

A History of Midland – Up to May 30th, 1972

In 1933, Leonard Earle, John Dawe, and Joseph Ryan were the first three families of Pasadena. There were also three section men working the railway – Ned Carter, Jim Carter, and Doug Tapp. Arch Watton of Change Islands was managing a store for Mr. Elliot and he also had a small Post Office under the same roof.

In 1936, Newfoundland was experiencing Government of Commission and in bays or the Avalon Peninsula, the fisher [the main and only industry of the people] had declined to such an extent that the people were reduced to very circumstances. In fact, there were many families to whom a coin was a rarity.

The Commission of Government decided to relocate these families – provided they were willing - to certain places where it was expected that they could make a better living.

For this reason, the Government decided that an area of land in the Humber Valley should be an ideal spot for a farming industry. Mr. Leonard Earle, of Fogo Island, had already begun what was apparently a very successful farm and fruit orchard in a similar area. He had named his particular area PASADENA after his wife whose homeland was Pasadena, California.

So it was then that the Government selected the quiet, forest-covered spot in the Humber Valley and called it MIDLAND because it was situated approximately mid-way between the towns of Deer Lake and Corner Brook.

After plans had been negotiated for the transfer of families from Red Island, and Fox Harbour, Placentia Bay; Lamaline, Trinity Bay, Burin, Bell Island, and Clarke's Beach, actual transfer began in June 1936.

On this date, twenty five men arrived under the supervision of Jack Dawson of Bay Roberts and an engineer named Roy Thistle. These 25 settlers were:

From Red Island Placentia Bay: Patrick Bennett, Peter Bonia, Joseph Walsh, William Walsh, Patrick Walsh, James Bishop

From Fox Harbour Placentia Bay: Andrew Whiffen --

From Lamaline: Hisekiah King, Wesley Foote, Charles Bonnell, Thomas Hillier

From Trinity Bay: Albert Antle, Charles White, Josiah French, Abraham Warren, Absalm Pitcher, Harry Martin

From Burin: Charles Ross, Percy Moulton, Joseph Wagg, Ben Hodder

From Bell Island: Gill Kelloway, Sam Peach, Bill Piercey

From Clarke's Beach: Harvey French

These men under the management made a road out of Camp 7 Portage and called it MIDLAND ROAD.

Billy Dawe was given a contract by the Government to build a bunkhouse and a staff house to lodge the settlers while their 25 homes were being constructed by the contractor and some outside men whom he employed. In the meanwhile, men slept in canvas tents. Also, they built stables for horses and a sawmill. Horses were very important in pulling stumps and logs. While outside employees were busy constructing these buildings, the new settlers were clearing land, preparatory to farming. During this time, the settlers were receiving no money but the government supplied them with full board, clothing and other necessary supplies.

In September 1936, all 25 houses were ready for occupancy. These homes were very simple in structure. Some of them consisted of 4 bedrooms and a kitchen while others had 3 bedrooms and a kitchen. Needless to say, there was no electricity*¹ and because all homes were built and painted alike, it was difficult to tell one man's home from another.

Finally, that day in September arrived when the men settlers hitched "Ol' Mol', Jimmy, etc." to chuckwagons and had them bog their way over the mucky road to the railway station at PASADENA to meet their excited families who had come to join them in this new settlement.

On the wagons went their meager belongings. Very little they brought with them for transfer rules prevented their taking many belongings.

After a trip on the coastal ferry, Argyle, from the bays to Argentia and then by train to PASADENA, the children had one great exciting time even if their mothers were a little sad at tearing up their old roots. The children experienced no feeling but that joy of excitement.

Many of them had never seen a horse until they reached PASADENA and here were the big farm horses ready to carry them to their new homes. Onto the trucks and wooden carton perched the families while the sturdy horses walloped through the mire from PASADENA to MIDLAND.

Every week for about a year, each family was given a weekly allowance to food and other necessary supplies. These groceries were delivered by horse and sled in winter and horse and car in summer. James Bishop was the delivery man. They missed their meals of cod tongues, etc., but there were lost of rabbits and moose to take their place.

The families had arrived in September and gradually winter approached. How different conditions were to what they had been accustomed. The land they had left was rocky and barren while the roar of the sea was audible. At MIDLAND, it was just the opposite. All the was so quiet and peaceful. As one old Irish gentleman (William Walsh) expressed it, "T'was a bit of heaven." The houses nestled among the firs, spruces, pines and maples. Snow fell evenly because the trees protected all from the force of the wind. That winter, rabbits were so plentiful that the boys set slips under their houses whenever they needed a rabbit.

¹ Circa December 1954, electricity was introduced to Midland

The men cut over land and burned brush during the winter of 1935 and 1937.

In the summer of 1937, they cleared a community field and sowed it down vegetables – 25 acres in all. All families participated and the seeds and fertilizers were donated by the government. When these vegetables were harvested, they were marketed by management to the paper company of Corner Brook for the use of the men in the woods camps. The money received from the sale of these vegetables was shared among the settlers.

In addition to this community field, every settler was given 35 acres of land and after clearing 12 acres of it and putting it under cultivation, he was given a grant to the 35 acres. This land was not to be broken into blocks nor sold. It was supposed to be intact for farming purposes and a settler could, if he wished, bequeath the entire plot to one of his children.

After the novelty had worn off and summer had arrived, the young people decided they'd like to have a dance, but --- where to hold it!! Well, the bunkhouse was partly vacant now so why not have a 'shindig' there? No sooner said than done. Some guy tucked a fiddle under his arm, another took his long treasured jewsharp and from dark until daylight the rafters rang with the noise of clicking heels.

These people were very religious. All of them were either of Irish or English descent. The Irish settlers were Roman Catholics and the English were Anglican and United respectively. At this date, 1936, the Redemptorist Missionaries from Corner Brook visited MIDLAND monthly to celebrate mass and take care of the other spiritual needs of the Roman Catholics. There was no church so mass was celebrated and sacraments administered at the home of Peter Bonia. Three of these Redemptorist missionaries were Revered Fathers Dever, MacNeil, and Doyle. In the case of Anglican and United Ministers, they held religious services in the bunkhouse at first and later in the amalgamated school which erected and opened in 1937. The first teachers were a Miss Martin and Miss Woodly.

The first wedding ceremony took place in the home of Peter Bonia December 26, 1937, when his daughter, Sarah [Sadia], married Jerry Rose and settled in MIDLAND.

The first child born to a settler was Ada Foote, daughter to Wesley Foote [1937].

The first death was that of Albert Antle [1945] whose remains were interred in the Anglican cemetery in Pasadena.

In 1941, Miss Benson and Miss Whit, two Jubilee Guild teachers arrived and taught the women crafts and bottling.

Gradually roads improved, more land was cleared and more vegetables grown. The Commission of Government felt that MIDLAND possessed ideal farm land but the individual farmers soon found out that this was not so. Only part of the land proved arable.

Consequently settlers looked for employment elsewhere – Corner Brook, the American base at Stephenville and other centers while their families remained at MIDLAND. Five of the original settlers, namely Sam Peach, Josiah French, Gill Kelloway, Abraham Warren, and Bill Piercey, became

discontented and after a brief stay in MIDLAND returned to their original homes. By government permission, their homes and properties were transferred to five others settlers namely James King from Lamaline; Albert Walsh, Jerry Rose, Stan Carroll and William Whelan all of Red Island.

In the meantime, there was no post office. Settlers wishing to post or receive mail had to walk over a poor road to the grocery store² in PASADENA where Arch Watton kept the post office in a tiny room off his shop.

By the years 1938 and 1939, the settlers were self-supporting and the Government-owned store was turned over to a community. It became a co-operative store with all the settlers becoming shareholders. Up to this point in this time, Max Feaver had been managing the Government store but at this date Percy Moulton became the Co-Op manager while the chairman of the board of directors was Peter Bonia.

In 1955, the Community Council of PASADENA-MIDLAND was formed by Harold Rowe, of Municipal Affairs, St. John's. The 3 elected were Charles Bonnell, Chairman; Nelson Bennett, Secretary; and Allan French, Councilor. Three years later, in 1958, there was another election. Charles Bonnell was re-elected Chairman, but there were elected also 2 additional councilors – Henry butt and Leonard Martin.

By this date, the Government realized that the community was a failure farmwise. The settlers had already realized it. People from nearby towns were desirous of purchasing blocks of land for settlement. Application was made by landowners to Community Council who in turn petitioned the Government of Confederation to permit blocking of land held by settlers. The request was granted immediately. Subdivision and sale of land began and population increased greatly.

In 1951, a Roman Catholic School [Holy Rosary School] was built in PASADENA and the MIDLAND students walked there daily to attend classes as well as church services. The two-room school at MIDLAND was sold to the United Parish of PASADENA and its members moved it to PASADENA where it was rebuilt into a United Church. By this date, the Anglican pupils were attending St. David's School in PASADENA and this religious group had erected a small but very fine church near their school.

In the meantime, the old staff house was sold to William Bonia while the bunch house became the property of the Co-Op store and Community Council meetings were held there. The Co-Op store later sold this building to Russell Pike, formerly of St. Fintan's and who had begun a grocery store on MIDLAND ROAD in 1960. This old store he used for a barn as he also raised [and is continuing to raise] a few cattle which he slaughters and then sells in his store.

The teachers' residence became the property of James Smith who had married a daughter of one of the original settlers. James Dyke of Corner Brook bought the land formerly owned by James King and has a dairy farm on it. He sells his milk to the Brookfield Ice Cream Company in Corner Brook.

² Arch Watton, from Change Islands, ran this store for a Mr. Roy Elliott from Humbermouth.

Harvey French began a hennery near MIDLAND ROAD and in 1965 he, his sons, and his son-in-law formed a company which became known as Alderbrook Farm. This farm appears to be progressing favorably.

In the year 1970, a new hall was constructed on what was the old community field. The previous year, 1969, PASADENA-MIDLAND was raised to a town status. The first mayor was Gordon Clarke and the present mayor is James Smith. The present town clerk is Bob Sharpe. The town has a public library which will be officially opened in June of this year. PASADENA-MIDLAND also has a recreational area located by the town hall. There is also a fire hall in this same location.

At the present date [May 30, 1972], the council is having a water and sewerage system installed to service the houses on the main roads.

Only four or five of the original homes remain and these have been greatly renovated. The many new and modern-styled homes are very prominent.

With the exception of Billy and Patty Walsh, Joe Wagg, Ben Hodder, Percy Moulton, Harvey French and Charlie White, the 25 original settlers [male] have died but most of them have left behind many children and grandchildren who today are worthy citizens of the little town of PASADENA-MIDLAND.

As recorded by the Stan Bonia family

The 25 families who arrived in MIDLAND September 1936 are:

[names in brackets () = married names but they were not married before moving to MIDLAND]

Family	Sons	Daughters
Patrick and Elizabeth Bennett	Jeremiah, John, William	Gertie (Fontana), Mary (McLenan)
Peter and Vera Bonia	Thomas, Patrick, Stan, William	Sadie (Rose)
Joseph and Mary Whalen	Patrick, Harold, John, Joseph [infant]	Helen (Kendall), Josie (Carey)
Hisekiah and Maud King	Bert, Doug, James, Wesley	Eva (Brennan)
Charles Bonnell and his mother Brothers – Leonard, Aubrey	-	-
Albert and Maud Antle	George, Alex, Harry, Peter	Josephine, Liz (Foote)
Patrick and Elizabeth Walsh	James, William, Jerry, Thomas	Bride (Bonia)
Wesley and Margaret Foote	Roland, Wilson, Nelson, Freeman, Ivan	-
Thomas and Caroline Hillier	-	Gwen (Walsh)
Charles and Nellie White	-	Florence (Foote), Louisa
Abraham Warren and wife	-	(One, Unknown Name)

Absalm Pitcher and wife	Allison left soon after arrival	-
Charles Ross and wife	Hubert, Hiram, Billy, Gordon,	Rita, Theresa
Percy and Nellie Moulton	Tom, Curtis	Betty, Beatrice
Joseph and Gertie Wagg	Gordon, Howard, Ronald, Bobbie	Edna (Pitcher)
Ben and Jessie Hodder	-	Pearl, Dulcie (Foote), Gladys (Wagg), Joan, Ella [drowned in Humber River]
Sam Peach and wife	-	Grace [brief stay]
Harvey and Hazel French	Joseph, Allan	Elsie (Bennett), June (Barter)
William Piercey and wife	James [family brief stay]	
Gill Kelloway and wife Brief stay in MIDLAND		
James and Julia Bishop	Andy, John, Tom	Rita (Foley), Tillie (Pennell), Nellie (Doyle)
William and Anne Walsh	Francis, Joseph, Cyril	Josie (Smith), Bride (Verdini), Bess (Caines), Anne (Seaward)
Andrew and Elizabeth Whiffen	Patrick	Carmel (Blackmore)
Josiah French and Family Left shortly after arrival		
Harry Martin and Family Left Shortly after arrival		