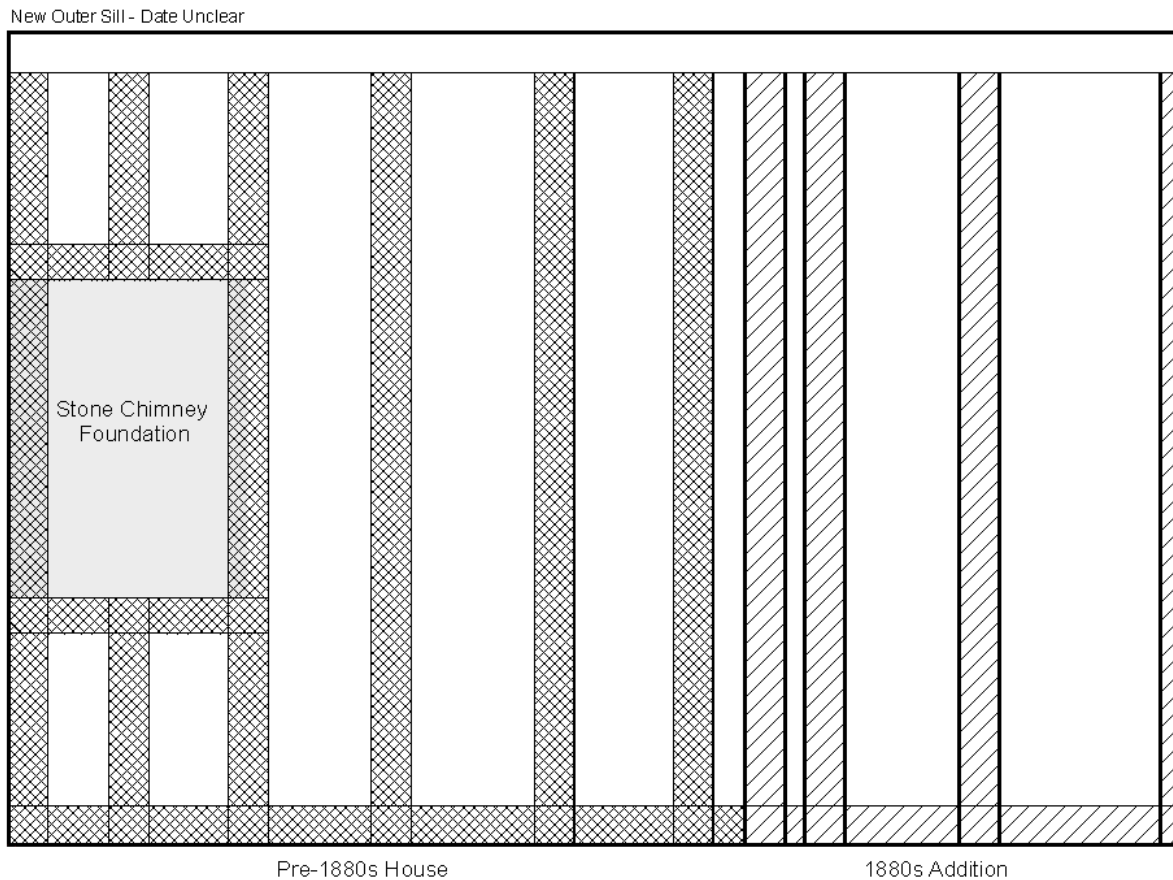


Fig. # 5. Scaled drawing of the Lane/Heffern House building foundations. Drawn by Maryssa Barras.

This type of remodelling, or ‘raising,’ of an earlier style home was common practice in Newfoundland (Mills 1975). While we do not know for sure who built the original smaller home, given this information it seems likely that Charles Lane is responsible for remodelling the building into its current form around or before the time of his marriage to Adelaide Brown in 1889. Thus, the earlier 1862 date from local histories may refer to the original, smaller, house, mistaking Charles for the original builder because of his major 1880s remodel.

Investigation under the house revealed that the sills and wood supporting piles have been largely replaced all along the front (north) side of the house. Other piles further back show some replacement, but the wooden sills supporting the western portion of the building stand out from newer sills on the east. The original sills on the west side of the house are made of rounded hewn timber, mortised to fit into one another and stabilised with trunnels (wooden pegs) (Fig. #6).



*Fig. # 6. Photo of a trunnel in part of the original Heffern/Lane House sill. Photo by Dale Jarvis.*

In contrast, the sills to the east of the building, underneath the current main door/parlour area, are of square, cut timber, affixed with nails. Also, while the original floor joists are evenly spaced, there is a tripling up of joists at the point where the western two-thirds of the structure and newer eastern third of the structure meet. (Fig. #5), suggesting that the eastern portion of the building is a newer, gable end addition.

On the interior, several clues suggest the location of the original eastern exterior wall. These include differences in interior trims, a discontinuation of the ceiling boards running east to west either side of what could be an original structural beam, and visible seams where floorboards jut against each other on the second floor.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Any future renovations to the building would likely reveal more precise information, and should carefully record the locations and types of studs used, original window and door placements, etc.





*Fig. # 7. Photo of part of the original stone chimney foundation. Photo by Dale Jarvis,*

The remnants of a large stone chimney foundation, which appears to have been built as part of the original mortise-and-tenon construction, can still be seen under the house, and measure approximately 2m wide and 1.5m deep (Fig. #7). All that is left of the fireplace on the first floor today is an exposed mortar and stone feature which lines the back (west) wall of the kitchen, measuring 1.4m wide and 18cm deep. It is uncertain when the kitchen portion of the fireplace was removed, and why the second storey section was left intact when the first floor section was dismantled - although Patsy Jane, a Salvage local and member of the Heffern family, recalls major renovations removing kitchen cabinets and counters took place when the building was converted into a museum in the 1960s.

On the second floor of the building, the original chimney framing remains largely unaltered in shape. The chimney enclosure is very large, and takes up a significant portion of the second floor in two of the bedrooms. It narrows, slanting inwards, towards the top of the second floor (Fig. #8). Such chimneys were typically constructed after the frame of the house was built, but before the interior was completed (Mills 1975).





*Fig. #8. Photo of a second floor bedroom in the Lane/Heffern House showing the chimney cutting through the room. 2020 HeritageNL Photo.*

What remains of the original flue was capped off at some point, and a modern blower vent was installed, which once was vented through the roof, and is currently disconnected. In the attic, the chimney rises only a short distance before it is capped off, suggesting that the original roofline of the house may have been considerably shorter.



Fig. # 9. Photo of the interior of the roof. Photo by Dale Jarvis.



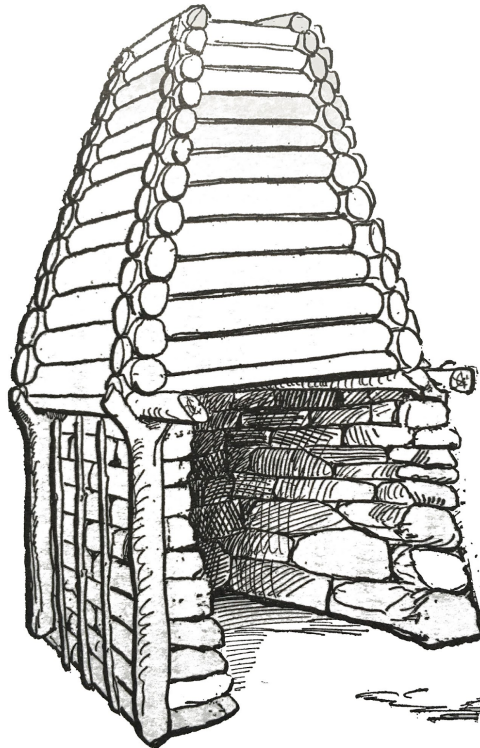
Fig. # 10. Photo of the first floor of the Lane/Heffern House - the remains of the original chimney are visible. 2020 HeritageNL Photo.

In the kitchen space, a large ceiling joist can be seen at the spot to where the chimney would have extended, likely constructed there to help support the weight of the chimney above.

Given this chimney's shape and size, it was likely originally a large gable-end walk-in or "inglenook" chimney, similar in shape to Fig. #11 (Beard 197).

Traditional inglenooks and chimney-corners would have served as more than just a space for cooking and heating the household. This was where family and friends socialized and cultural values were disseminated. As wood and oil stoves were introduced to rural areas, inglenooks became less common and many were removed, but kitchens continued to be centres of socialization and tradition (White House para.5).

While an inglenook style chimney was not unknown in Newfoundland, it was not a particularly common style of chimney. More frequently, large brick or stone chimneys and fireplaces were built centrally in the house, to help with better heat distribution (Mills 1975).



*Fig. # 11. Illustration of an inglenook style chimney. (Beard 1914: 197)*

Currently, the building features small-pane 3/6 single-hung wood windows somewhat evenly spaced on the front of the building with plain trim and narrow reveal wood clapboard. Viewed from the roadway, the fenestration pattern is slightly asymmetrical, mostly likely referencing the placement of windows in the original structure, with the windows in the 1880s east side addition being slightly offset.

The measured distance from the west gable end of the house to the west window is equal to the distance from the central window to the midpoint between the central window and the eastern window. This midpoint roughly corresponds to the placement of the triple floor joists and dividing line inside the house, all suggesting an earlier, more square floorplan.

From the attic, it appears that the current gable roof was put in place at one time, with no differentiation in structural members from west to east end. The roof was likely



added and/or raised above the height of the original chimney during the 1880s remodel.

The interior of the ground-floor storey of the building (Fig. #12) consists of one large open space, with an enclosed adjacent hallway housing the staircase and exterior door, with a small under-stair closet. This open space was created by the removal of a wall between the kitchen and parlour space by the Heffern family in the 1960s when the building was being converted into a museum. Oral tradition holds that the only access to the parlour was originally through the interior parlour door which still leads to the hallway.

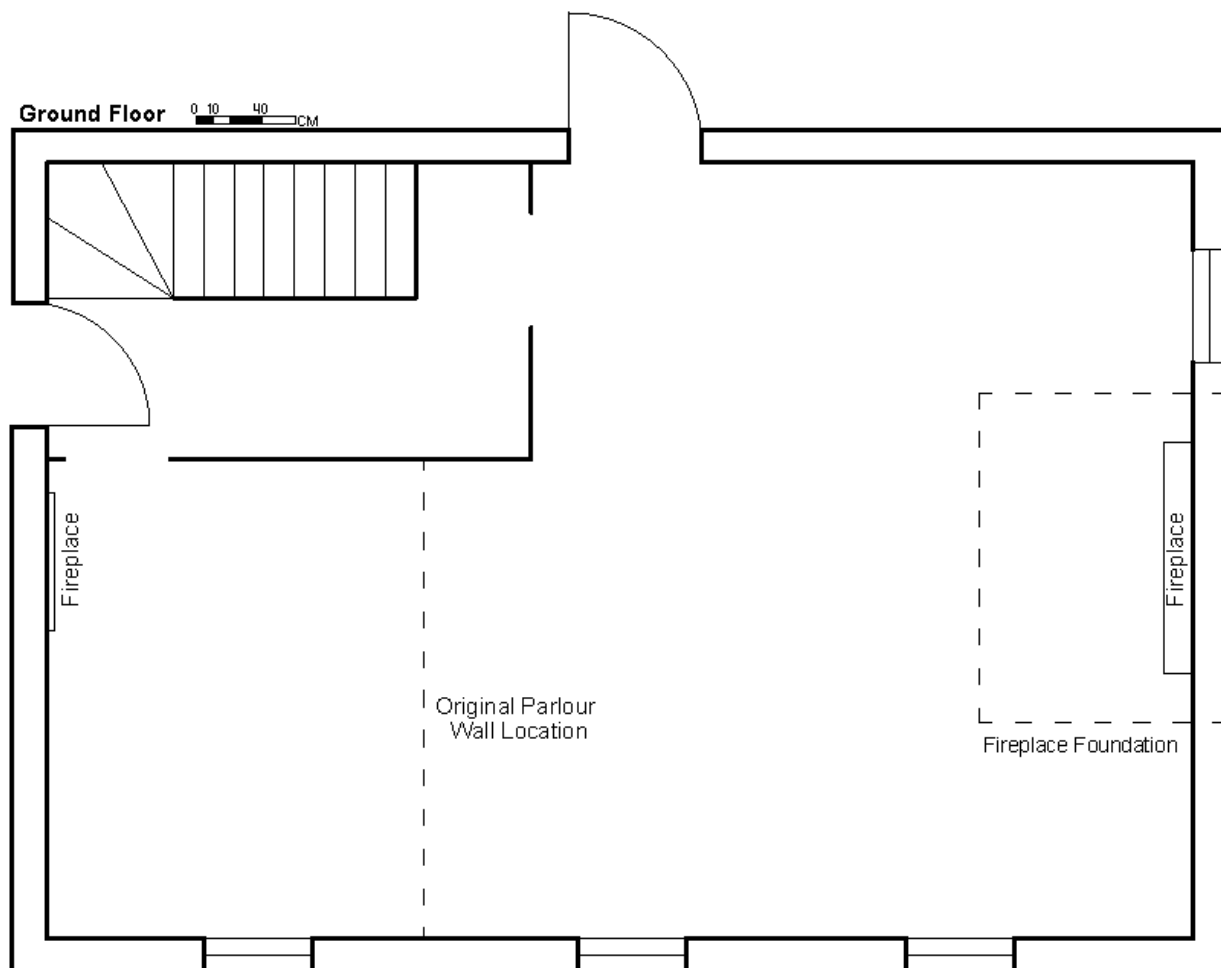


Fig. # 12. Scale drawing of the Lane/Heffern House first floor. Drawn by Maryssa Barras.

Preliminary fieldwork found no sign of a pre-1880s staircase, and there are a couple possible options for how the upper level might have been accessed. The main room ceiling spaces to the right or left of the chimney may have been open between the main and upper level and accessed by a stair or ladder, or a staircase might have existed in the southeast corner of the room, which was largely rebuilt during the 1880s remodel to house a new hallway entrance, staircase, and closet. The upper storey may also have been shorter, based on the chimney height.<sup>2</sup>

A wooden Victorian-era fireplace surround is visible on the interior eastern wall of what would have originally been the parlour. A stovepipe cover is fitted over the vent pipe for what was most likely a small mass-produced coal/wood parlour stove.

Today, the first floor of the building consists of a single, large, open space and an enclosed hallway containing the staircase and a barred doorway. This is certainly not the original floorplan of the building, but it is unclear when exactly the alterations to the first floor of the house were made. The position and size of the original exterior door on the gable end of the building, likely dating to the 1880s remodel, does however seem unchanged, as does the layout of the second storey of the building (Fig. #13).

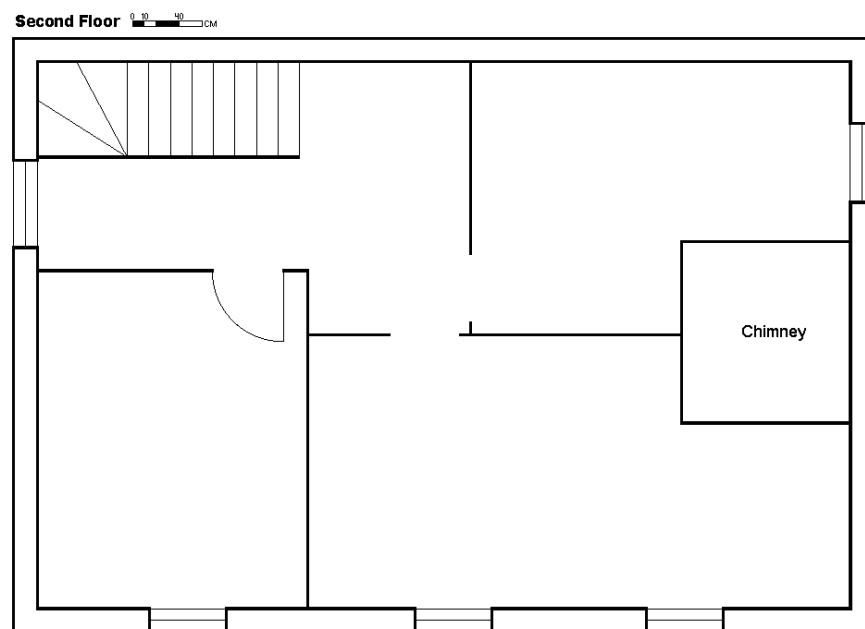


Fig. # 13. Scale drawing of the Lane/Heffern House second floor. Drawn by Maryssa Barras.

<sup>2</sup> This is something to document when clapboard is removed during the restoration process.

Today, the building's footprint is significantly larger than its 1880s floorplan, due to two additions built by the Heffern family after the building was converted into a museum in the 1960s. The first addition is that of a single story room built as a reception area for incoming visitors, which today houses a small gift shop. The second, smaller, addition was built behind this addition to house a washroom for visitors in response to the lack of public washroom facilities in the town. More recently, a large wrap around walkway and porch salvaged from another local building was added onto the house to provide easier access for visitors. Given the recent date of these additions, and their intrusion on the original footprint of the historic building, they were not measured and are not included in our analysis.

## Lane Family Use (circa 1860s-1947)

The first member of the Lane family in Newfoundland was Joseph Lane, who came to Barrow Harbour on the southern shore of the Eastport peninsula in the late 18th century. Joseph was a fisherman of British origins, who married Mary Stockly, the daughter of another local fisherman, and eventually inherited the Stockly family's fishing room as a result. The first member of the Lane family to move to the Salvage area was Joseph and Mary's second son, John Lane (1796-1876). John moved to Salvage with his wife, Elizabeth Dyke (1799-1883), at some point prior to the birth of their eldest son, William, in 1830 (Handcock 2002b).

Together, the couple had several more children including their third son, Henry, who was born 3 May 1835. Henry grew up to marry Elizabeth (Betsy) Hayward (or Hayford) on 3 November 1860 in Greenspond. One year later, Henry and Elizabeth's son Charles (Fig. #14), the first recorded owner of the Lane House, was born in 1861.

Local oral history, as previously mentioned, argues that the Lane house was constructed by Charles Lane (1861-1937), in 1862. As mentioned, again, because Charles was only 1 year old in 1862 our current hypothesis is that the house was built by someone else around this year and Charles, instead, significantly remodelled the building in the 1880s. In her unpublished history of the Lane family, Charles's granddaughter Anita Lane writes, "Charles and Adelaide lived the typical life of an



inshore fisherman's family in the home that he built. It is now the oldest structure in Salvage and a museum."

If, as we suspect, the house was built in (at least) two phases, the ownership of the earliest version of the house is unclear. If Charles's father, Henry Lane, was the owner of the house in its original configuration, it could have been constructed on the site by or for him around the time of his marriage in 1860.

Alternatively, the house could have equally been constructed for or by someone outside of the Lane family either *in situ* or somewhere else nearby around this time. As the original stone chimney appears to be contemporary to the mortise-and-tenon foundation sills, it seems unlikely that the structure would have been moved there by Charles Lane as part of his 1880s rebuild. Without documentation or further physical examination it is, as of yet, impossible to confirm any of these theories.

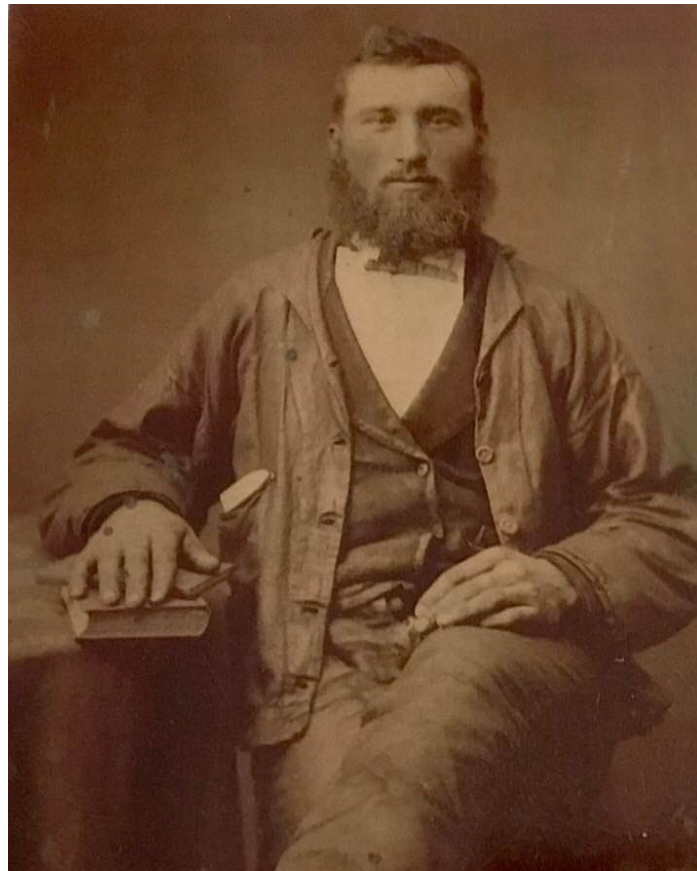


Fig. # 14. 1888 photo of Charles Lane.

Charles married Adelaide Brown (1866-1954) in 1889, and their first child, Tryphena, was born 1890. Throughout his life, Charles Lane worked as an inshore fisherman and sealer and Adelaide maintained a typical homestead for the period, keeping gardens and livestock on the property. Rabbits were snared in hills behind the house (Greenham). Anita Lane writes,

Adelaide helped her husband in 'making' or 'curing' the fish i.e. the process of salting and drying the fish. She cared for any domestica animals and grew the root vegetables needed to survive the long, harsh winter. This in addition to caring for children and everything to do with 'keeping house' which was no easy feat. There was no running water, no central heating, no modern conveniences of any kind. She would knit, probably from wool sheared and carded from their own sheep. The large bags of cloth which held flour, hard tack and other provisions would be used for sewing. She made quilts and maps from scraps and used clothing (Lane).

They had a total of four children together, including Charles Maxwell "Max" Lane (1905-1992), who was born in the upstairs of the house. He would go on to inherit the property.

Maxwell began his career as a teacher in Salvage, before moving to St.John's to become magistrate and lay minister. He sold his family's home in 1946 to the Hefferns, prior to launching his political career.

Maxwell launched his political career as a proponent of confederation, and worked his way to being appointed General Secretary of the Smallwood-backed Newfoundland Federation of Fishermen (NFF) in 1951.

While the NFF was criticized for its close ties to the governing party and, therefore, its ineffectual advocacy, Maxwell was a critic of the government's lack of participation while in his role.

After five years in this role, in 1956, Lane successfully ran for a position as MHA, and became the elected representative for White Bay North. While in government he also held a number of cabinet positions including Minister of Public Welfare, Fisheries and Mines, and Agriculture and Resources.

## Heffern Family Use (1947-1969)



*Fig. # 15. Photo of Wilfred Heffern (l), politician GA Frecker, and Ida Jane Heffern*

*with Doug Heffern (r) and Alice (Heffern) Bradley (front), taken inside the Lane/Heffern House*

The Heffern family has roots on the Eastport Peninsula dating to the early 1800s, initially settling in Broomclose but later moving closer to Salvage. Early records of the Hefferns use a wide variety of spellings, including: Hefferen, Heferen, Heffernan, Hefferman and Heffern, complicating genealogical research. Members of the Heffern family were among the earliest families to settle in Bishop's Harbour, as William Heffern was listed in Lovell's 1871 Directory.

The Hefferns, much like the Lanes, were typical Newfoundland fisher folk throughout the 19th and early 20th century.

The property was acquired by Wilfred and Ida Jane Heffern and family in 1947, and where they lived until they built a new house with modern plumbing and electricity next door ("Salvage" 17). The under-stair closet was used by the next generation of Hefferns for sewing supplies:

That hallway that came down towards where the larger living kitchen area is, to my knowledge was always there, because they always used to talk about Bessie's



closet was the closet under the stairs. It kind of acted as a little sewing nook for her. All her materials for sewing and her knitting and everything were kept in there. Some of the girls have told me stories about [how] it was great fun to go and play in Bessie's little area under the stairs. They'd go in and play with the material and the threads (Murphy).

In many ways, the interior of the house was the woman's domain. One of the Heffern men was quoted in 1982 as saying "the house was where the men slept and the women worked" (qtd. in Dale). His wife noted,

...the women tended the sheep... sometimes the men helped with the shearing, more times not since they'd be busy with other things...the women 'ed wash, card, and spin wool and knit their men sweaters and mitts and even wool underwear... it was cold out on the sea, you'd need all that or you'd freeze to death (qtd. in Dale).

While various members of the Heffern family curated the museum from the time that it first opened until it closed, they did not own the museum. Wilfred and Ida, instead, sold their old home to the Eastport Peninsula Committee for the Development of Progress for the purpose of converting the building into a museum.

## Fishermen's Museum (1969-present)

After nearly a quarter-century of ownership by the Hefferns, the next phase in the building's evolution began.

The Salvage Fishermen's Museum opened in 1969 as a project of the Eastport Peninsula Committee for the Development of Progress. The purpose of the museum was to showcase the history of Salvage focussing particularly on the home life of a fishing family. The idea of a museum in an old house, typical of a traditional dwelling occupied by a fishing family before Confederation, was based on a model followed in Trinity, Trinity Bay. In the late 1960s the Trinity museum was the only museum in the province outside St. John's. A chief attraction was that the house itself (its setting, design, layout, and architecture) would serve as an important artifact to be preserved, displayed and interpreted, the dwelling

house being a vital part of the life of a fishing family (Handcock “Salvage Museum”).



*Fig. #16. Photo of the Salvage Fisherman's Museum c.1975. Photo by Gordon Handcock. Maritime History Archives, Dr. Gordon Handcock Slide Collection. PF-327.2775.*

The museum was described in a 1971 Maclean's magazine article as “enchanted”:

Based in an old home, the museum is financed by the community, furnished by the people around (the hand-lettered sign says, ‘It is strictly prohibited to be taking things out of its place as those things belong to other people’) and run by Wilfred and Ida Heffern, who live next door (Annesley et. al 1971).

The Heffern family continued on as curators and interpreters, as documented by the Newfoundland Historic Trust in a 1976 article:

In the first year of its operation, all the artifacts were laid around on tables and shelves without any real attempt to organize them and a visit to the museum was not unlike a fascinating afternoon in grandmother's attic. The first curators were the Hefferns, an older couple who lived next door and took the museum under their wing. They could see visitors coming from their window and would

come over and with the most evident pleasure explain the use and origin of the various objects in the collection. Mrs. [Ida] Heffern would give demonstrations on one of the old spinning wheels when things weren't too busy ("Salvage Museum").



*Fig. 17 Photo of Ida Jane Heffern spinning in the Fisherman's Museum, 1971. Decks Awash 1.7, pg 27.*

In addition to demonstrating spinning (see "Eastport"), Ida Heffern was a dyer of fabrics, also noted in 1976:

One of the Museum's exhibits contains samples of her hand-spun yarns, some of which are coloured with her own dyes. One of her favourites, and now mine, is 'mollyfodge,' a grey rock lichen which produces a deep rich chocolate brown which she uses on rags which were then hooked into rugs ("mollyfodge").

The museum closed for a time, and the elements started to take their toll on the building. Nancy Murphy purchased the neighbouring Heffern property, and seeing the museum go unopened for a few years, started a campaign to reopen it:

With little money available, and a front bridge rotted and fallen apart like an old dilapidated wharf, Murphy began working with then-mayor Gordon Janes and others in the town to begin restoring the property (Greenham 2018).



*Fig. #18 (left), #19 (right). Photos of deck renovations in 2016, with Nora Markin and Gord Janes. Photos by Allen Lorimer, Nora Markin, Patsy Janes, and Gord Janes.*

As a result of Nancy Murphy's efforts, a local museum committee was organised and, thanks to their successful restoration and campaign efforts, the museum was reopened 1 April 2016.

Part of this revitalisation process has included adding and updating a wooden walkway and porch area to the building in June 2016 in order to make it more accessible to visitors. In a great example of community solidarity and support, the deck and walkway actually came from another nearby building in Bishop's Harbour which had recently been dismantled by Alan Lorimer, Nora Markin, and Gord and Patsy Janes. According to Alan Pickersgill:

Gord and Alan with the help of Alan's little digger dragged the deck along the road from Bishop's Hr. and attached it to the side of the museum making it possible to use the door. (Pickersgill 2020)

Pickersgill quite rightly also pointed out that this type of addition and renovation speaks to a long history of Newfoundland renovation and remodelling based in reuse and recycling of local materials. Around the same time as this new shed was constructed on the property to be used for artefact storage and display.

In addition to present day Salvage residents, the museum has also benefited from the input of Anita Lane, granddaughter to Charles and Adelaide and daughter of Maxwell Lane. Anita Lane has contributed important information in an unpublished resource document she has compiled on her family history and the Lane/Heffern house property. The recent success of the Fisherman's Museum have had tangible community impacts as well. On 23 August 2018, for example, a Family Historical Day was held, which saw descendants of the Lane and Heffern families from as far away as Japan meet at the building (Greenham 2018). The property was designated a Registered Heritage Structure by Heritage NL in 2020 due to its historic and aesthetic value.

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