



folk belief & legends

of bay roberts & area

Edited by Lisa Wilson

Illustrations by Graham Blair



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Foreword by Dale Jarvis

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In cooperation with the
Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
and the Bay Roberts Cultural Foundation Inc.
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foreword

my late father-in-law, George Jones, was born in Riverhead, Brigus, but his grandfather was one of the Littlejohns of Coley's Point. As a boy, George would walk from Brigus to Coley's Point to visit his grandparents. His pop would fill his head with ghost stories, in preparation for the long walk back to Brigus in the dark.

"There is a ghostly funeral there, every morning at 4 am," George would tell me, every time we drove from Clarke's Beach down to Bay Roberts, pointing at the cemetery at the top of the hill between North River and Bay Roberts. "My grandfather told me that." And now, every time I drive past that graveyard, even in the safety of daylight, I remember that story, and his retelling of it. I don't know if he believed it, but it was a story that had lingered in his memory for all those years, and which now will linger in mine.

The Bay Roberts area is rich in folklore, legends, traditional cures, fairy stories and folk beliefs. While electric streetlights and fast-moving cars may mean that the spirits haunting old cemeteries are less

likely to be seen these days, the old stories still exist. But like phantoms, stories are ethereal, intangible things. They can easily slip from sight, and from memory. They need to be coaxed forth, and shared and retold if they are to continue from one generation to the next.

This process of sharing stories and traditional knowledge is what folklorists like myself call “transmission” and it is a process that is an important part of the work of the Bay Roberts Cultural Foundation Inc., and the Intangible Cultural Heritage office of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador. Together, our two organizations have been working on documenting the folk beliefs and legends of the area in the hope that this knowledge will be transmitted onward, to the next generation of tradition bearers.

The stories in this collection come from a couple of different sources. Many were contributed by the students of Mrs. Kimberley Welsh at Ascension Collegiate in Bay Roberts. Folklorist Lisa Wilson and myself visited the school, talking about local folklore and supernatural belief. We talked with the students about doing primary folklore research. To help them out, we developed a one-page questionnaire, for them to take home and use while interviewing parents, family members, friends, or neighbours. They came back to us laden down with stories, many of which are presented in this booklet. The other stories here were taken from a series of oral histories conducted by Lisa Wilson, largely with seniors from the Bay Roberts area.

We are certain that this collection represents only a small part of the oral traditions of the region, and that there are many more stories out there waiting to be told. We’ve included the questionnaire at the end of the book, hoping that you will go out, ask some questions, and tell some stories of your own.

Happy hunting and sharing!

DALE JARVIS

Intangible Cultural Heritage Development Officer
Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador



“My pop had a friend who was believed to be the seventh son of the seventh son. It was believed that he had healing powers for almost anything.”

— *Eve Williamson, Bareneed*

during the 12 days of Christmas Betty Jerrett’s grandmother used to visit 12 friends, in 12 different households, to collect 12 pieces of Christmas cake. This was done to ensure that she had good luck throughout the 12 months of the year. Traditions such as these, based on superstitious belief, often helped to shape certain behaviors in outport

communities. While superstitions are less common now, some people still do their best to avoid bad luck. Here are some other examples of superstitious belief provided by residents of the region.

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“Exit through the same door you entered from on Fridays, or bad luck ensues.”

— Olivia Bradbury, Bryant’s Cove

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“The seventh son of the seventh son could cure and kill things.”

— Cassidy Mercer, Spaniard’s Bay

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“Before someone’s death or a bad happening (mostly leading to death), Nan says she can see a face on the tree. Within a span of three to four days, they will be dead or critically ill.”

— Cassidy Mercer, Spaniard’s Bay

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“Cross your socks when you take them off before bed to prevent bad dreams.”

— Olivia Bradbury, Bryant’s Cove

“You didn’t like a black cat crossing in front of you. And the crows, even now, if we’re driving we’ll cross out the crows. Just your finger like this and cross the air. I’ll say lots of times when we’re out I’ll say, “They’ll think we’re nuts, b’y”. ”

— Gerald French, Bay Roberts

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“I’ve been crossing out single flying crows that cross my path for over 40 years, whether driving in my town or on the TCH. Here’s the rhyme that goes with it: “One for sorrow, two for joy, three for a kiss, four for a boy, five for silver, six for gold, seven for a story that’s never been told.” My cousin who lives in South River told me that when I was about five years old, and warned me to cross out all the single crows because they brought bad luck (sorrow), but anything more than that is okay.”

— Paula Roberts, Clarenville

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“My nan and pop are visiting from the South West Coast (Port-Aux-Basque) and I asked them about some of the superstitions that were popular when they were younger. Nan told me that when she was little, if there was thunder and lightning, my great nan would cover the mirrors with towels or blankets and open the windows. The reason for doing this was to keep the lightning from reflecting off the mirrors and possibly catching something on fire. The windows were left open so that if the lightning did come in, it had a way to escape. My nan told me they were the first house in their community to have a phone. Nan remembers lightning coming in through the window and hitting the phone. It really blew the phone to the opposite side of the house. Nan couldn’t believe that the phone was literally pulled off the wall and thrown to the other end of the house. The covering of the mirrors and opening windows is

no longer done during thunder and lightning storms. It got lost through generations.”

— Charlie Spicer, Bay Roberts

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“My sister, she was born on Friday the 13th, she’s very superstitious about the 13th if it came on a Friday. It was always supposed to be an unlucky day.”

— Eliza French, Bay Roberts

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“Weather lights, only what we call galls, like a short rainbow, that’s against a certain weather. They only come up so far. Wind galls they calls them. With all the wind we’re having there must be some of them around now. Always weather signs, oh yes. The weather signs, that’s what they went by. They didn’t have... only a weather glass and a lot of people didn’t have that. That’s how they sailed to the Labrador. Just by their knowledge. They never went to any navigation school, and some of them couldn’t sign their own name. They didn’t have the opportunity.”

— Greta Hussey, Port de Grave

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“The weather lights used to be seen when people were out getting caplin early in the morning or late in the night. The light would come down over the Port-de-Grave hills and disappear in the water.”

— Sarah Barrett, Coley’s Point



cures & remedies

“I heard that if you had a sty on your eye you take a gold ring and cross your eye, it would go away.”

— *Brittany Roberts, Brigus*

Old time remedies and cures have been handed down through the generations to tell us how to ease the pain and discomfort of certain illnesses. Whether it's a cure based on superstitious belief or an herbal remedy from local plants, these traditional practices can inform us about some of the ways that people coped in times when

health care was scarce due to isolation. During a visit with Greta Hussey of Port de Grave, she remembered a number of remedies that her family would use when she was a child. Dockwood for instance, can be used to treat the burns from a run-in with stinging nettle. “You just rub dockwood leaves together to create a juice,” she explained, “and then rub the juice on the burn.” And that is just one of many that she had to share...

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“Oh sure, that’s all we used at one time. You had to pay a doctor and nobody had any money. For instance, I’ll give you a demonstration, see that scar there? I scalded that by reaching over one pot into another one, and now, there used to be water running out of that. In the night, I got a raw potato, this is what an old gentleman in Hibb’s Cove told me, and put on it. Draws the fire out and it looks like it’s doing a fine job. That’s one remedy we used, and Maxine my daughter, she scalded her leg. Now, I grated the potato on that, put a patch over it. Never had a problem afterwards with it.”

— Greta Hussey, Port de Grave

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“There was hardly a day while I was going to school where I didn’t have a nosebleed. I don’t know why it was. There was an old lady said to me, she said “Gus, if you can get a girl to give you a piece of green ribbon to put around your neck,” she said, “your nose bleeds will be over.” I said, “How come?” She said “I can’t tell you how come but I’m telling you what to do to stop it. Anyway, I said to this girl about what the old lady told me, and she gave me the piece of green ribbon and tied a knot to it around my neck and I never had a nosebleed after.”

— Gus Menchions, Spaniard’s Bay

“I have picked to do my write-up on special charms, superstitions and remedies that are used in my community, Coley’s Point. I have known a few of them, but I went to my grandparents to see if they knew any more, and they knew a lot of them. They said that there are several people in the community who can charm warts away. There is another story that says that if you put milk on a wart and let a black dog lick it off, it would take away the wart. Some people can charm toothaches by writing something on a piece of paper and then they would tell you not to look at it and the toothache would get better. Also a remedy for curing hiccups is to hold your breath and take ten sips of water or if someone frightens you they will go away. Wear white socks to bed to cure cramps in your legs. For cuts you could take some turpentine off a tree and wrap it up around the cut or they would cut off a piece of chewing tobacco and wrap that around the cut. My grandparents Gertie and Clayton Russell helped me with this project. They were both born in Coley’s Point and still live there today.”

— Sarah Barrett, Coley’s Point

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“Oh yes, that’s all they used back in them days. Goose grease and camphorated oil when you get a cold on your chest. You’d be greasy for a month. You cook a goose anytime for the winter, and you save the fat from it, and render it out. Then they used to put the camphorated oil with it and I’m telling you, you didn’t have a cold too long. You weren’t tight on your chest too long when that started to work.”

— Alice Mercer, Clarke’s Beach

“Mix Buckley’s and kerosene oil, drink, and it’s supposed to clear lungs. Rub goose grease on your chest for a cold. Bread poultice is for an infection.”

— Olivia Bradbury, Bryant’s Cove

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“If you had a pimple or wart or an infection you’d put a poultice on it and it would clear the infection. Poultice: a piece of bread boiled and warmed and wrapped in gauze.”

— Brandon Cross, Shearstown

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“If you had an infection on your skin you would mix bread, salt and hot water. It’s called a poultice. Wrap it around the infection and it would dry the infection out.”

— Brittany Corbett, Clarke’s Beach

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“Years ago people would make bread poultice (bread and milk) to heal boils and skin infections. It would help pull toxins from the skin.”

— Jordan Coombs, Bryant’s Cove

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“Stinging nettle soup or tea can be used as a blood cleaner.”

— Rex Hussey, Port de Grave

“Pop got a hook in the arm, it got infected. Pop’s father took him to a little community in Labrador. The doctor said he will probably need his arm amputated. Went back to where they were fishing, put a bread poultice on his cut, and put maggots on arm. When took off maggots, had all the infection gone and he was fine.”

— Cassidy Mercer, Spaniard’s Bay

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“Simple things for the ordinary boils. Fishermen had sores called pups on their wrists with the chafing with the oil clothes and we used to make various poultices: flour and molasses, and one thing and another, and put on it. But we found an instant cure for it: they used to get Sloan’s Liniment then. You can’t buy it now, I suppose you might in the States. Open the pustule, put it on, and no more pups, thank god. Pups they were called, water whelps. Some called them water whelps, but they were boils on the wrists. Home remedies, and I’ve seen them using... everybody smoked then, they smoked leaf tobacco, you know, the plugs of tobacco and I’ve seen them peel off the outer skin to stop the blood, on their hands.”

— Greta Hussey, Port de Grave

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“Ginger, it’s a remedy for pain. You have a toothache, so you take a little bit of gauze, and you put a little bit of ginger, fold it over, and just lay it on your gum and the pain will go.”

— Audrey Sparkes, Bay Roberts

“I haven’t used ginger for ages. My grandmother used to take it, probably about that long, fold in gauze, make sure you wet it. Don’t put it in your mouth dry. You’ve got to mix it. You put it in a cloth with a couple stitches in to make a little bag, about that long probably, and put it on your gum. Debbie come out here two or three years ago, and she had a toothache and I said, “I’ll do something Grandmother did 40 years ago.” I made one, put it on, and next thing she was here asleep.”

— Wilbur Sparkes, Bay Roberts

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“Wilbur’s father had very bad arthritis, and his vein used to knot in his arm and then would be useless. So anyways, this night he was stoking up the stove because we had a coal stove and he said, “Everybody go to bed now. I’m not going to bed because my arm is painin’.” So we made this big poultice, put it on. We got a big scarf, put it on, strapped it to his body. “Now Dad,” we said, “go to bed.” So he went to bed and went to sleep, when he woke up in the morning, the pain was gone. His arm was a bit stiff but as the day went on his arm, you know, the motion came back in his arm.”

— Audrey Sparkes, Bay Roberts

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“We also used to use the soft bread poultices. Just soak a piece of bread and put it in... with a bit of sugar on it. We used to use that you know, years ago. That would draw it out. They knew a lot of stuff years ago. My grandfather and them knew, they knew. Juniper for instance, not juniper the big trees, but the low-lying juniper with the blue-looking berries. When you’re picking for blueberries, watch yourself. Well every year he’d go down and pick so much of that. And when the cows would calf, that’s what he’d give them. Boil that up, some of that, and that was

a present cure. Juniper. But all that stuff, I don't know. I often wonder what juniper would do. ... They had their own beliefs, they believed that this was good, and that was good. I'm not an expert on it, but I know my grandmother, ginger and stuff like that, she was right in the middle of it.”

— Wilbur Sparkes, Bay Roberts

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“They'd rub in mustard. You'd rub your throat with it if you had a bad cold. Some would make mustard plasters but you had to be careful with them and I didn't know too much about them. I know my sister used to use them.”

— Greta Hussey, Port de Grave

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“Placing advil in your sock can cure headaches.”

— Quintin Parsons, Bay Roberts

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“I remembers my grandmother and my grandfather French. They were Frenchs, and I remembers mom telling one time, she had the mumps and her throat, she couldn't swallow. Anyway, doctor came over and that's what he told her. I remembers Mom telling me how this old lady came in and lived just out the road from them and she said, “Nate, go out and get a bucket of small potatoes.” And Mom said, “I had no idea. I was about 11 or 12 and I had no idea what they were going to do.” But they boiled them and she said they made what they called a plaster, a poultice, and put it around her neck. In this day and age you don't hear

tell of mumps, I had them one time. And when they wouldn't use that, they'd put slices of fat pork. They'd boil it in hot water, sprinkle pepper over it and put this up around your throat. This was supposed to keep the glands softened. Whether it done any good, or whether it did, I don't know."

— Olive Strickland, Spaniard's Bay

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"Now, on times, I think I must have been born like it. Anyhow, I got a cold. I wasn't very old. I must have been a year old, and my grandmother, my dad's mother was living with us at that time. She said to my mother, "Elsie, she's going to die anyhow, she's going to choke with that cold on her chest she's got. So," she said, "can I try an old time remedy?" And Mother said, "I don't care what you try as long as you save her." So she mixed up molasses and a little tiny drop of kerosene oil from the lamp, because in them days they used lamps to light the houses. Just a drop or two in the drop of molasses. Boiled it, and when it cooled, gave me a taste. And Mom said I was no time and that got down in my stomach. When I coughed, and believe you me, she says I coughed up a load. So yes, lots of old time remedies."

— Alice Mercer, Clarke's Beach

cures for warts

"There was an old woman in Island Cove who took away warts by saying words."

— Morgan Hayes, Ascension Collegiate

“Cut a potato in half. Bury one half and forget about it. The wart goes away.”

— Olivia Bradbury, Bryant’s Cove

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“There was an old lady in the community that would ‘charm’ away warts. She never did tell anybody how she did it, and the people she done it for didn’t tell anyone either.”

— Ryan Adams, Upper Island Cove

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“Rub a potato peel over your wart, put it in a paper bag, then throw it away. The wart will disappear.”

— Josh Russell, Bay Roberts

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“My nan had a friend who she would call and ask to make her daughter’s warts go away and the next day they would be gone. Therefore my nan thought she was a witch.”

— Josh Russell, Bay Roberts

“There is a very very old lady who once lived in Island Cove and people believed that she could cure diseases and could ward off evil spirits. She could also remove warts from people’s hands and cure toothaches. For these reasons she was considered to be a witch.”

— Jesse Rideout, Upper Island Cove

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“The old lady that lived in our community used charms to remove warts. She put chalk markings on the back of the stove and she said as the marks go away, so will the warts.”

— Jesse Rideout, Upper Island Cove

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“Go to a grave of a family member who had most recently died. For however many warts you have, pick up a rock for each wart. Put the rocks in a paper bag and then throw the bag away. Your warts will then disappear.”

— Shelby Batten, Bareneed

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“Throwing salt over your shoulder to get rid of warts.”

— Selina Seymour, Bareneed



“This ship, on a foggy night, can be seen out in the bay with people jumping overboard.”

— Alicia Linthorne, *Upper Island Cove*

The Badcocks of the east end of Bay Roberts were one of the first families in their community to have electricity. Around this time, most households were still using lamps to light up their kitchens. Many residents of the community can still recall when friends and family would crowd together by the lamplight to tell stories into the night... and some of these stories were ghost stories. Tales of ghost ships sailing past, abandoned houses with shutters flapping in the night, and women in white roaming on the cliffs, searching for something they'll never find. Some of these stories seem to be supernatural in nature, while others

could be explained away as a trick of the light. As Wilbur Sparkes said, "You have to remember, there was no light in Bay Roberts then." He then went on to repeat something he once heard: "A man told me this, he said: I'll tell you about the ghosts. All the ghosts left when the electric lights came. Now there's a bit of psychology." But as you will see from the stories here, not everyone would agree that all the ghosts left when the streetlights arrived.

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“It was in June and this old man died up here in Mosdell’s Lane and my grandfather, they were fishing, so my grandfather come up to the wake. Well you know where Mosdell’s Lane is here, just below the church, handy to the church. So at about 2 o’clock in the morning, they were going fishing, so he had to go home. He left there at 2 o’clock, right here at Mosdell’s Lane, and he walked down the front road. When he get half-way down the front road, it was a beautiful night, moon shining, he said you could read a book. When he got on top of Aunt Jane Churchill’s hill, we used to call it, the house was up in the garden. That was an expensive house at one time. We used to play hide and seek around there when we were going to school, get down there, throwing rocks, we’d be hiding away from the rocks. But anyway, when he got on top of the hill, when he looked down, right down at the bottom of the hill, there was this white thing, and he stopped. And he said, “Now, that’s the Devil,” he said, “trying to tempt me. But,” he said, “I’m going on.” Anyway, he come on down and when he got there this thing was standing on the bank, looking out at the water. When he got up to it he said “Goodnight.” No answer. So he went back by about 10 feet. “Well,” he said “I’m not going home till I find out what it is.” And when he went back, this was Aunt Jane Churchill, out in her night clothes. Not one thing on, only white. White nightdress, white shawl on her head. Imagine. That was the idea of some of the ghosts that they saw. He always used to tell that.”

— Wilbur Sparkes, Bay Roberts

“My mother was telling me one time that they were at a dance in Spaniard’s Bay. There was a girl at the dance who apparently wasn’t all that attractive to males, and she mentions, she says, “I would dance with the devil himself tonight, if he was here.” A few minutes later, this guy came along and asked her for a dance. And when they were dancing the waltz she looked down and he had hooves.”

— Mike Flynn, Bay Roberts

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“Now, I don’t know too much about her, but she was the mail boat going from Holyrood to Bell Island and she caught on fire and burned but they got her in one of the beaches on Kelly’s Island near the cross... you know there’s big Bell Island, little Bell Island, and Kelly’s Island. Kelly’s Island is the farthest one up. That’s why she was bringing the mail down, because people lived there. There’s a woman in Hibb’s Cove taught school on that island one time, they tell me. And the boat, she caught fire and afterwards they would see her ghost coming down the bay. It was common knowledge for people. My father was out and he looked and says, “Oh, there’s the Blue Jacket coming,” and he’d swear she’d cut him down before they got to where she was going down. Now you don’t know what lights in the bay, really, but there was a girl married just down next door to us, and the Blue Jacket was seen that night. Because you could see it from our door in Hibb’s Cove. Since then I’ve often wondered about, there’s woman called out, probably eight or ten years ago, and she said, “There’s a boat and fire out in the bay!” They searched and couldn’t see a thing. We hadn’t known about the other one that could’ve been because of course there would have been a search and rescue out. They did go out I think, but there was nothing to be seen and nobody reported. So who knows, that you can only surmise. But the other with my father...”

— Greta Hussey, Port de Grave

“They said another night, there was a man going in through Barnes Road and it was that dark he said, “I wish Jack o’ Lantern would come and light for me!” And you know, this big light come and he got such a fright.”

— Gerald French, Bay Roberts

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“This story is called *Ghost of the Church Hall Basement* and it was told to me by my father Wade Bradbury, who is 45 years old. It was about 10 years ago. Two workers were seeing to repairs in the church hall basement in Bryant’s Cove. After several hours, one worker said goodbye to the other and left to go home for the day. Not long after, this worker came to the realization that he had forgotten his lunch can, so he returned to the building to retrieve it. Upon entering the dim, empty basement he saw his partner standing with his back to him. Thinking he’d forgotten something also, he called out his name. When the figure turned, he saw that it was not his partner at all. It was an old wrinkled man with long wispy hair. The worker could see right through him to the back wall. After the experience the man would not return to work for weeks. However, he faced an abundance of ridicule for his fear and returned to work out of humility. He never spoke of any more paranormal events.”

— Olivia Bradbury, Bryant’s Cove

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“This story took place in Upper Island Cove. Once there were two fishermen. They were very good friends and one winter, one of the fishermen found himself without any food and he was sure to starve. Before spring came around, his buddy shared half of his only barrel of flour, which kept him from dying. The following spring, the man who

received the flour had been fishing and had struck a jagged rock off the coast of Island Cove and drowned in the sinking of the ship. About a week after, his friend who gave his friend the flour was fishing in the same area his friend died at. The fog rolled in over his boat and he could see very little and didn't know where he was going. Suddenly a large light flashed in the water near the rocks where his friend drowned. A ghostly figure of his friend appeared and said to him, "The rocks, the rocks," in a very ghostly voice. The fisherman always said that his friend repaid him for the flour by saving his life."

— Jesse Rideout, Upper Island Cove

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"In Bryant's Cove, there is an old school that is now over 100 years old. It is said to be built on an indian burial ground. On some nights when you are walking or driving by, the lights will turn on but there is nobody inside. A long time ago when a student was in school, he went down to the basement and looked in one of the closets and when he opened the closet door, he seen a man inside. The student was so scared that he never went back to that school. Also, one night while a group of people were outside the building, a couple of years ago, they looked in one of the windows and they seen a figure looking down at them through the window."

— Jordan Coombs, Bryant's Cove

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"In Butlerville it's believed that there was a man who hung himself and if you go to that spot at a certain date and time, you can see him getting ready to hang himself and then doing it."

— Eve Williamson, Bareneed

“Muddy Hole, Shearstown. Many of years ago a man hung himself on a tree. They have the tree cut down now but apparently if you go down there at night sometimes you can see him hanging himself and if you look away he will pop up behind you.”

— Brandon Cross, Shearstown

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“In Bareneed just up the road from my house there is an old woman believed to be a witch. They believe that, because a neighbour said they saw her set her yard on fire and then she called the dead. But the next morning her yard was fine.”

— Eve Williamson, Bareneed

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“There was an old lady named Ms. Tilley who lived in my great uncle’s house now, but the lady who lived there before died in it. One night my mom and dad were babysitting my cousins and they heard the back door open, chairs moving in the kitchen. They went to see if it was my uncle but nobody was there. They went back into the living room to finish watching their movie. Then they heard footsteps in the hallway and the bathroom door shut. They only thought of it as the wind, and continued watching the movie. Then the next morning my father told my grandmother. She said that old Ms. Tilley’s ghost had visited my mom and dad that night. My father asked my great uncle about her and he said that she visits them every night.”

— Brittany Corbett, Clarke’s Beach

“At Clarke’s Beach Pond where the metal bridge is, there is a hill that leads into a pond and behind is a forest where dirtbikes and quads go past. Years ago a lady was kneeled down by the pond washing her old clothes because back then there was no washing machines to clean your clothes like there is today. She lost balance and fell into the pond and because she didn’t know how to swim, she had drowned. It is said that if you go on the bridge where you can see where she drowned you can see her ghost with red eyes on the hill washing clothes.”

— Josh Russell, Ascension Collegiate

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“The trestle in North River was known to be haunted. In the night you should stay away because there was a girl killed on it. She haunts the trestle and she will try and kill you.”

— Brittany Corbett, Clarke’s Beach

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“My scary story is when me and my family were in the Carbonear Hospital before my nan passed away. We were all sitting around nan’s hospital bed trying to get over the fact that nan never had much time left. So we decided to turn on the radio which was unplugged. As mom was walking over to the radio to plug it in and turn it on, all the lights in the room flashed and the unplugged radio played my nan and pop’s wedding song.”

— Brady Titford, Spaniard’s Bay

“Down at the east end of Bay Roberts past my house, there is a hill/cliff called White Rock. People say that it is haunted by a woman in white. Apparently a woman floats down and over the cliff and crosses the road into the marsh, but the only time you can see her is pretty late at night.”

— Kyle Mercer, Bay Roberts

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“Catherine Snow was a young woman who married John William Snow. They lived in Barneed near Port de Grave. Their marriage however was told to be unhappy and the couple had frequent fights. According to reports, Catherine would fight back and throw things at her husband. Then one night John Snow disappeared. The neighbours had suspicions that he had been murdered. There was an investigation and dried blood was found at John Snow’s fishing stage. Once the investigation was finished Catherine Snow was convicted with murder and was given a death sentence. Catherine was the last woman to be hanged in Newfoundland, and even up to the very moment she was killed she vowed that she was not guilty of her husband’s murder. My nan lives in Bareneed and has all her life. My nan is now 66 years old but when she was a little girl she was always told to watch out for Aunt Kit on Dick’s Hill in Bareneed. Aunt Kit is the ghost of Catherine Snow. People of Bareneed said that at night you would see Catherine Snow in a white gown walking around Dick’s Hill, the hill where her and her husband John had lived. People believed that she would walk the hill in search of what happened to her husband to prove herself not guilty.”

— Shelby Batten, Bareneed

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“A local ship story that I heard was about an old schooner that was anchored off in Harbour Grace a long time ago. People thought it was

haunted because on some nights when you would go by the schooner, you would see a light in the wheelhouse, but nobody was on it so they said it was haunted.”

— Jordan Coombs, Bryant’s Cove

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“It is said that a fisherman’s wife would go down to the dock and wait for him to come back everyday even though he died in a shipwreck. One day someone saw a man walk towards the woman and sit down, five minutes later they had both disappeared.”

— Eve Williamson, Bareneed

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“There used to be the front road school and we went up to our W.A. meeting, myself and two other ladies. See, I had just moved. I wasn’t familiar with anything. We were walking home and there’s a rock there, Wilbur knows where it is, and it was called the drummers rock. And we’re walking home and it is a wild night, and this noise, and one said to the other, “The drummer is playing on the rock tonight.” I was ready to fly but I just walked on with them.”

— Audrey Sparkes, Bay Roberts

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“A rock on Bareneed Road near where the Dawe building is now. There was a grove of trees behind the rock. People walking by late at night said they would see a white dog and they would be pushed down or knocked off their bikes.”

— Sarah Barrett, Coley’s Point

“Apparently a boat ran aground and a dog died in Coley’s Point. It is said some people sometimes hear or see the dog.”

— Courtney French, Coley’s Point

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“The cliff in Butlerville. Said to have been a baby left there by its mother one summer. Eventually it died and now it’s said on summer nights you can catch the baby crying.”

— Emilee Butler, Shearstown

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“There is said to be a woman who died and was buried in the Harbour Hill Graveyard. She got up from her grave, walked around the headstones, then jumped off the Port de Grave cliff. Told by Gilbert Russell from Bay Roberts, age 58.”

— Josh Russell, Clarke’s Beach

“On Island Cove’s shores there is a massive rock formation. In the early 1800s a fishing vessel struck the rocks and everybody on board died. It has been said that on misty, foggy nights sailors walk through the valleys of Upper Island Cove looking for their fellow sailors.”

— Jesse Rideout, Upper Island Cove

“The church hall basement in Bryant’s Cove is rumoured to be haunted. And a house on Flings Lane one night during a card game, there was talk that the devil walked in.”

— Ryan Adams, Upper Island Cove

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“I remember I was out first year teaching, in ‘47, and Uncle Cleveland Green, he sat down at the ghost stories and he’d make himself afraid, and never told one word of truth in his life. The White Rock, do you know where the White Rock is? Down on the Back Road, it’s still there, I could show where it is. There’s a rock, a white rock. Turn the corner, it’s in the middle of the road. They called it the White Rock. Uncle Tom Menchions, he said when he untackled the horse in the yard, he said there was a woman’s veil on the shaves*. Oh my, oh my.”

— Wilbur Sparke’s, Bay Roberts

[*The Dictionary of Newfoundland English states: Shav(e)s: The shafts of a horse-drawn sled or other vehicle.]

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“On Cranes Road a family going to Island Cove in winter perished while traveling. People see them sometimes in the winter, in the form of a white light.”

— Cassidy Mercer, Spaniard’s Bay



fairy abductions and charms

“I was told that when I went berry picking to take bread crumbs and turn my clothes inside out so the fairies would not get me.”

— *Shelby Batten, Bareneed*

Growing up in outport Newfoundland many children are warned against wandering into wooded or boggy areas. Many believe that this is where the fairies make their homes. Quintin Parsons of Bay Roberts recalled that he was warned against going into the woods alone, or he would run the risk of being taken by the fairies. Brittany Corbett of Cupids on the other hand, was never allowed to go down behind the garden because the fairies lived by the train tracks. But what would happen if you did encounter fairies? Eliza and Gerald French remembered a story that

her mother used to tell. A girl from Brigus was passing through the marsh when she suddenly felt a smack in the face. She didn't know what hit her but later in the night, a spot on her cheek began to swell and she had to go to the doctor. When the doctor cut open the bump, it was filled with goully-twigs from a low lying marsh bush. This strange injury was blamed on the fairies and she was told never to go past the marshes again. She was spared abduction, but not everyone is so lucky.

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“At a certain time of summer in Butlerville people say you can hear the ghosts of dozens of babies crying in the hills near a spot called Fox Hole, which is a hole that goes to an underground den. In one version of the story the crying babies are supposed to be those taken by fairies in the fairy paths, patches and woods.”

— Cameron George, Bay Roberts

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“My uncle Tom Spracklin went out blueberry picking one day and got taken by the fairies. He had been nagging his mom all day to go blueberry picking. She said he could go but she warned him about the fairies but he was gone before she could say anything. He was gone for several hours and his parents were out looking for him, he came back that evening in a daze. He stayed like that for a couple of days. He wouldn't stop talking about the beautiful music they were playing, and how all the fairies were dancing and playing beautiful music, but he couldn't remember what kind of music they played or what the fairies looked like. He's dead now but after that experience he was never the same again.” (Location of story: Cupids Meadow, Brigus)

— Morgan Hayes, Ascension Collegiate

“The title of this story is *My Great Grandmother Attacked by Fairies* and I learned this story from my Nan Mary Greeley. When my Grandmother Mercer was a little girl, she was at her grandparents house in the garden taking up potatoes with her grandparents. It was after supper, kind of foggy, in the late evening. After they took up the potatoes, she put the potatoes on a stick and had a fire, like today when you roast a marshmellow at a fire. All of a sudden, she felt a huge pain in her jaw. After a while her grandparents took her home and wrapped a towel over her face. When this occurred a strange type of fluid like water came through the towel. The next day they took her to St. John's General Hospital where she had her jawbone removed. She was in there for 13 months as a patient. The true story behind what caused it to happen was a doctor from Harbour Grace said it was caused by the fairies.”

— Ryan Adams, Upper Island Cove,

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“My Nan Earl told me this story. When Nan was really young, she was only about six months old. Back then they would take you and if it was nice out, they would wrap you up or just take you and lay you outside for some fresh air. Nan was outside for about two hours and when Nan's mom came to check on her, her face was really grey and she looked really old. So my Nan's mom was really creeped out and apparently back then, if the fairies took you, you were able to take them with a shovel or just take them and throw them. If you were thrown, the fairies would let you go. So anyways, my Nan's mother took her and tossed her in a snowbank and when Nan's mom came back and picked her up she was back to normal.”

— Brandon Cross, Shearstown

“A long time ago around the 1930s, a man had gone into the woods blueberry picking. He had been gone for the full day and almost all night. His parents were very worried. They went up into the woods calling his name and looking everywhere for him. After a long while they returned home to call the police. He was face down on the porch. His parents saw that his clothes were full of holes and barely together. When they flipped him over they saw he was disfigured, almost unrecognizable. His left eye was gouged out. He couldn’t talk because his tongue had been ripped out and every single one of his nails were hauled off. His mother was petrified and ran inside to call the police. Once they arrived they examined him and handed him a piece of paper. They asked him what happened. He took a moment to write and when he flipped the paper around there was one word there: Fairies.”

— Eve Williamson, Upper Island Cove

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“My grandmother told me a story about when she was a little girl. They lived up in North River and like all kids back then, loved to explore and play outside. Her mother would say to them, “Don’t go up there because the fairies may get you.” Indicating not to go to the field on Springfield Road or by the old train track because those spots would be known as the places where the fairies have taken people for what seemed to them to be 10 to 15 minutes, but could actually have been anywhere from three hours to three days. Her mother saying this was enough to scare the kids from going to these places.”

— Courtney French, Coley’s Point

“My nan told me that the fairies are in a graveyard. I also called my dad to tell me more about it. He said an old man told him that in certain houses in certain places there are fairies that live there. People that lived there always heard noises, footsteps and breaking dishes in their house at night. It was believed that this happened because those people built their houses in the middle of the fairy’s path.”

— Selina Seymour, Bareneed

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“My aunt’s friend, she went out with her friend berry picking and they had split off for a bit and they were supposed to meet back in a few minutes, but she didn’t show up. So she went looking for her but she couldn’t find her so she went home, and her family went looking and they couldn’t find her. About a week passed and they had continued the search for that week. They found her back where she had “vanished” and she was confused and she had no idea where she was. They took her home and a few days later she passed but she was never the same for those few days before her passing.” (Location of story: Country Road).

— Devin Butler, Bay Roberts

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“When my dad was around my age, Dad was up blueberry picking on a hill behind his house with his old dog. He was about to go home when his dog suddenly started growling at something looking over the hill. Then my dad heard a voice telling him to go home. He thought it was just someone pulling a prank so he continued to pick berries when he heard the voice tell him to go home again. This time he decided to follow the voice. It led him over to the hill and he stopped and realized

he was being led into the woods. He said he was just being led by the fairies and he just then turned and ran home. He never heard the voice again.” (Location of story: Brigus).

— Kyler Morgan, Ascension Collegiate

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“We were told not to go to Barrack’s Lane berrypicking because there’s an old woman that has the fairies in her backyard and even has little houses in her backyard made for them. They would turn their clothes inside out so the fairies wouldn’t get them. Told by Gilbert Russell from Bay Roberts, age 58.”

— Josh Russell, Clarke’s Beach

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“Where my house is located now was once all barren land that leads to a steep valley. My parents always forbade me to walk in the valley because they said many many years ago children walked down into the valley and were never seen again. The old people always said they were taken by fairies and still live in the valley with the fairies.”

— Jesse Rideout, Upper Island Cove

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“Well, one time my mother said that her brother was going along just down by the cable office, in the night time, and this little tiny small woman was walking in front of him, and all of a sudden she disappeared.”

— Gerald French, Bay Roberts

charms against fairies

“Don’t go into the woods without bread in your pocket and odd socks on to protect yourself from the fairies.”

— Kerri Neil, Spaniard’s Bay

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“When I’d be at Butlerville at my friend’s house we’d go for a hike and she would put everything inside out because of the fairies. Her aunt was taken by fairies before.”

— Brittany Roberts, Brigus

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“In Island Cove, they say wear your pockets inside out, carry bread crumbs and/or silver to keep fairies away.”

— Alicia Linthorne, Upper Island Cove

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“Charms for fairies: silver coins, turning clothes inside out, wearing the “greek eye” which wards off evil.”

— Erica Vardy, Ascension Collegiate

“My grandmother said when they would go berry picking as teenagers they would be told to take a cake of hard bread or turn their coat inside out so the fairies wouldn’t try to take you away.”

— Sarah Barrett, Coley’s Point

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“There is this grove down by my house and my mom tells me that fairies live there. If I was to go down there, the fairies would take me and carry me away. She would say if I hear rustling sounds, they were coming for me. Bread crumbs or clothes inside out to make fairies stay away from you.”

— Kyle Mercer, Bay Roberts

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“In Butlerville there is the story about a man who went berry picking on the cliff with little silver bells in his pocket to ward off fairies. He assumed they were real silver but they weren’t and when he stepped on a fairy trap the fairies came and shoved the bucket he was picking berries with down his throat. It is said sometimes you can still hear the bells ringing when you go berry picking in the same spot.”

— Emilee Butler, Shearstown

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“When my Great Grandmother Gladys was younger, she and her friend went blueberry picking up on the ridge. While they were berry picking they got seperated. My grandmother was gone for hours. When her friend

couldn't find her, she went and got more people to help her look. They eventually found her sat on a rock in the woods. She was in a daze. When they tried to get her to leave, she started crying and bawling and saying she wasn't going to leave. After hearing this, my grandmother's friend took of all her clothes and put them back on her inside out. After doing this she was completely normal again.”

— Cassidy Mercer, Spaniard's Bay



“I have heard that while you are sleeping that this old woman comes and sits on your chest and you can’t move or breathe until someone else wakes you up.”

— Sarah Barrett, Coley’s Point

have you ever woken up in the middle of the night to find that you can’t move your arms or legs? Was there a heavy feeling on your chest? A presence on or near your bed? Maybe it was just a dream, a night terror, or perhaps it was a visit from the Old Hag. The Old Hag is an infamous character in Newfoundland folk belief who preys upon people

who are fast asleep. According to hag lore, she takes on many different forms and spends her nights going from bedroom to bedroom to sit upon the chests of unsuspecting people, drawing out their breath. Who or what is she, exactly? An incubus? A ghost? A nightmare? Nobody knows for certain, but many have seen her and have lived to tell the tale.

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“Old Hag is a condition that occurs while sleeping. This happened to me once while I was in bed. I woke up and was aware of all my surroundings but I couldn’t move or scream. I believe it wasn’t a dream.”

— Jesse Rideout, Upper Island Cove

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“I had two different experiences with the old hag while sleeping. Once when I was so young I never heard of an old hag visit. In this experience it was an older man, like a grandfather. He came in my room. I woke up on the floor... but he wasn’t hurting me. It was like he was protecting me. The other experience was very different. Unlike the man, the old hag was sitting on me. I couldn’t breathe or move. It seemed to last for hours. I don’t remember much of these. I tried to forget them since they happened. I never spoke of this to anyone.”

— Erica Vardy, Ascension Collegiate

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“There was one time not too long ago, actually a couple of months ago, I had a visit. I was laid down in bed, couldn’t talk or move and it felt like there was something on my chest. They say that if you spell your name backwards you’ll wake up.”

— Brandon Cross, Shearstown

“I was in bed and could not move and it looked like there was a person at the foot of my bed.”

— Shelby Batten, Bareneed

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“It was scary when I had her. I was awake but I couldn’t move and talk. I was facing the opposite side of my door and I had a feeling that someone was there.”

— Kyle Mercer, Bay Roberts

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“Grandmother had the illusion of someone sitting on her chest. She could not scream or move but did not see the Hag and believes it was a dream.”

— Olivia Bradbury, Bryant’s Cove

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“I woke up and I couldn’t move and there was a weird smell, like old clothes, and it felt like someone was in the room with me. I believe it was just a dream.”

— Ryan Adams, Upper Island Cove

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“The Hag was choking my father and he couldn’t scream for help or breathe. He could feel the hands on his throat. He thinks of it to be a dream.”

— Brittany Corbett, Clarke’s Beach

“When my nan was my age she had a visit from the Old Hag. She said the ceiling looked like it was coming down and she could hear the Old Hag but she couldn’t move or wake up.”

— Eve Williamson, Bareneed

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“When I got home I quickly went to bed and fell into a deep sleep. In my dream I had a nightmare about the old hag coming into my room with a strange object. She came through the door and sat on my bed and just looked through the window. I couldn’t move for a few moments which felt like forever. She looked at me, her face was just darkness. She said something and I don’t remember what. She got up and placed something on the coat hook on the back of my door: a dream catcher. When I woke up it was actually on my door. Ever since a dream catcher was placed behind my door, I rarely ever have nightmares.”

— Aaron Parsons, Bay Roberts

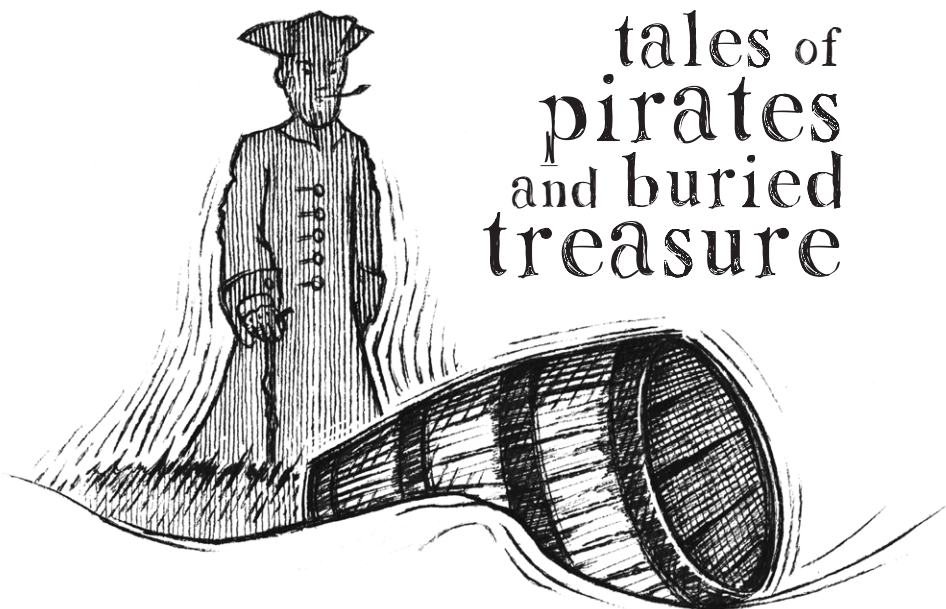
strange dreams

“Told by Peggy Mercer. She felt like she was being chased by someone and couldn’t get away from them. When she snapped out of it she was in the kid’s closet. This happened when she moved into a new house at Central Street, Bay Roberts, 30 years ago. After she went back to sleep she kept having dreams of it.”

— Josh Russell, Clarke’s Beach

“This happened four years ago to my mom’s dad, my grandfather. He had taken sick one night at my mom’s house and I had to go to my dad’s house. I almost fell asleep. This was around midnight. I was watching tv and I started dreaming and in my dream, I was watching my grandfather close his eyes. That was the last thing I remember. I woke up to the phone and I told my brother Pop was gone before my dad had told us.”

— Cody Smith, Tilton



tales of pirates and buried treasure

“They say in Spaniard’s Bay there’s an island called Kelly’s Island and apparently there is treasure buried there from when Spaniard’s Bay first came to be.”

— *Brandon Cross, Shearstown*

When I asked for stories about buried treasure, Gus Mentions of Spaniard’s Bay thought back to when a mysterious man, a Captain, would spend his time down at Mad Rock. “He was a captain in the Boer War, that wasn’t yesterday. His name was Locke Thomas. He could tell some stories.” Gus had met the man several times, and spoke

to him often, but still, nobody seemed to know what he was doing down there. Legend has it, he was digging for gold, and gold he did find. Once it was pulled from the ground, he whisked it away from the community on the train. Locals tend to think that the Mad Rock treasure, the one taken out of the country by Mr. Thomas, isn't the only stash of gold in the Bay Roberts area. Peter Easton was thought to be a busy man when he was sailing around Conception Bay. Some even believe that he continues to roam the shores as a ghost, protecting his hoards through the centuries.

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Olive, Gus' daughter, shared what she could remember of the Locke Thomas story. It was a tale she was told many times as a child:

“There was a man who came to town and settled for awhile. He borrowed a horse and cart to travel up the road and he said, “I believe my heart has shifted to the other side, there was that many bumps and potholes!” He was down there, I’ve heard Dad telling, in this little shack he had built, down towards Mad Rock, wasn’t it? Down Juggler’s Cove. Anyway, he got two men, he went out and he bought a roll of canvas like sail, for sail, and they said he had a box or something this length, dad said, and he had it wrapped up. He had the rope wound around so tight. When it was done up all you could see was this lead, with rope around it side by side. Well, they said, it took him and two more men all they could do to get that up on the dray. He carried it up and he got aboard the train. No one ever heard tell of him after. He went on. He got that money that was buried in Scotland’s Head. You gotta take it up on the night, and I say that no one knew what he was doing down there. He was a Dutchman or Englishman or something. It had to be something, it was all they could do to lift it aboard.”

— Olive Strickland, Spaniard’s Bay

“Well I’ll tell you, the buried treasure on Green Point, it’s not there anymore. In 1970, that’s not too long ago, that was taken up. It was found by somebody. How much am I allowed to say about that? Anyway, it was taken up and shipped out of the country somewhere but I can’t say anymore about that. I wrote it down so I wouldn’t forget it, because the person who told me, and he’s dead and gone. He said, “I acquired one piece of the money.” But I tell you, there’d have been more than one. We were walked over time and time again and didn’t know it was there. We knew it was somewhere, or we thought we did. Oh ever since we were born it had been talked of. It was talked about another one in Ship Cove Pond, in a barrel but after awhile, the barrel was gone, you know. See it was close comfort for the pirates. This is where they used to run from the ones that was after them. Oh, I’ve got all of that stories. But the one about the money, they came from Quebec one time and a guy tried, but they didn’t go in the right place. See, their instructions was to walk so many steps in a certain direction and turn in another direction and there was a big rock there with arrow into it. They tell me that the arrow is pretty faded now, but they knew where it was, I suppose. The pirates? It was Easton and his crowd. Peter Easton.””

— Greta Hussey, Port de Grave

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“If you go looking for Peter Easton’s treasure in the middle of the night on the south side of Harbour Grace on the beach, and you get really close to it, Peter Easton shall appear, turn off your flashlight and disappear. They say no one has been able to find his treasure yet.””

— Alicia Linthorne, Upper Island Cove

finding local folklore:

folk belief & legends in your community

Read through these questions and try to answer them... have you ever heard stories like this? Now ask some of your family members these same questions. Maybe you'll hear a few spooky stories from the past that you've never heard before.

- 1). Is there a place in your community that people say is haunted?a haunted cemetery, a haunted walkway, a haunted cliff or rock, a house, or other building? What are the ghostly stories connected to these places?
- 2). When you were growing up, were there any places you were told not to go because the fairies would get you? Where was this and what are the stories you were told?
- 3). What are the local stories about shipwrecks? ...buried treasures? What about ghost or weather lights seen on the water?
- 4). Are there any people who are believed to be witches in the community? Why do people think this? What kind of powers does this person have?
- 5). Have you ever had a visit from the Old Hag while you were sleeping? What happened and do you believe that this experience was real or just a dream?
- 6). Do you know of any special charms, superstitions, cures or remedies that are used in your community?



