

The House that Uncle John Built: Holloway Property, Lethbridge, NL



Heritage NL

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Introduction

Designated a Registered Heritage Structure by Heritage NL in 2024, the Holloway Property is tucked away on a treed lot in Lethbridge, Bonavista Bay. It includes a two-and-a-half storey house and two outbuildings - a one-storey shed and a two-storey barn. Built in 1915 and influenced by Victorian Gothic style elements, it is a good example of an early 20th century home with some of its original outbuildings (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Holloway Property, 2021. Photo by Heritage NL.

The above description might be enough to tweak the interest of heritage architecture enthusiasts. But the value of heritage homes encompasses much more besides exterior detailing and material integrity. For those inclined to appreciate both the tangible and intangible, the stories of the lives lived within heritage buildings are as valuable as the visible built heritage assets. A dive into documenting the past residents of the Holloway Property revealed generations of

ordinary people living ordinary lives, the very thing that great stories are made of.

Lethbridge

The community of Lethbridge lies at the head of Goose Bay, a bay within Bonavista Bay. It was established circa 1870 by people who had lived further out in Bonavista Bay. Its name was variously recorded as Southeast Arm, Hopevale, Hopeville, or Brooklyn West - until 1912 when the Newfoundland Nomenclature Board officially changed it to Lethbridge after the community's oldest resident James Lethbridge.



Fig. 2. The Evening Telegram, November 11, 1911.

The economy had been reliant on the fishery until the opening of the Bonavista Branch Line railway in 1911 (Fig. 2). This development resulted in construction jobs and facilitated easier access to resources. The railway was a boon to local logging and sawmilling operations and Lethbridge's

strategic location along the railway line resulted in many locals becoming career railway workers ("Lethbridge" 283).

Eli John Holloway

On May 5, 1916, in Musgravetown, across the bay from Lethbridge, 22 year-old John Holloway, listed as a fisherman living in Lethbridge - and also known as Eli John, Jack, or Uncle John - married 19 year-old Minnie Earl from St. John's ("Post 1891 Registration Records 1913-1916"). The Holloway Property was most likely built the year before. On May 16, 1917, just after the couple's first wedding anniversary, Minnie died in childbirth ("Bonavista Bay District Vital Statistics"). John was left to raise his daughter, named Minnie after her mother, in the fine house he had built for his bride (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Eli John Holloway, date unknown. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.

A year and five months after his wife's death, John would face a loss shared by many of his generation. His younger brother Albert had joined the Newfoundland Regiment on May 18, 1917, aged 20. On October 17, 1918, he died from pneumonia

while being treated for gunshot wounds in the South African Military Hospital, Richmond Park, London ("Military Service Files").

On March 8, 1919, again in Musgravetown, John married Mabel Cuff of Bloomfield, Bonavista Bay ("Post 1891 Registration Records 1917-1920"). The couple would have six children together: Edna, Albert, Kesiah, Mary, Maisie, and Herman. John's occupation was now listed as "lumbering," and indeed it was this industry that would have an enduring impact on his life.

John and Mabel's grandson Geoffrey Muggridge recalls how his grandfather would go on to operate a sawmill and sell lumber (Fig. 4). John would mill logs at Parson's Siding - also known as New Country Waters - along the railway track. The entire family would pack up needed supplies and join John at the sawmill for a few months every year. It was at this location that tragedy once again struck John's life. In November of 1933, two of the Holloway children, Mary (age 8) and Maisie (age 3 years, 11 months), died from accidental poisoning at the sawmill (Muggridge).



Fig. 4. Advertisement in *The Fishermen's Advocate*, November 29, 1929.

In 1939, two months after the start of WWII, the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit was established (Fig. 5). The Unit was formed in response to a request from the British government to the Newfoundland Commission of Government to form a civilian, voluntary unit to address labour shortages in Great Britain's logging industry. Of particular concern was maintaining a regular supply of pit-props for coal mines. Initially, loggers had to sign a 6-month contract. Over 2000 men had signed on in the first two months. Many left after serving the minimum time, prompting a change in contractual

terms. Beginning the summer of 1940, men would have to sign a 5-year contract. Over the course of WWII, some 3600 men from Newfoundland and Labrador would serve in the Unit (Higgins).

**Great Britain Issues Call for
2000 Newfoundland Loggers**

Rate of Pay \$2.00 per Day and Found—Will be
Civilian Organization Staffed by Newfound-
landers—Will Work in Scotland and England

Fig. 5. Headline from *The Evening Telegram*, November 20, 1939.

Many of the men who joined the Unit would have worked in logging camps in Newfoundland. Conditions in these camps were notoriously harsh, especially during the winter months. The Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit camps, most of which were located in Scotland, were probably a step up in terms of living conditions. A souvenir booklet published by the Newfoundland Overseas Foresters' Association in 1945 lists many of the camp amenities available to members of the Unit, including canteens, recreation huts, concerts, cinemas, games, radios, reading material, educational instruction, church services, and weekly transport to the nearest town (Newfoundland Overseas Foresters' Association 43).



Fig. 6. Unknown forester and John Holloway in Forestry Unit camp accommodations. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.

In the summer of 1940, at the age of 45, John joined the Unit, with the possibility of five years of

service. While John was very much used to forestry work, he would now be an ocean away from his family, not just a ride down the railway line. A picture taken during his time away shows John darning socks in his sleeping quarters (Fig. 6). His grandson Geoffrey remembers his grandfather being a good hand at darning (Muggridge).

While overseas, in August of 1944, John made a trip to London to visit his brother Albert's grave (Fig. 7). 26 years had passed since his brother's death and most likely John was the first family member to see in person where he had been buried - apart from seeing pictures of the gravesite sent to the family at the time of Albert's death.

Memories

Mr. Eli Holloway, a Foreman in the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit, visited London on August 19th, for the purpose of seeing the grave of his brother, Albert Holloway, who served with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the last war and died of an illness resulting from his war injuries. He was buried with fourteen other Newfoundlanders in the Newfoundland plot at Brookwood Military Cemetery near London.

Fig. 7. Article from *Observer's Weekly*, September 26, 1944.

John served five years and five days in the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit, with over two of those years as a foreman (Fig. 8). When writing John's recommendation letter a week before his official discharge from the Unit, his superintendent Thomas Curran noted "He has shown a very thorough knowledge of logging operations, and I would wish to recommend him as a very industrious, hard working, and conscientious man" (Fig. 9). John was honourably released from his contract with Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit on July 31, 1945 (Fig. 10). John's son Albert, born in 1920, also served in the Overseas Forestry Unit ("Member List" and Pike).

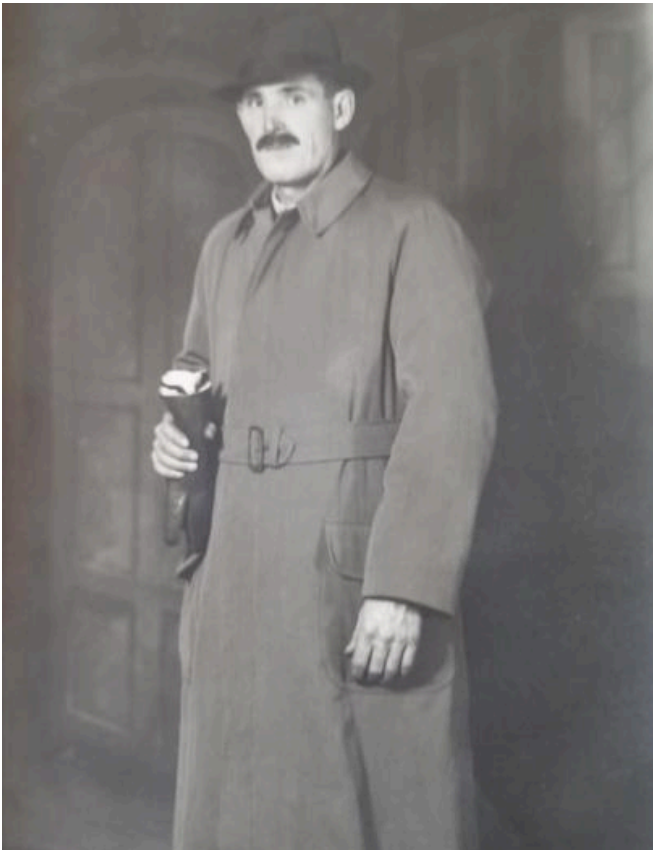


Fig. 8. Photo of John Holloway taken at Jas. Thomson & Co., Inverness, Scotland. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.



Fig. 10. John's discharge papers from the Unit. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.

The 1945 census of Newfoundland shows John, wife Mabel, daughter Edna, and son Herman living in Lethbridge ("Newfoundland's 1945"). John's grandson Geoffrey recalls that his grandfather was a skilled carpenter who spent much time in the workshop behind his house.

He took pride in his work and loved showing people items he had made. He crafted trims, railings, banisters, and much of the furniture in the house. Geoffrey still has a table made by his grandfather, a treasured reminder of John's woodworking skills (Fig. 11). When asked about his memories of his grandfather, Geoffrey recalled that "Grandfather believed, and he taught me the same, that a person could do anything he set his mind to" (Muggridge).



Fig. 11. Table made by John. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.

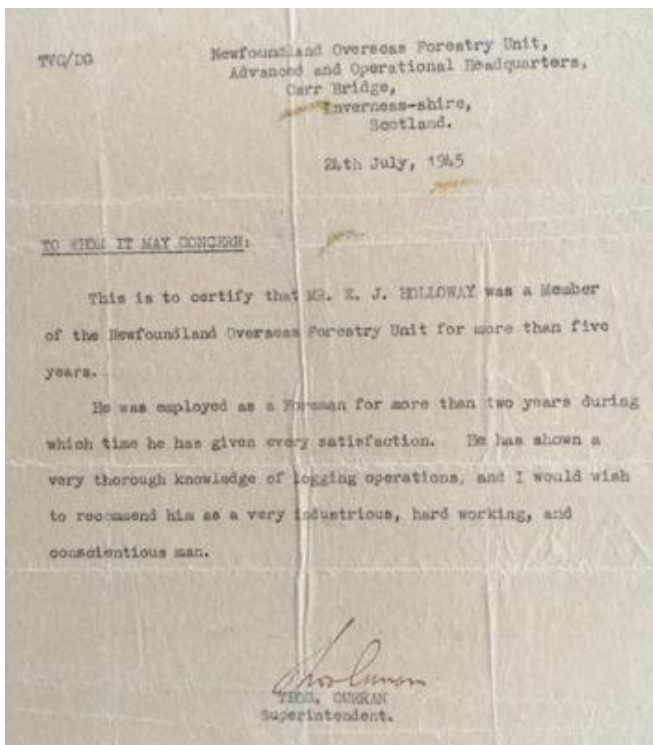


Fig. 9. John's recommendation letter from superintendent Thomas Curran. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.

Geoffrey's most enduring memories of his grandfather are of a witty, jovial man who loved life and loved to lightheartedly tease his wife Mabel (Muggridge). It seems that despite the hardships and losses they faced alone and together, John and Mabel's home was one filled with fond memories (Fig. 12 & 13).

Eli John Holloway passed away on October 1, 1968 and the sentiments expressed on his memorial card echo Geoffrey's memories of his grandfather. In part it reads:

“‘Uncle John’ as he was well known had been in failing health for the past year but nevertheless his passing came as a shock to the whole community and he will be long remembered and greatly missed by his family and friends.... In his home life he was a kind and good husband and father, also a faithful Church attendant, striving in his every day life to live up to the high standard of Christian Principles which he possessed. Being of a kind and cheerful disposition his kindness and generosity won the hearts of all who came in contact with him as he was always ready and willing to lend a helping hand to all who needed it and his memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew him.”
(Heritage Foundation)



Fig. 13. John and Mabel Holloway, date unknown. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.

Sometime after her husband's death, Mabel moved to her daughter Kesiah's home and later to a care home. In 1975 she sold the Holloway property. Mabel passed away ten years later on July 23, 1985.



Fig. 12. Mabel and John Holloway, date unknown. Photo courtesy of grandson Geoffrey Muggridge.

Children of Eli John Holloway (1894-1968)

Marriage to Minnie Earl (1897-1917) on May 5, 1916

- Minnie Holloway Blunden (May 15, 1917-May 23, 2007, age 90)

Marriage to Mabel Cuff (1899-1985) on March 8, 1919

- Edna Holloway Smart (1919-May 28, 2018, age 98)
- Albert Holloway (1920-August 10, 2003, age 82)
- Kesiah Holloway Muggridge Holloway (1922-February 24, 2010, age 87)
- Mary Beryl Holloway (1925-November 3, 1933, age 8)
- Maisie Holloway (1929-November 3, 1933, age 3 years, 11 months)
- Herman Holloway (1937-April 28, 2021, age 83)

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