

Ancient St. John's.

To lecture about Ancient St. John's and to give you any new and interesting matter is not an easy task, neither is it easy to picture to you what St. John's was like in the past. To give an account of the city, with details of its growth and boundaries, is not my intention, as I have neither the time nor ability to do the subject proper justice, therefore the present lecture is merely a recital of some facts which may be of interest to you, and such as I have gathered from historical records and from the lips of those who remembered St. John's a century ago.

Who first discovered St. John's, and who named it, is not recorded in history. The name does not appear on any of the earliest charts of North America, its first appearance on a chart is in that of Desclir of 1546, but we have a record of a letter, written from St. John's in 1527 in which Rut says "On the third day of August, entered into a good harbour called St. John's and there we found eleven sail of Normands and one Breton and two Portugal barks all a-fishing.

It has been asserted by two writers on Newfoundland that John Cabot, discovered and named St. John's on St. John's day, 1497, the date on which he first saw the land of America. On an examination of the account of John Cabot's voyage I can find no authority for this assertion, it has also been asserted that Cape Bonavista was the landfall of Cabot and it was stoutly

maintained by the late Judge Prowse that such was the case.

Messrs. HARRISSE, Dawson, Biggar and others however, maintain that the land fall was Cape Breton. In the Encyclopedia Britannica, under the head of "John Cabot," giving the Cabot Biography, by H. P. Biggar, as well as in the "Cabot voyages to North America and Greenland" and in "Revue Hispanique" the land fall of Cabot is spoken of as some place on the American Continent and not Newfoundland. But suppose we allow that Cape Bonavista was the land fall of Cabot, we have it on record that he made the land with a large island lying off it, on the 24th. of June (St. John's day) 1497. He had been 57 days at sea in a Caravel of fifty tons and it is likely that when he made the land he at once sought an anchorage in order to obtain wood and water and to clean his ship; for in those days, when anti-fouling paints were unknown, vessels' bottoms had to be frequently cleaned during a long voyage, moreover we are told that such was the case, for it is recorded, after he landed "the Royal banner was unfurled and in solemn form Cabot took possession of the country in the name of King Henry VII. etc. etc. Having taken on board wood and water, preparations were made to return home as quickly as possible and he sailed north 300 miles." Judge Prowse maintained that tradition showed that Cabot anchored in King's Cove, which was, as he asserted, the King's