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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Communities Mark Landing In 1770

By NEIL A. MATHESON

NORTH SHORE communities celebrate on Saturday when they remember officially that the Falmouth, bearing many people that settled Stanhope and surrounding areas landed its cargo of a reported 17 families on June 8, 1770.

The Brown family was one of those involved and Ira Brown, Charlottetown tells me his great-great grandfather, Laurence Brown was among those who came from Perthshire, Scotland after a voyage of two months.

In the diary of Rev. William Drummond – apparently he was the chaplain on the ship – is found some interesting facts on the sort of voyage our forefathers faced when they sailed from their former homes to this country back in those days of sail.

The voyage started, Drummond relates, from Greenock at five o'clock on the afternoon of April 8, and the people were landed at Stanhope on June 8, which will be 200 years ago come Monday.

Made Little Progress

SOME DIFFICULTY is related when Drummond notes that on April 14 they “made little way” and on April 16 he wrote:

“The wind still west and southwest, we were obliged to tack back and forward whereby we made little way.”

There was mention of rough seas, of a rolling ship, and of people being very sick. The sickness, apparently seasickness, “seized most of the company about April 14 was still very severe” on April 18. But even sea sickness comes to an end and by April 24, Drummond wrote “the people now almost free of sickness, except David Lawson. But winds were high in the afternoon “which made the ship roll considerably”. There was also heavy rain.

From the Bicentennial Committee representing Stanhope and Covehead we have these family names of people who were on the Falmouth:

“Auld, Brown, Dewar, Drummond, Gregor, Jamieson, Lawson, Leitch, Marshall, Miller, MacCallum, MacEwen, MacGregor, MacLauchlan, MacNeill, Shaw and Taylor.”

The names will be displayed on a cairn or monument which the North Shore Bicentennial Committee is erecting at Stanhope.

Getting back to the Drummond diary he said on April 25:

Company Began To Complain

“THE WIND HIGH and the vessel tossing. Our company began to complain . . . afternoon almost quite calm. All our company, except D. Lawson are quite recovered.”

Saturday was a really nice day and on Sunday, April 29 the wind continued brisk and the vessel ran at the rate of six and seven miles an hour. He preached both forenoon and afternoon.

On April 30 the ship made four to five miles an hour, by May 2, it was down to four miles, but the ship encountered a "severe squall at seven o'clock in the evening of May 6 and the remainder of the night it blew very hard with heavy showers."

At 10 o'clock in the forenoon of May 23 they saw St. Peter's Island on the southwest point of Newfoundland. It had snow on the hills.

The following forenoon they saw Newfoundland, the nearest part was 100 miles away.

On May 25 they saw Cape Breton Island from the mast head. "It was 18 or 20 miles distant."

Great Field Of Ice

ON MAY 26 the whole day was fog, very thick and close, that we could not see 100 yards around. At 10 a.m. they came to "a great field of ice, which made us return eastward". They sounded and found 50 fathoms of water.

For several days the wind was North and strong so that they "could not fetch the North Cape of Breton".

The ice was troublesome in this late May period. On May 30, for example, they bore on through broken ice. The ice was very close and heavy. It rained heavily with a thick fog all the time.

At 3 o'clock they saw a great field of coast ice which made us steer northward to be cleared of it.

About 4 o'clock the fog lifted enough for them to see "the Island of St. John, southward about 15 or 16 miles from us".

At six o'clock they came close to the coast of the Island "but the wind hindered us from going to the north side of it".

"During the whole day we saw great numbers of sea fowls, cows, bulls and horses among the ice."

Severe Gale Encountered

ON MAY 31 with the wind northwest they steered toward the east point of the Island but the wind still being contrary made us return. A severe gale came in and carried us out towards Cape Breton about 10 miles, he wrote.

That evening they launched the yawl when some of the ship's company went out after sea bulls, but they came back without any because of "not being well provided with ammunition".

The ship finally was carried to the north side of the Island late on May 31. On June 1st the Captain and one of his crew went ashore at St. Peter's Bay which is within 10 miles of Stanhope Bay Cove.

Some of the ship's company apparently went ashore at Princetown on Sunday, June 3rd. They found "a great number of French people who were very kind".

They did nothing on June 5 and 6 – the reason is not explained and spent the whole day of June 8 in "landing the people and the provisions".

There was trouble among the settlers after they landed and several leaders were named and replaced until finally one James Curtiss was sent from Scotland to manage the group. My information does not indicate how successful he was.

The Drummond Diary

ALL THIS INFORMATION, or most of it, is gleaned from the diary of William Drummond and here is how it became available.

Back in 1930 when H.H. Shaw was superintendent of education here, he received a copy of the diary from the archives at Ottawa. Ira Brown, being a friend of Mr. Shaw, was able to get the loan of it, so he could make a copy. Mr. Brown later had many copies made and he kindly gave one to me.

I talked about this with Mr. Brown when I was a hospital patient back in February. This is how I came to learn of the interesting old diary and some of the details it contains.