The Migratory Fishery

NL Studies 2205
The Basques from France and Spain began hunting whales in southern Labrador in the 1530s.
They killed bowhead and right whales as they swam through the Strait of Belle Isle.
• The best known whaling site was at Red Bay.
• At its peak – 600 men and 15 ships per year.
What did they do?

1. Whales were harpooned from small boats and towed ashore.
2. Blubber was cut from the whales and heated in large cauldrons which transformed it into oil.
3. Oil was shipped back to Europe in barrels and used for lighting, lubrication, and in manufacturing.
Whaling Video

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWdaPbg-w8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWdaPbg-w8)
Flensing of a Whale

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITpwIZ3BQaY&feature=related
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFkFwWycMjo&feature=related
Inuit Whale Hunt

• http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrH0S68-luc&feature=related
Why did Basque whaling end?

• Foreign competition
• Pirates
• Conflict with Inuit
• Troubles in Spain
• Decline in whales due to overhunting
• Who knows?
Hmmm....

- Is it fair to say that Red Bay was the first oil refinery in the province?
The French Fishery

• Fished on the Grand Banks for most of the year
• Fish were caught from platforms on the sides of ships using hook and lines.
• Ships only came to shore during storms
• Fish were preserved in heavy salt until taken home – **green fish**
• First fished on the south coast near **Placentia**
• **Placentia** = French capitol
Why do you think the French made Placentia their capitol?
The Treaty of Utrecht

• Signed in 1713
• Recognized English rule of Newfoundland
• Agreed to leave Placentia (no longer allowed to have a permanent settlement)
• Moved to the new “French Treaty Shore” between Cape Bonavista & Pointe Riche (seasonal only)
TRACTATUS PACIS & AMICITIAE
INTER
Serenissimum ac Potissimum Principem ANNAM, Dei Gratia, Magnae
Britanniae, Franciae, & Hiberniae, Regnorum, Fidelis Defensorem, &c.,
& Serenissimum ac Potissimum Principem PHILIPPI V. Dei Gratia,
Hispaniarum Regem Catholicum, Conclusis Traiecti ad Rhenum diei 15
Abbrei Julii, Anno 1713.

TREATY OF PEACE and FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN

The most Serene and most Potent Princes AN N B., by the Grace of God,
Queen of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c.,
and the most Serene and most Potent Prince PHILIP the Vth, the Catho-
lick King of Spain, Concluded at Utrecht the 15 Day of July, 1713.
By Her Majesties Special Command.

LONDON,
Printed by John Baskett, Printer to the Queen most Excellent Majesty,
And by the Assigns of Thomas Newcomb, and Henry Hill, deceased. 1714.
• The French later fished on the north and west coasts – **French Treaty Shore**

• Fish sent to France and Spain
Carbonear Attacked by the French!

- In the 1600s and 1700s, Carbonear was attacked and burned several times by the French and Captain Iberville in their attempts to control Newfoundland, and then later again by American privateers. The residents continued to improve the fortifications using their own money and although the town was repeatedly burned, Carbonear Island protected its residents and the town grew into one of the most important settlements in Newfoundland in this period. When Judiciary districts were set up to govern the island in 1729 by Commodore Governor Henry Osborn, Carbonear was recognized and was chosen as one of the six initial districts. With new French threats, the British finally erected a fort and garrison on the Island in 1743, but this eventually fell to the French who burned the buildings and tossed the cannons over the cliffs in 1762 where they still lay.
During the winter of 1697, after French raiders had laid waste most of the English settlements in Newfoundland, the residents of Carbonar and surrounding communities entrenched themselves on Carbonar Island. From here they repelled repeated attempts to take the island and for a brief time were virtually the only holdout against French domination of Newfoundland. Carbonar Island was successfully defended again in 1705 by local inhabitants led by William Pynne of Carbonar against a French force from Placentia which had pillaged the coastal fisheries.
The English Inshore Fishery

• Ships were moored in the harbour
• Fishing took place in small boats close to shore
• Lasted only from June to August
Preparing for the trip

- Merchants fitted ships with gear, food and clothing in England
- Fishermen were paid a share of the catch
It’s all about timing...

- If they left too early = ice
- If they left too late = all landing places (rooms) would be taken
Order of Events:

1. Repair/rebuild stages, flakes, buildings
2. Get bait
3. Crews of 3-5 men used hand lines with baited hooks to catch cod
4. Shore crews headed, gutted, split, washed, lightly salted, and put fish on flakes to dry
What happened to the fish?

- Cured fish was sent to Spain and Portugal
- Ships then returned to England to get ready for next year’s fishery
NL and the Global Economy

• Look at the map on page 139 to see where we shipped our saltfish.
A Triangle of Trade

- England traded food and clothing with Spain for salt.
- Salt was shipped to Newfoundland for making fish.
- Fish was sent to mainland Europe in exchange for fruit, wine, and olive oil that was sent to England.
Our Connection to Slaves

- Poorly cured saltfish (which wasn’t worth much in Europe) was sold to plantation owners in the West Indies for sugar, rum and molasses.
- This fish was food for slaves and became known as “West Indian cure”.

![Map of the Caribbean](image1.png)

![Illustration of slaves](image2.png)
Fishery Economics

- Unpredictable, not always profitable
- Feast or famine
- Pirates
- Wars, Disease, Exchange Rates, Weather

“The merchants lived from season to season in a state of incessant panic, so their well known air of pessimism was surely not surprising.”
Captain Peter Easton was originally a British privateer who raided Spanish ships with the full blessing of his king.

When England made peace with Spain in 1604, Easton was left in Newfoundland with three ships and no official way to make money to pay for them.

Easton became a pirate – one of the most successful to terrorize ships along the Newfoundland coast.
• At the height of his pirate career he commanded 40 ships and used Harbour Grace as his base.

• Easton was not a bloodthirsty rogue. He treated Newfoundland settlers, traders and governors with care, and tried to win a pardon from his King.

• Despite his desire for respectability, Easton never managed to shed his "arch-pirate" image.

• He eventually retired, with two million pounds of gold, to the French Riviera. Easton was never brought to justice and eventually used his fortune to buy the title, Marquis of Savoy.

• Being at that time a handsome man around 40, according to contemporary descriptions, he crowned his career by marrying a very wealthy lady. He remained in the service of the Duke of Savoy until 1620, when he is lost to history.
More on Peter Easton

• [http://www.eastwaters.com/easton.html](http://www.eastwaters.com/easton.html)
Risk Management – How Could the Merchants Reduce Risks?

- Strict supervision
- Employ family members
- Paid shares of the fish caught vs. guaranteed wages
- Outfitted the small resident population with supplies on credit (beginnings of our current history in “this place”)
The Resident Fishery

- Supplies on “credit”
- Merchant accepted fish as payment
- Merchant acquired fish without risk or expense
- Not so good for the fisherman
- Sir William Coaker
The Fishermen’s Protective Union (FPU)

- Coaker was troubled by the fact that NL fishermen were powerless while controlled by merchants.
- He started the Fishermen’s Protective Union and constructed a community to be the home of the union – Port Union, Trinity Bay.
Fishermen’s Union Trading Company

- The FPU set up the Fishermen's Union Trading Co. which established stores throughout the province.

- They would purchase fish from fishers for cash and would also import goods to sell to fishers directly at a non-inflated price.

- The St. John's fish merchants were no longer needed.

- Previously, merchants did not pay cash for fish, locked in a system which kept most fishers in never-ending debt, making him dependent on the merchant.
Port Union

- Port Union is the only union-built town in North America.
- Built in 1916, it became a bustling community.
Port Union Amenities (1916-1936)

- a retail store that served 40 outlets in other communities
- a salt-fish plant with electric dryers
- a seal plant an international fish and supply trade a fleet of supply and trading vessels
- its own spur railway line
- a pier for the government coastal steamer
- coal and salt sheds
- a cooperage and carpenter shop
- workers row housing
- a soft drink factory
- a hotel
- a warehouse with electric elevators
- its own power-generating plant
- a movie theatre
- a woodworking factory
- a school
More pictures of Port Union

• http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~melbaker/foundation.htm