

Heritage Update



Heritage NL

News and Notes on Heritage NL's Built Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Programs
ISSN 2371-218X -- ich@heritagenl.ca -- Heritage NL

Fowler House: A Historic Home in Brigus, NL *By Megan Webb*

The Registered Heritage Structure known as “Fowler House” in Brigus was designated in 1988 for its unique and historical value within the community and province. It was given its title after the Fowler family who occupied the property for nearly a century from the early 1900s up to the 1990s. It changed hands a few times, but throughout that time it is thought that it was owned exclusively by various Fowler relatives. *Photo courtesy of: Heritage NL*



The most iconic and distinctive part of the structure is the roller located at the base of a door on the second floor of the attachment - this served as a way to ease pulling fishing nets up from the street into the loft to mend them. As the town of Brigus was heavily involved in the fishery, having a tangible representation of the history of the fishery in the community through the house is very valuable. Just below the twine loft was a store, indicated by the large multi-paned window, that was at one time used to sell hats that had been displayed for all to see.

Another unique part of the house is that it has four entrances: two on the first floor, one on the second floor, and one on the third floor, all of which are technically on ground level. This is due to the fact that the house was built on and into the hill behind it. Building the house on the rugged landscape is a wonderful example of the adaptability of people in Brigus to make use of their surroundings.



Photos courtesy of: Heritage NL

Over the last 30 years or so there have been some alterations to the house, most of which were internal changes. However, the current owners, with the aid of a Heritage Revitalization Grant, are working to restore the home as much as they can. Working with local contractors, trained heritage restoration crew, and us here at Heritage NL, they are making wonderful progress in bringing Fowler House back to its former glory.



One of the ways we are supporting this project is through a stream of social media posts that we put out on Tuesday mornings called “Twine Loft Tuesday.” These posts provide some chronological history of the house and its importance to Brigus. To keep up with these, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) at hfnlca. We also encourage people to follow along with the restoration updates by following the current owners social media pages on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) at Brigus Twine Loft.

Killick making anchored in occupational tradition

By Lara Maynard, Heritage Skills Training Coordinator, Heritage NL

On a cool September Saturday, six workshop registrants joined Bill Tapper on the veranda at Torbay History House & Museum, newly opened this summer, for Heritage NL’s first killick making workshop. The handmade traditional anchors were once commonly used to moor boats or nets. Bill, now 64, learned to make killicks as a younger man when he took up fishing -- despite his father’s unfavourable opinion of the occupation. Bill learned the skill from Torbay fisherman Jacob (Jakey) Bradbury, in whose memory the archives and genealogy room at THHM is named.

As Torbayman Darrin Thorne, now resident and mayor of neighbouring Flatrock, commented on Heritage NL’s Facebook post about the workshop, “A well-built killick was needed in Torbay to hold the boats during the strong NE winds that hit Torbay Bight.”



Photo: Bill Tapper demonstrating how to use an awl to make a hole in the base for a killick rails to go in.

Indeed, while the killicks completed during the workshop that day were each about 3 feet high, Bill remembers that those local fishermen once made were often considerably larger and heavier – up to two or three hundred pounds. During the workshop, he recounted how he once followed Jakey around for a few days while the older man looked for the perfect size and elongated shape rock to make a killick. When Jakey finally found one that he liked, he used a car hood scavenged at the dump that was then in use on the Flatrock end of Windgap Road to haul the big rock.

For the workshop, we used freshly cut spruce or var (fir) for both the killick rails (also known as killick pickets, rungs or rods) which surround and contain the rock and the two

cross-base pieces. Traditionally, lumber or sawn wood was often used for the base pieces. Bill says that sometimes that wood came from the bottom of old barrels.

Seven killicks were complete by the end of the workshop, crafted using some basic but well-proven carpentry and reinforced by the adept rope knot-tying that is an important skill for fishers. Six of the killicks went home with workshop participants. Bill left the other killick for Torbay History House & Museum, which has several smaller model killicks in its collection – as befits a heritage institution along the tourism route called the Killick Coast.

Photo: Bill Tapper tightening a killick knot.

Killick making is one of the traditional skills in the endangered category on Heritage NL's Craft at Risk List released in 2021. You can view that document here:

<https://heritagenl.ca/programs/craft-at-risk>

And please let Heritage NL know if you think there is a traditional craft missing from the list by taking the online survey at www.heritagecraft.ca or emailing ich@heritagenl.ca.



St. George's Courthouse Research

By Juliet Lanphear, Heritage NL

At the turn of the 20th century following William Henry Churchill's appointment as the Superintendent of Public Buildings, there was a boom of new public buildings constructed in Newfoundland, including several courthouses. Plans for a new courthouse in St. George's were completed in 1903, which was likely built to replace the Courthouse in Sandy Point, which is described in an 1889 report as being "very old and dilapidated" (Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador 2022). Until the 1880s, Sandy Point was the major trading and retail hub in St. George's Bay and one of the largest permanent settlements on the French Shore. However, by the late 19th century, due to increased flooding from Sandy Point's location on a sandbar, administrative services were relocated to nearby communities, such as St. George's. *Photo: St. George's Courthouse, Andrea O'Brien/Heritage NL.*



The St. George's Courthouse was built in the Second Empire style with a prominent frontal tower used as a stairway and a two-sided mansard roof with dormer windows. Unlike the other courthouses constructed during this period, the St. George's and Greenspond Courthouses are only two stories tall instead of three. The original layout of the Courthouse contained the Post Office, Customs Office, four cells, and a living area. The courtroom occupied the entire second floor, which was unusually large compared to other contemporary courthouses. Over the years, the functions of the Courthouse changed to match the community's needs. In 1943 the living spaces were replaced with the Constabulary, a drug room, a treatment room and offices on the main floor. The courtroom upstairs was reduced in size to accommodate the addition of a hallway, the customs office, the district agriculturalist's office, the Magistrate's office, and a stenographer. Further changes were made in 1952, with a clinic replacing the first-floor jail, and the jail was moved into the basement. By 1977 the Courthouse housed the Welfare Department, the RCMP, the Magistrate's Court, the jail and offices.

However, the St. George's Courthouse also had non-judicial uses as a community space. The Courthouse was used as a polling station during elections, as the site for tea and dance fundraisers, and for various public meetings, including committees such as the Women's Patriotic Association and the Newfoundland Patriotic Association during the world wars. Since the 1990s, the St. George's Courthouse has been used as a Band Council office and the K'Taqmkuk Mi'kmaq Historical Museum. More information about St. George's Courthouse will be available in the upcoming Fieldnotes Series.

Works Cited:

Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador. 2022. St. George's Courthouse.

<https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/society/st-georges-courthouse.php>

Growing and Storing Food. A Look Back on Cultural Traditions.

By Robert Burgess, Burgess Heritage Property, Whiteway, NL

Everyone had a fishing stage. Everyone had a root cellar. Everyone had a vegetable garden. According to the census of 1874, there were 31 residents of Whiteway (Witless Bay until August of 1912). The census recorded 7 families, 7 houses, 6 fishing rooms, 1 head of cattle, 2 milk cows, 22 swine and 12 goats. These families salted 124 quintals of fish, cut 1 ¾ tons of hay, grew 78 barrels of potatoes and produced 30 lbs of butter.

Outport communities of the time persevered through a combination of fishing, cultivating small gardens, raising livestock, berry picking and trapping, shooting wildlife. Using our family as an example, our great-great grandparents could not read or write so traditional methods were handed down by ‘show and tell’. They taught their children how to clean and salt fish, how to prepare the garden and plant potatoes, how to make jam, how to sharpen a scythe and cut hay. In the true sense of the words, survival was a family affair. In the picture (*right*) our father, Henry Charles Burgess (1922-1995), is standing in Burgess Lane with a cow that provided milk and butter.



Family fishing stages were used to hold a winter's supply of salted cod, root cellars were used for potatoes and other vegetables, stable lofts held hay, berry barrels kept partridge berries, other berries were jammed and hen houses supplied fresh eggs and an occasional meal.

Over the past few years there has been a renaissance in backyard farming and homesteading. People who never grew a potato or bottled jam are flooding Facebook farming sites with ‘how do I grow’ and ‘how do I keep’ questions while proudly posting pictures of their children holding up home grown vegetables.

Our Uncle Will (1904-1999) was the last Burgess to utilize all of our out-buildings, fishing stage, saw mill, stable, stable loft, store and cellar as they were intended. At age 85 (see picture) Uncle Will was still growing, digging and storing potatoes following traditional methods – plant after the full moon in June, cover the seed with pony manure when planting, dig only after the stalks have faded, during the summer months go down in the cellar and break the spouts off the remaining potatoes (to keep them fresh). Uncle Will left with us a legacy of cultural practices and insights into how previous generations of our family lived. In 1997 he wrote...

‘What we ate? There was eggs. Mother, grandmother always had ducks and hens. We could have porridge for breakfast. When we were in the woods we would boil the kettle and toast bread on the fire. Mother always had supper. Fall and winter rabbit. Father would shoot a bird when he saw one. In the fall there was a pig to kill 200 pounds or a sheep. We always had sheep. Kill it before xmas. Hang it up in the store. It would keep frozen until it was eaten. We killed a cow and kept a quarter and there was baked beans for (breakfast).



Photo: Will digging potatoes.

Our Aunt Susie (1914-1997) wrote in a letter also from 1997...

‘(all better.) We had lots of black currants, mother used to make jam, if we had a sore throat during the winter, grandma would boil the kettle, put a teaspoon of jam in a cup, fill it with boiling water for us to drink. That would cure our throats. No doctors or drug stores in them days. The old people believed in their own cures, most often they were right. (We had no electricity or indoor plumbing in those days,) ‘

Electricity didn’t arrive in Whiteway until 1959, so many people here still remember how food was stowed over the winter before we had power. James George said his uncle Albert would pull up cabbage and leave on the roots. The cabbage would be hung up by their roots in his shed. Two lungers (spruce log about 3 inches in diameter) would be hanging from the beams in his shed and the cabbage roots were slid between the lungers. ‘Uncle Albert could get green cabbage leaves whenever he wanted.’



Image of cabbages hanging by the lungers by Kim Burgess.

Other people remember keeping partridge berries in a berry barrel. The barrel was 3-4 ft high. Stained red inside. Harold Burgess said almost everyone had a berry barrel in their porch. Annie George recalls they kept partridge berries in a large glass bottle. Our sister-in-law, Betty, remembers breaking the ice in the barrel at their home to get berries for baking. Of course bottling beets and making black currant, blueberry, bakeapple jam are traditions that continue today.

Over the past few weeks many people in our province have been picking berries and harvesting, preparing their garden vegetables to be stowed and used over the coming winter. Some of us are returning to traditional winter storage methods that changed after the arrival of electricity and deep freezers. Who knows? Maybe some day we will all have a fishing stage, a root cellar and a garden again!



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Editor: Dale Jarvis, Executive Director, HeritageNL
PO Box 5171, St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5V5 dale@heritagenl.ca