

Harry Philpott

Cottles Island/ Cottlesville

Cottlesville, formally known as Cottles Island, was built on the fishing industry. It officially made the Newfoundland census in 1884. To those who grew up in Cottlesville it has often been referred to as a good place to raise a family. It has seen many families through good and bad times, watched families grow, while others left for various reasons. One man in particular shares his views of how he grew up in Cottlesville, watched it change over the years, but was forced to leave for work. Harry Philpott was born June 6, 1930 to James and Blossom Philpott. He grew up in a large family, though average at the time, with six brothers and four sisters.

As a child Harry recalls the activities young children took part in. Many activities centered around the water. Rowing around the harbour in a punt was always a treat for the little ones. If there was no adult around to take them out in punt children often sailed their toy boats in the beach. However, hide and seek was always a fun game to play with friends.

Responsibility started at a very young age back then. Many fathers were involved with the fishery and would be away from the home for long periods of time. When Harry's father would go away on the boats to work he always left a bit of paint to paint the fence or the hen house. If there was any paint left over the children were allowed to use it to paint their toy boats.

Sometimes when their father was away, Harry along with his older brother Woodrow, would make a make-shift boat in the yard and pretend they were away on the schooner like their father. They would put a spar down in the ground with help from their mother. Then they would rig up the sails. Woodrow always manned the rudder. They played this game many times. One day, as Harry recalls, while deeply engulfed in their adventure, Woodrow jumped up, threw down the rudder and said "we aren't going anywhere!" With that he tore down the sails and walked away. They never attempted to play this game after this time.

School days were very different in the 1930s. Classes for all ages were held in one room school houses. Harry attended two different schools throughout his childhood, the United Church School and the Pentecostal School. Harry and his siblings lived about half a mile from the school so every morning and afternoon they were required to walk this distance which was about ten minutes each way. When they arrived at school the first item for the day was roll-call, this was always followed by the Lord's Prayer which was said in unison. The morning sessions would consist of math, known as arithmetic. The teacher would assign the students with lessons appropriate to their age group. Mornings sometimes also consisted of writing. In the evenings, students were expected to take turns in front of the class reading from their readers. At the end of each day they were tested on what they had learned that day. At this period in time school was not mandatory and many students left school to go to work to help their families. Grade ten was the highest level offered. Harry completed grade five then it was off to work to help make money for the family.

One winter there was a schooner in Cottlesville. Harry was asked to help with the upkeep over the winter. From October to May he worked really hard to ensure the schooner stayed a float by pumping the water out very often. And at the end of his "work-term" he was paid two dollars. Very proud he remembers going to King's store and buying a Bible for his sister Marie. She kept that Bible for a long time and a couple years ago she passed it on to Harry's son Dean.

When the children became older (12-17) more responsibilities were handed over to them. They were responsible for the animals. Most families had sheep, goats, horses, and "piggies". The animals had to be fed and water had to be available at all times to drink. From the time Harry was a teenager he also attempted many jobs outside the home such as logging as well as working in Lewis Evleigh's Herring factory where he would pack the herring for shipping.

At this time Harry joined his father on his schooner and went to the Labrador. All hands were expected to help with the fish whether it was cleaning, gutting, or drying. He enjoyed his travels with his father and the crew. However at this time traveling across the country was becoming much easier. In 1949 Harry left Newfoundland to go to Ontario, Canada, to find work. He traveled with his sisters Geraldine and Marie. Both sisters went on to become nursing assistants. They later married and settled down in Ontario where they still remain. Harry found that there was a variety of work available in Ontario and soon found his niche with plastering and painting. He remained in Ontario for twenty five years. Then he returned to Cottlesville to settle down with his wife Dorthy and their two children Sharon and Dean.

From what Harry can recall from his childhood Cottlesville was like any other outport community. It wasn't well developed. It had a school and a church and a store was always available. There was a post office but no water supply, garbage collection, or electricity. Out-houses were used for (toilets)washrooms. Houses had woodstoves for heat. The only books available were the children's school books. Roads more were really cow paths for walking or for the horse and buggy. Dogs were never seen as house dogs. If a family had dogs they were most likely used as a mode of transportation in the winter hitched up to a sled.

Harry's proudest accomplishment in his life was being able to meet and marry the girl that he loved (and still loves after more than 45 years) and to have raised two wonderful children. He would advise the younger generations of today to get all the education available for them and choose an occupation that they like and give it all they can. Settle down, get married, raise a family. Most of all be happy, that's as far as life goes. He would love Cottlesville to be remembered as a safe community and a wonderful place to raise a family. As for himself Harry would like to be remembered for being a "good looking citizen" of Cottlesville.