

Heritage Update



Heritage NL

News and Notes on Heritage NL's Built Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Programs
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Loss of traditional NL craft skills concerns local cultural organizations

Two of the province's leading cultural bodies are worried about a decline in traditional craft skills.

Newfoundland and Labrador is known for its traditions and culture, heritage skills, arts, and crafts. Some of those, like rug-hooking, have seen a resurgence in interest. Others, like birch broom making or Indigenous basket-making traditions, face an uncertain future.

Concerned about the loss of traditional know-how, Heritage NL and the Craft Council of NL are working to document these crafts at risk and developing a new funding program to encourage the sharing of heritage skills.

The Heritage NL Craft at Risk List 2021 features 55 crafts, 10 of which are listed as critically endangered. These include things such as bark tanning, harness making, and the fabrication of tin flat-bottom kettles. An additional 32 crafts are listed as endangered, while 12 crafts are listed as currently viable. One craft, rope making, is listed as having become extinct in the last generation.



Heritage NL Craft at Risk List 2021

<https://heritagenl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Craft-at-Risk-List-2021.pdf>

“The promotion and support of craft producers in the province is a vital part of maintaining and developing the cultural diversity that makes Newfoundland and Labrador unique,” says Rowena House, Executive Director of Craft Council of NL. “This furthers the preservation of traditional craftsmanship while pushing the boundaries of fine craft among the provincial producers.”

Recognizing the importance of tradition-bearers to the transmission of craft, Heritage NL has developed a new grant program designed to pass on these skills at risk. The new Mentor-Apprentice program has funds of up to \$10,000 per grant, split between a teacher/learner pair, to help maintain those crafts which the organizations have listed as either critically endangered or endangered.

Heritage NL Mentor-Apprentice Program

<https://heritagenl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Mentor-Apprentice-Program.pdf>

“One possible project could be a master boatbuilder taking on an apprentice during the construction of a regionally-specific boat type, for example,” says Dale Jarvis, Executive Director of Heritage NL. “Our staff will work with the mentor-apprentice team to help focus their final product, and to record and photograph their work for posterity.”

There are three deadlines for the pilot granting program, in December of this year, and February and April of 2022.

The project is supported by the Labour Market Partnerships program, Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Information on both the list and the granting program are available through the Heritage NL website - www.heritagenl.ca/programs/craft-at-risk



New Knitters in Torbay

By Lara Maynard

The Torbay Folk Arts Council has finished up its fall series of knitting lessons for registrants aged 12 and up. 16 people registered to learn casting on and off and patterns like moss stitch and sand stitch. Instructors also provided guidance with blocking or sewing up projects.

Marie Codner, a TFAC volunteer and one of the knitting instructors, says, "The group was knitting dish cloths, scarves, hats or sweaters. Our youngest knitter has almost finished a cat sweater! And we had two exchange students with us, from Germany and Spain, who thoroughly enjoyed themselves as well as getting to practise their English and being able to hear and understand ours."

Heritage NL was happy to partner on this traditional skill training and we hope that all the new knitters have many productive hours of knitting and purling ahead -- whether in Torbay, Germany or Spain!



Photos by Jeremy Harnum, Harnum Photography

How to Research Your Historic House (from Home) - a free webinar!

Join Michael Philpott, Heritage NL's Heritage Officer for a free webinar on the evening of December 1 to learn how to research your historic house or other old building from home. Michael will introduce attendees to online resources like digitized insurance plans, community directories and archives. And tell you how building forms and styles can help you





How to Research Your Historic House

When: Wednesday, Dec 1st, 2021
7:30-8:30 pm
Where: Zoom
Cost: Free
Register: heritagenl.eventbrite.ca

to determine the age of buildings or fill in research gaps.

Who should attend?: Owners or caretakers of old homes or other buildings, researchers, contractors who work on historic buildings, anyone with an interest in historic buildings

When: Wed, Dec 1, 7:30-8:30 pm

Where: Zoom

Cost: Free

Register: Via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/x/how-to-research-your-historic-house-tickets-207128054587>

If you need assistance registering or have questions, please email lara@heritagenl.ca.

Researching on Change Islands

By Andrea O'Brien

This October, Terra Barrett and I travelled to Change Islands to conduct a "People, Places & Culture" workshop with the Change Islands Heritage and Culture committee and local residents. The People, Places & Culture workshop is designed to assist communities in identifying their cultural assets and to consider ways to protect and develop them. The workshop explores opportunities for protecting, safeguarding and developing cultural assets. Participants also rank themes and clusters of cultural assets that emerge from the workshop.

Cultural assets ranked the highest priority at the Change Islands workshop included cemeteries, heritage skills, historic places, the invention of the Newfoundland cod trap, occupational folklore and calendar customs. Based on these themes, we suggested that the Change Islands Heritage and Culture committee focus on the following projects:

- 1) heritage skills inventory & workshops;
- 2) documentation of historic places; and
- 3) documentation of oral histories.

We look forward to working with the Change Islands Heritage and Culture committee as they implement suggestions contained in our report, which can be found on our website at

<https://heritagenl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-ChangeIslands-People-Places-Culture-Report.pdf>

Trinity Restoration Project

By Sarah Roberts

Hundreds of polaroid photographs from the Trinity Restoration Project collection are currently in the process of being digitized and uploaded to Memorial University's Digital Archives Initiative.

Legend holds that the town of Trinity, located in Trinity Bay, was visited by Portuguese explorer, Gaspar Corte Real, who came to the town's area on a Sunday in 1501, naming it "Trinity." Like many of Newfoundland's communities, the town was frequented by migratory fishermen by the end of the sixteenth century. For the town of Trinity and its surrounding areas, this led to them becoming important sites for fishing and mercantile activities, eventually leading to permanent settlement in the eighteenth century onwards.

The Trinity Restoration Project features the restoration of several buildings, primarily household dwellings, throughout Trinity in 1979 and into the early 1980s. Many of the buildings restored through this initiative date throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



Constructed circa 1900, this house was originally owned by John Lockyear and owned by George Lilly at the start of the project. Above, are two scanned polaroid photographs of the home following extensive restoration work. The following scanned polaroid photographs show the various stages of restoration that the building underwent to have its roof shingles replaced, clapboard replaced and repainted, and a replacement front wooden bridge to access the elevated front door.





The Post Office and Postmaster of North River

By Terra Barrett

Mary Long was born in her home in North River in 1934, and grew up in the community. She became a teacher and taught in various communities around the island. Mary went on to earn a Masters in Educational Psychology, and retired after many years with Mount Pearl Senior High.

Mary had two sisters and one brother, and she was the youngest of the four. Her parents were Elizabeth and Gregory Long. Her father, Gregory, was born in Labrador as his parents were fishing when he was born. Gregory was a fisherman but later worked with the Union Towns Electric Company. Mary's mother, Elizabeth died when she was eight years old. Her aunt, Mary St. Clair, who was her father's sister, helped raise her and was a surrogate mother. Her father's parents were Bridget (nee Morrissey) and John Long.

Outside of school and church, Mary remembers taking piano lessons with one of her teacher's at the priest's house. She also recalls that there were always children around to play a game of "May I" or tag and everybody seemed to have a homemade swing set. Mary said she would hear a lot of stories while doing her schoolwork at home. One thing that was often recalled was the post office which was once attached to the Long family home:

The post office, well [my grandfather, John Long,] was the postmaster and the postmaster meant there was a little space there, a little stove in it, a kerosene oil stove was the heat in that. Along with being the postmaster he had to go over to Clarke's Beach to get the mail. The mail came by train from St. John's. The central post office was Clarke's Beach not the one that is there now there was one in the back and three days a week it came and he would have to go over on his horse and slide or horse and dray or walk and come home and sort it. People would come right away to get their mail. That's what I was told. That's a story because it is before I was born, some of it. He was postmaster until he got hurt on the highway and

broke his leg. My aunt, who stayed here, was allowed to take over the post office for a while because it was postmaster and they called it a relieving officer. Relieving Officer meant glorified welfare but they didn't give out cheques for welfare they sent out a certain number of dollars and if you were the relieving officer you had to decide who should get them. If there was a new baby a person would come right away and say it's another mouth to feed. So it was a bit of responsibility. But in the depression they closed the small post offices and that I guess was 1929. It was never here when I was here but the building and the little stove was.

Terra Barrett interviewed Mary Long in her home in North River on June 22, 2021 as part of a North River community heritage project.



John Long, Bridget Long, Catherine Long, and grandmother Mary Hurley St. Clare. Long's house was built in the late 1800s. Attached post office can be seen to the right of the home.

Gregory and Mary Long St. Clare. The Long house was originally built by a pair of brothers and had double doors on the front. The attached post office can be seen to the right of the home.





Mary St. Clare, Mary Myles, Gregory Long, and Mary Long.

Research on the Parsons/Collis building, Harbour Grace By Michael Philpott

The Parsons/Collis building at 132 Water Street, Harbour Grace, was likely built following a fire that cleared the area in 1858. It was once one of three attached, two-storey commercial structures with steep gable roofs, a typical form for the period in both Harbour Grace and St. John's. By 1871 then-carpenter Simeon Henry Parsons (1844-1908) had purchased one or more of the buildings and was offering cabinetmaking, upholstery, and undertaking services from the premises.



The surviving Parsons/Collis building today. The exterior was remodelled in the late 1900s. Source: Sarah Roberts

After developing an interest in photography, Simeon handed off his other business to brothers Alexander B. (1847-1887) and Edward (1852-1929) and established a photography studio on the top floor. Simeon moved to St. John's in 1972 to practice photography full-time and would go on to capture perhaps the most extensive photographic record of the period. His brothers, meanwhile, continued to operate both the manufacturing business and studio.

With the establishment of Simeon's studio, or shortly thereafter, the middle building in the range of three was rebuilt with a third floor, mid-pitch roof, more ornate trim, and a large window on the second storey. By 1893 the eastern and western buildings were likewise raised or replaced to match the middle in height, roof pitch, and style.



The Parsons/Collis buildings are centre-frame with the raised unit clearly visible, circa 1870s. Source: Conception Bay Museum.

Edward and Susanna Parsons' son, Reuben T. (1878-1968), became director of A. & E. Parsons around 1906 and led the company for more than 50 years. Reuben was also a photographer and his photos of Harbour Grace are invaluable today.

By 1956 the company was "widely known and probably the oldest remaining firm in Harbour Grace" (*Daily News*). In 1940 the Parsons family sold the surviving building to Leslie Collis, though Reuben and Gertrude Parsons' son,

Graham Maxwell (Max), and wife Jean continued to operate out of the remaining two until 1971.



The expanded Parsons/Collis buildings standing after the fire of 1944. Source: Town of Harbour Grace

Leslie Collis purchased the easternmost Parsons building to expand a piano tuning and repair business begun by his father, Althelstan Lockyer Collis, around 1908. There Leslie established a piano showroom, repair, and finishing shop and, ultimately, a piano factory. To this end Collis had a large, one-storey addition built on the rear of the building circa 1940. Additional space for woodworking and refinishing was added circa 1960.

As business continued to grow the Collis family moved to St. John's, eventually opening seven stores across the Island. Leslie and Lillian Collis's son, Alastair, joined the family business in 1976 and took over following his father's death. The Collis family purchased the remaining Parsons buildings, using them primarily for storage until tearing them down circa 2000. With increasing international competition the Harbour Grace store and factory closed permanently in 2001, though production continued in St. John's until 2010.



As-built drawing of the side of the Parsons/Collis building with Leslie Collis's additions to the right. Source: Michael Phipott and Sarah Roberts

Following the closure of A.L. Collis & Son's, the Parsons/Collis building was used by former employee Mac Martin and business partner John Payne. The pair ran WoodArt Limited, a furniture refinishing company and subcontractor to Saunders and Howell, until the 2010s. It was briefly owned by a cabinetmaker before being turned over to the Town of Harbour Grace. Though remodelled in the late 1900s, the Parsons/Collis building retains a significant amount of original material and features speaking to over 100 years of manufacturing and cultural activity.



Job Posting: Heritage NL Social Media Intern

Do you like geeking out over heritage online? Are you passionate about people and their stories? Are you curious about the stories behind our historic places in Newfoundland and Labrador? We are looking for a Social Media Intern that is passionate and is looking to support the understanding of and appreciation for the built and intangible cultural heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador. The ideal applicant will be energetic, self-motivated, and will have strong organizational skills. One of the goals of the Youth in Heritage Program is to diversify and strengthen the cultural heritage sector. We encourage individuals who face barriers to employment to apply.

The Social Media intern will be responsible for assisting in day-to-day operations and management of content of the Heritage NL Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts. This position will be responsible for planning, creating, scheduling, and posting content for various heritage projects such as our designation program for historic places, and for our Craft at Risk Mentor/Apprentice programs and internships. Must be aged 15-30 and legally entitled to work in Canada. \$20/hour - 35 hrs per week.

Start date: 1/10/2022 End date: 3/31/2022

Send your resume and cover letter to ich@heritagenl.ca by December 6th.



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