

# Heritage Update

## News and Notes on the Heritage Foundation of NL's Built Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Programs

ISSN 2371-218X -- [ich@heritagefoundation.ca](mailto:ich@heritagefoundation.ca) -- Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador

### Heritage NL Develops a New Heritage Paint Colour Chart

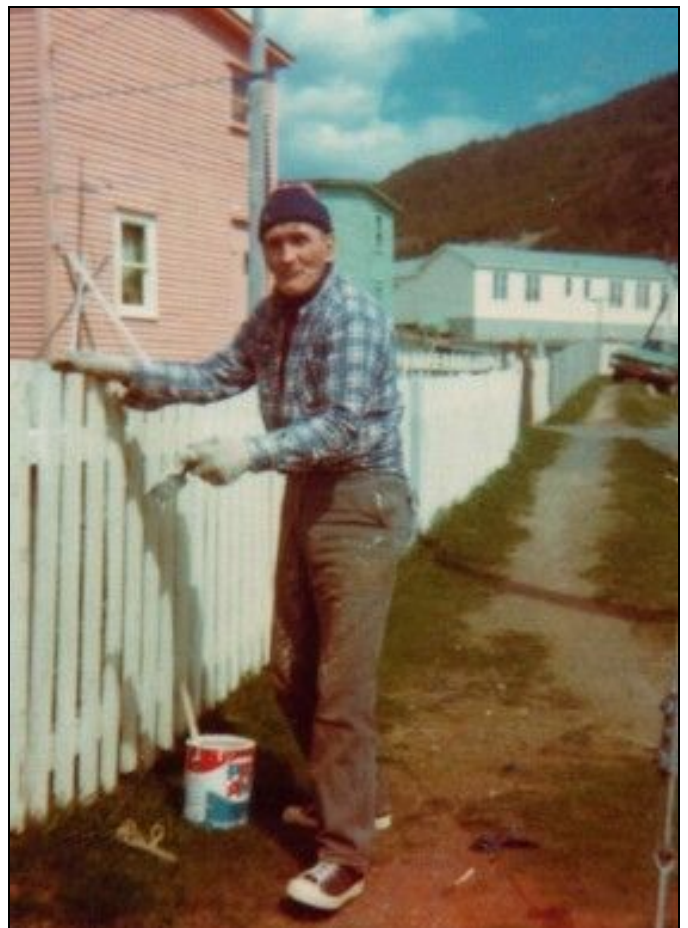
*By Jerry Dick*

When Matchless Paint closed shop a few years ago, the previous “Historic Colours of Newfoundland” paint chart – a collaboration between Heritage NL, Matchless Paints, and Templetons -- became outdated. The Matchless paint bases were simply no longer available to use the heritage paint formulas.

Heritage NL has formed a new partnership with The Paint Shop and Benjamin Moore Paints to develop a new set of heritage paint colours for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Based on extensive research, a new set of heritage colours reflects paint practices through the 19th and 20th centuries in the province. In the process we have all learned a lot about paint!

The new “Heritage Paint Colours of Newfoundland and Labrador” will be launched in the spring of 2020 and will include a web page with lots of additional information on the history of paint practices in the province and practical tips for researching historic paint finishes on one’s home and on making paint finishes last. Stay tuned!



*Photo: Mr Drover of Hodge's Cove, courtesy Southwest Arm Historical Society website.*

## Painting (and decorating) fisheries buildings.

*By Andrea O'Brien*

Today most fisheries buildings are painted but this wasn't always the case in the past. Many had bare, weathered board. Others were coated with a mixture of cod or seal oil and ochre powder which would tend to fade over time. White wash (lime mixed with water) was also used on fisheries buildings with common trim colours of red, yellow, orange or green. Large mercantile premises were usually kept neatly white-washed with contrasting trims, perhaps because larger firms could employ people to do the work.



Door decorations (sometimes referred to as hex marks or hex signs) were a common feature on outbuildings in many small communities. Many traditional stages and stores around the province had and still have these symbols painted on their doors. Traditional examples include circles, stars and geometric patterns. More recent symbols include maps of Newfoundland, most likely traced from stencils.

The use of door decorations on outbuildings is more common in some regions of the province than others. For example, along the northeast coast of the island, in places like Tilting and Joe Batt's Arm, almost every stage has a door decoration – most typically a circle. In the Great Northern Peninsula community of Conche, settled predominantly by Irish Catholics, crosses are a common motif.

Painting door decorations on outbuildings is one area of our provincial folk practice which has not been studied. One of the few references available suggests that they were a way to find buildings in the dark. It is rather far-fetched to think that men who could find fishing grounds through sophisticated methods of triangulation would get lost in their own yards. Correlations with Pennsylvania Dutch folk art on barns is also a stretch as these began appearing a continent away in the early 19th century.

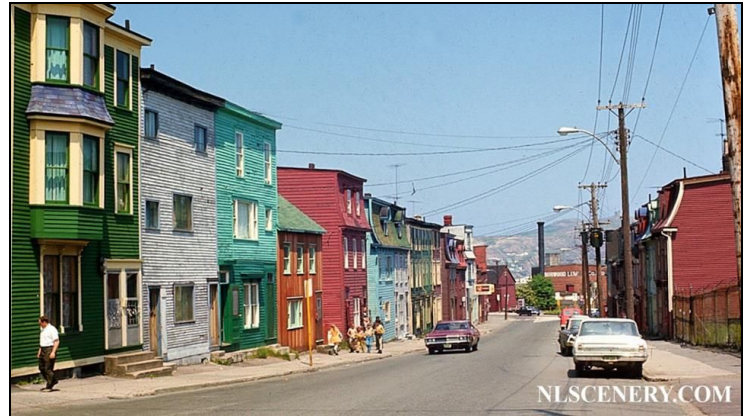
The most likely explanation for the origin of door decorations on outbuildings in the province is the essential human impulse to fancy things up or to add a little bling to otherwise plain buildings. Examples of modern designs (such as the map of Newfoundland, cod fish, anchors or stylistic initials of the owners) show that the desire to decorate common, plain buildings is still there.

## The Evolution of Historic Paint Colours in Newfoundland and Labrador

*By Jerry Dick*

To chart the history of paint and paint colours in Newfoundland and Labrador we rely on a variety of sources: investigations on existing heritage structures and; archival sources that include newspaper commercial ads for paint, government records on paint imports, references in diaries, and colour photographs dating from the mid-20th century.

The fact that most of our historic buildings were built with wooden clapboard meant that they were usually painted and that they could be any colour available to their owner at the time. Unlike places built of brick or stone, buildings here could be colourful and varied, a fact that Sir Cavendish Boyle, one-time governor of Newfoundland, commented on when he steamed into St. John's Harbour in 1901. Paint was not only decorative but served to protect wood from the harsh elements of wind, rain and sun. *(Photo, right: Hamilton Avenue 1971, from nls scenery.com)*



Until after World War II, the colour palette of the province's buildings was much more limited than today. Aside from marine oil-based red and yellow ochre paints and whitewash, early paints were usually expensive and generally required some skill to prepare.

Early interior pastel colours were often mixed with water (known as distemper paints). Deeper colours such as reds, blues and salmon were mixed with linseed oil and, in the Georgian era, were meant to evoke the deep rich colours of tapestries that hung on the walls of wealthy English home owners. In some of the finer structures of the Colony of Newfoundland, such as the Colonial Building and many churches, walls had complex paint finishes with different coloured glazes over a base paint or were skillfully rendered in faux finishes such as marble, granite or fine woods. For those that could afford it, interior wood trims, doors and even window sashes were painted in faux wood finishes such as oak, maple or mahogany.

In the first half of the 19th century many wooden buildings, particularly in rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador were either unpainted, whitewashed, or covered with red ochre paint. These colours were common for fishing structures while white was often found on houses, particularly in many rural parts of the province. When other colours became available, a single colour would generally be used on clapboard and trim although wealthier individuals might use a different trim colour.

The wooden buildings of St. John's right up until the 1970s were often painted dark colours such as deep (chrome) green, red, brown or grey, reputedly, because they better coped with the coal soot that flowed from most of the city's chimneys. According to reports there were also houses that were various shades of blue or pink in the city.

In the early 20th century, pre-mixed paints became available, particularly with the establishment of the paint division of Standard Manufacturing in St. John's in 1907. Yet even then, the colour palette remained limited.



With the introduction of custom paint tinting in the shop after World War II, customers could purchase virtually any colour they desired. Especially in the outports, pastel blues, yellows, greens and pinks were frequently used and, in many communities it was not uncommon to see the second storey of a home painted in a different colour from the lower portion (*Photo, left, Bar Haven, from Maritime History Archive resettlement collection*).

The 1970s and 80s, which saw the beginning of the revitalization of downtown St. John's, saw a significant expansion of the paint colour palette employed. Staff at the St. John's Heritage Foundation encouraged livelier colour schemes with one or more accent colours for

exterior trims and mouldings. For example, window, door and corner trims would be painted in a contrast colour to the main body of a building with a third or fourth accent color picking up window and door caps, brackets and doors.

Eventually, the term "jelly bean row" came into common usage to describe the brightly painted houses of the older city neighbourhoods, a label which may have originally been given to a 1970s townhouse development on Quidi Vidi Lake.

In the ensuing decades, restored and renovated older homes and fishing stages around the province came to employ a more diverse colour palette with contrasting colours for architectural detailing

## Hant's Harbour Post Office Adaptive Reuse

*By Patrick Handrigan*

As a Newfoundlander studying architecture in Toronto, I've always looked to my home province for inspiration in my designs. Whether it's our rugged, untouched landscape or our rich intangible values, something is always drawing me back to create pieces of work reflective of my heritage. This past summer, I was hired by Heritage NL to work as an Architectural Heritage Researcher. Since May, I have been researching and updating the Statements of Significance for our registered heritage properties across the province. Aside from my research papers however, I had the opportunity of helping put forth an architectural plan that combines my interest in design with my desire to shape the place I call home.

Working alongside executive director, Jerry Dick, and intern from the Tourism and Hospitality program at CONA, Andrew Maye; I was tasked with creating an architectural plan for the historic Hant's Harbour Post Office. This study was undertaken by the Heritage NL and Willow Tree Heritage Society to explore sustainable options for adaptive reuse. Built during the 1920s, the post office and telegraph centre was the central hub within the community. Residents would gather at the office, oftentimes twenty or more in the small entranceway, to hear important news or send mail. Clarence

Snook was the last postmaster of the office when it closed nearly fifty years ago. In a recent interview with Dale Jarvis, he reminisced on many stories of his time as the postmaster, looking back on his important role within the community. He would often inform residents on the seal fishery or wartime news and be responsible for aircraft detection throughout the Second World War. The post office was in operation until the 1960s and has remained vacant ever since.

Three options were considered for the 362sqft post office – a craft shop, vacation rental, and a tea room. Each option would require a full restoration of the existing building, as well as some utility and landscaping work. The ultimate goal for the post office was to create a stylish and sophisticated space that reflects the culture and tradition of outport Newfoundland. Taking inspiration from the Fogo Island Inn, each option features whitewash matched board sheathing and light wooden flooring. High ceilings and windows brighten the space while splashes of colour from the knit quilts and traditional furniture bring warmth to the room. Unique touches, such as



cubby-hole shelving, Morse-code inspired artwork, and historic photos reflect Hant's Harbour's rich past. In addition to the existing building, a new 190sqft wrap-around deck will provide a space for community gatherings, private dinners, and additional tea room seating.

The study was completed in July with further discussions slated for the near future.

## NL Heritage Craft at Risk

*By Rachael Green*

How many people do you know who can run a birch broom, weave a basket, or make a tea doll? Today, the practitioners of these heritage crafts seem to fewer in number, with fewer people having the knowledge of how to make the tools, objects, and crafts of yesteryear. Heritage NL and the Craft Council of NL are working to compile a list of makers, craft producers, and skills in decline.

The aim for this project is to assess the current viability of traditional heritage crafts in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to identify those crafts which are most at risk of disappearing. While doing this, we hope to create a list of heritage crafts in the province accompanied by information about each craft and whom may practice it.

### What is a "Heritage Craft"?

For the purposes of this research, we are using the definition developed by the UK-based Heritage Crafts

Association, which defines a heritage craft as “a practice which employs manual dexterity and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, design and techniques, and which has been practised for two or more successive generations” (*Photo: Joan Smith, Heart's Content*).



We have created a survey to collect information on heritage crafts in the province. The survey is used as a way to allow crafters, makers, and builders to give us feedback on the current state of heritage craft form they are most familiar with in Newfoundland and Labrador. Even if you don't consider yourself a craftsman we encourage anyone to participate with any knowledge you may have. This information is a great help to our project, and will be used to compile a list of those crafts most at threat. If you would like to complete the survey it can be found here: [www.heritagecraft.ca](http://www.heritagecraft.ca).

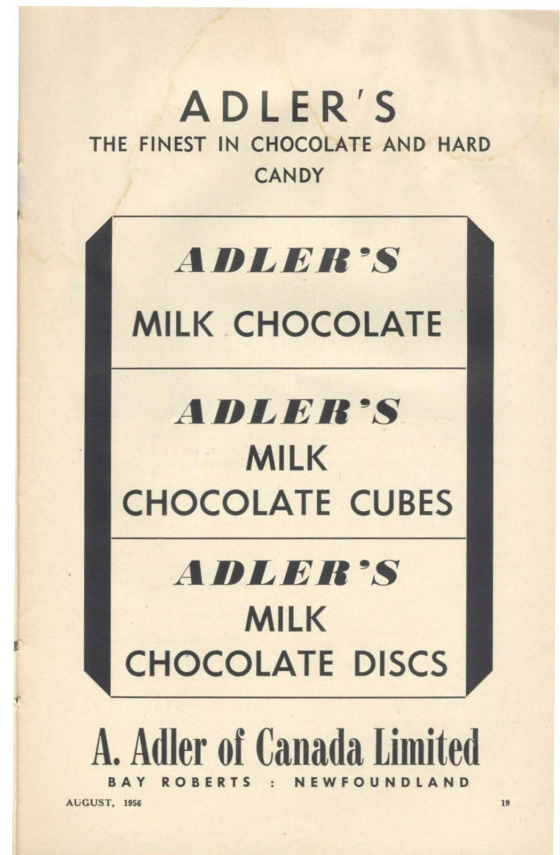
## The Ladies of the Adler's Chocolate Factory

*By Terra Barrett*

As part of Joey Smallwood's New Industries, he convinced Adolf Adler, an English chocolate maker, to shut down his factory in England and move it to Bay Roberts. Following confederation with Canada in 1949, Smallwood's motto was, "Develop or perish" and he pushed for economic development in the province through the establishment of new industrial plants. These plants included everything from a cement plant on the west coast to the Brigus knitting mill.

On April 21, 1955, Premier Joey Smallwood announced the establishment of Adler's Chocolate Factory at Bay Roberts with the help of a government loan of \$500,000. In June 1955, the Daily News reported:

"It is understood that some 100 persons will be employed in the plant. Approximately 73 of these will be girls, who will be producing the lovely Rhapsody line of chocolates, sugar candies, chocolate covered nuts, biscuit bars and all other chocolate lines which Adlers formerly produced in their plant on Nile Street, London."



By the end of February 1956, the first commercial production of chocolate bars was underway, and by April the factory employed about 30 people, mostly women. The Newfoundland Journal of Commerce wrote a glowing review of the facility in 1958, noting:

"It is spotless just as a food plant should be, no doubt it is a shining example of how clean a food-manufacturing concern can be. The plant is geared to greater output than at present and can produce tons of chocolates and candy every week. All ingredients are mixed by machinery so that the human hand does not come in contact at any time with the product. The female help all wear smocks and head and hand coverings."

An article titled "New industries in Conception Bay" published March 1957, in The Newfoundland Quarterly outlined:

"Mainland visitors have recently commented how impressed they were with Adler's chocolate bars and in fact were taking some back to their families. One visitor, according to the Sunday Herald, commented that "the chocolate in Adler's ten cent bar was better than anything he had ever tasted, including Swiss chocolate," which is supposed to be the best in

the world. This is high praise for a locally manufactured product, and it would appear that Adler's is off to a good start.”

Known for its chocolate production, the factory also produced candy, and looked into the erection of a potato chip plant adjacent to the chocolate factory. In spite of claims of increasing chocolate sales, however, the future did not look so sweet for the company. Market problems combined with the loss of the factory roof in a freak storm resulted in its closure by the early 1960s owing \$891,875.72 in a government guaranteed loan.

After the chocolate factory's closure, the government attempted to sell the building. Several companies and organizations considered purchasing the building including a biscuit and candy maker, a pie filler and cake mix producer, and a school. Regrettably, the building caught fire on July 10, 1969 before it was sold and an insurance payout was received in 1970.

Although, the chocolate factory was not a long running business in Bay Roberts, the memory of the chocolate still lingers. Local ladies tell stories of the smocks and hair coverings they wore, and swap the secrets of the Nut King bar. The location of the chocolate factory hosts a new ball field, but the stories of the Bay Roberts chocolate factory remain. Homage is paid to A. Adler, through Adler Place, a small cul-de-sac where the factory once sat.

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