

NEWFOUNDLAND

ROLE CARD

In the 1860s most people in Canada East and Canada West know nothing about Newfoundland. Since it is an island, the only way to get there is by steamer. Newfoundland is nearly as large as the other three maritime colonies put together.

The coastline is rugged and indented with many bays and inlets. Most people live along the coastline. The rest of the island is dense forest, swamps and rock. There are no roads across the island. When people want to visit their friends, they get into their boats and call in at the coves along the shore.

The fishermen live in plain, unpainted houses, on the cliffs overlooking the coves where their fishing boats are anchored. Beside their houses are wooden racks where they dry the cod fish they catch. They grow potatoes and turnips in small gardens, though the soil is not good for growing crops. Newfoundlanders have to depend mostly on the sea. From the earliest days Newfoundland has traded fish with Britain, in return for British manufactured goods. People wear clothes and shoes made in Britain and read British newspapers and magazines. Since 1858 Newfoundland has been linked with Britain by a trans-Atlantic cable. This cable lies on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, and provides Newfoundland with telegraph communication to Britain.



Gros Morne, Newfoundland

Population: 122,000 (1861)

Largest City: St. John's, population 30,475 (1857)

How People Make a Living: Almost everyone is connected with the fishing industry or seal hunting. Merchants buy the fishermen's catch and sell them the things they need, such as ropes, hooks, canvas, salt, barrels and sou'westers (oilskin hats with wide brims at back, worn by sailors and fishermen).

Special Problems:

1. All through the 1860s the fishing and seal hunting is bad. Many fishermen are hopelessly in debt to the merchants. By 1865, one-third of all money in the colony is spent on helping the poor.
2. Since 1713, French fishermen have been allowed to catch fish and dry them on the west shore of this island colony. Newfoundlanders fear that the French want to use this shore for more than their fishing stations. French warships are seen in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. In case of trouble with France, will Britain be prepared to protect them?

Railways: Railway links with other colonies do not interest them because they have the sea for their highway.

Defence: Newfoundland depends on the British navy which is second to none. Newfoundland has little fear of being attacked by the United States.

Newfoundland Fathers of Confederation

Frederick B.T. Carter	1819-1900
Ambrose Shea	1815-1905