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SECOND EDITION. ST. JOHN'S MERCHANTS.

By CLARENCE WARD.

Let us take a glance at the old Merchants and their times. In the scope of a newspaper article, it can only be very brief and incomplete, a mere outline, as a volume could be written without exhausting the subject. It is to be hoped that some day justice will be done to the memory of the founders of the city, and a proper acknowledgment made of their indomitable energy in establishing on this rocky peninsula a flourishing community of merchants, trading in that early day, not only with the adjoining republic, but the West and the Indies and even Africa. It has been the fashion to speak lightly of them as being aristocratic, asserting a position of superiority from the fact that a majority of them had served their King in arms, and assuming that the British, govern and assuming that they had almost no work to do here in case of a reward for the perils and privations they had undergone, but nothing could be farther from the truth. From the very beginning they were in every sense a band of workers, each doing his share of work according to his capacity. Of course the energetic took the lead, as they will on all occasions, and the faint hearted fell behind, and filled a lumbering position as was suited to their nature, but all as were a band of brothers helping and cheering each other in the arduous task that was before them. It must be remembered that the majority of those who landed here in 1788 were comparatively young men, who on the breaking out of the American revolution, were not have been long at any business or profession, and during their period of service would not have time to perfect themselves on anything but the art of fighting so that when they commenced their business here they had almost everything to learn. Of course all were not of the military class, very many nature men came with them, who were learned in the law, and eminent clergymen, and those who had held offices under the old colonial governments in New England and New York, who left on principle on the establishment of the Republic. These applied themselves to the establishing of a system of government, and the making of laws, and it must be confessed that this class fared exceedingly well; they settled themselves principally at the seat of government at Fredericton, and appropriated to themselves remunerative offices. But the portion who remained at the new town of St. John were of a different stamp; they had a sturdy independence, a determination and a will to carve out a city from the bustling crags that surrounded them, and right well did they do their duty. It is very difficult to get much information of the business done before 1800--the earliest account books I have are dated 1788; the style of bookkeeping is very quaint, and the entries chiefly refer to the interchange of commodities, very little money being used in the trading. The commencement of business was in a small way, money was scarce, the first merchants were traders, bringing here small consignments, and exchanging with their neighbors for fish and furs and natural products. One great advantage they had, was the fact of the West Indies being closed to vessels from the United States; here was a good market for their fish and lumber, when they commenced to manufacture, bringing back sugar and rum and West India produce, which they traded in the States for manufactures and domestic articles and provisions. The business part of the city was then wholly confined to Water Street, Dock Street, King, part of Prince William Street and part of Nelson. Other streets, as we know them now were only outlined on the plans of the surveyor, and the ground still covered with a primitive growth of wood. The shores of the harbor had been first cleared, as affording a convenient access for the transport of goods and necessities, and naturally stores and residences were first erected by the water's edge. The North and South wharves at first extended only as far as Ward and Nelson streets, the lower parts were occupied as stores and the upper as dwellings--in fact with the exception of a few families who were possessed of more means than the rest of their fellow exiles, and lived in residences apart from their business, it was the general custom to have the store and dwelling in the same building. At the commencement of this century a great improvement could be noticed; the place had grown from a hamlet to a town; saw and grist mills were erected; those who had settled up the river on farms, were supporting themselves and had something to spare in exchange for articles required in their families, and firms then came into notice that for many years bore honored names amongst us. The heated and revengeful passions

engendered by the fratricidal war had begun to cool, and though for many years there was but little friendship between the Loyalists and their triumphant kinsmen in the States, yet they naturally turned their attention first to that quarter as an opening for trade, at first in an experimental manner, which gradually increased till quite a business sprang up between them. The first vessels built were of small tonnage; the shipyards were on the beach at York Point, the Market ship, and Pettungills--they were called Sloops. I have a quaint description of a business voyage to New York in 1808, undertaken in one of these little vessels, which was then the only mode of communication. It illustrates in a marked manner the wonderful changes that have taken place in the last 80 years. A few extracts will be interesting, and illustrate better than I can describe, the troubles and discomforts incurred in travelling from place to place, which are written of as a matter of course and common occurrence; how would we bear with them at the present time? "Memorandum of a tour to New York." "Left St John New Brunswick, Oct. 14, 1808 on board Humbert's Sloop, Captain David Way. 15, Off Mount Desert, fair wind. 16, Sunday, made the highland back of New Brunswick, ran in through mistake to Newburyport bar, beat all day and stood off at night. 18, Tuesday, stood to the southward, until we met a vessel out from Boston, then stood in. 19, Wednesday, at 10 in the morning anchored near Boston harbor. Went to lodge at Whittington's, and took passage in the stage to Providence; got my business done with Whitney and Goodwin, and on Thursday 20, went on in the stage; at 6 o'clock in the evening arrived at Providence and put up at Ammidon's. 21, Friday, went on board the Packet for New York, Capt. Westocote, at one o'clock; at 4 o'clock in sight of Warren and Bristol (at the same time) Popoquash neck divide; there was on shore Rhode Island, a beautiful situation, but appears going to ruin; eat oysters at the sign of the Game Cock; made sail at 7 in the evening. 22, Saturday, fine wind and rain. 10 o'clock up with Edens neck; at half past 2 came to anchor in New York; took lodgings at Mrs. Bradley's on Bay Street." Here follows a description of meetings with old friends and companions of his youth, dinner parties and entertainments, which is very interesting to the general reader. He also meets with Mr. Hugh Johnston and Mr. Samuel Miles, St. John merchants. Mr. Johnston had a ship discharging. One entry here is significant of a momentous period in his life. Jotting down events in his diary he says, "25 Nov. Friday, British evacuation, great military day." On that day, 25 years ago, he had sorrowfully embarked with his regiment for the (to him) unknown shores of New Brunswick, having with him a delicate wife and little child, and leaving behind, his birthplace, parents and family, and all for the sake of the cause he had fought for. It was men like him who had built St. John. He took a trip up the Hudson to his home, and made a round of visits amongst his relatives and friends; he received a most cordial reception (many names mentioned by him are now held by men prominent in political and mercantile life in New York, evidently descendants of those people.) There is no hint of any unpleasantness on account of the late civil war. In the twenty-five years that had elapsed, great changes had taken place in the sentiments of the people; the old rancor had died out, and he lived amongst his old friends, as though no long years of bitter warfare, and exile, had ever parted them. On returning to New York he settled up his affairs and prepared to return home, after having made a long visit. A good deal of his time appears to have been devoted to business, as many transactions are mentioned. From the following entry it would seem St. John had been speculating--"Tuesday, 13 Dec. 1808, agreed with Mr. Kipp, Captain Thomas and Hatfield for cotton to be shipped to Boston. 14, This day paid Isaac Kipp \$2500, on account of cotton shipped by him to Boston, one half to the debt of Hugh Johnston Esq." On the 15 March 1809 he took passage for home in the schooner Hiram. "Went through Hell gate at 2 o'clock, and got on board the schooner. Capt. Robb and Peter Gunnarrian passengers; got under way and anchored at Hart Island where we remained all night. 16, Thursday, fine morning, little wind from north, at evening got under way with light wind. 17, Friday, in the morning no wind, thick fog; at 10 o'clock light wind from eastward, Edens neck aster five miles at 12; put about, ran back and came to anchor in Loyds harbor at 4; lay all night, thick fog. 18, Saturday, thick fog; 10 o'clock sun came out, a little breeze from the age-west, got our boat out and went to fill a cask of water; in the afternoon thick weather. 19, Sunday, still

lying in Loyds inner harbor, thick weather, with hard showers of rain, no prospect of getting on our way; at 10 o'clock got under way with a fine breeze from west; 12 o'clock calm, 3 o'clock wind east, thick fog, stood for the north shore, tacked ship at 5 o'clock; at 2 o'clock no wind, very hard rain, 2 o'clock in the morning fine breeze from south west. 20, Monday, wind west, at 6 in the morning, the Gulf light ahead 10 miles, 12 o'clock abreast of Block Island, at sunset got under way and stood across the bay up with Gay Head light, stood over for Tarpanin, but night came on and dark; ran in for a light in Robinsons hole through mistake; lay until 12 o'clock then got under way and stood across the Sound. 21, Tuesday, at 6 o'clock no wind fine morning, drifting towards Holmes Hole, two Pilot boats came on board of us, no news; at 11 o'clock went on board of Capt. Howard, spent some time; he came back and dined, and spent the afternoon. 22, Wednesday, fine morning, wind north-west, got under way at 5 o'clock in the morning, at 6 o'clock passed the East chop of Holmes Hole, at 12, up with the Round Shoal, wind to the east, at 4 o'clock heavy to, thick weather. 23, Thursday, cloudy morning wind north-east, 8 o'clock made sail, course North, at 12 o'clock, fine day, course north-east, about two knots, Capt. Robb, Mr. Gunnarrian and cook sick, some from the motion of the ship others from extra drink; at sunset strong wind, hauled mainsail, and lowered topsail on the cap. Robb very sick, fresh gale all night. 24, Friday, in the morning gale increased, at 8 o'clock hove to under fore sail, heavy gale south of east, lay by until 11 o'clock at night, weather moderated, made sail under fore sail and top sail on the cap. 25, Saturday, wind south west, made sail at 6 o'clock, Mount Desert bore north-west 15 miles, fine breeze, at 10 up with Machias, 11 o'clock at night came to anchor off the harbor of St. John, out small boat and came up to town." I have quoted the description of the return voyage at some length, as it illustrates in a masterly way the philosophical manner in which the philosopher of a tedious voyage in a small vessel were endured. Let us, however, go back some years and note the commencement of a business which was their great object, and perhaps from the glimpse even here and there, of the trials and privations, of the weary disappointments, of the failures of ventures carefully planned out, which has meant disaster, the means to fall back to recuperate being so limited--we will see the school in which this reliance and endurance was learned. Three years after the landing of the Loyalists, this firm commenced business, a narration of the trials and vicissitudes, good and bad fortune of the one concern will do for all, as all were engaged in the same pursuits. Fish and Lumber the staple of export, Rum and Molasses and West India produce, with general goods from England, the imports. No merchant of that day kept in any special line of business, but traded in anything he could find a purchaser for, in fact his place of business would be best described by what we now call a general country store. After some small ventures they agree to make a real start in mercantile life, as the following extract will show--"Sept. 9, 1788. These are to inform you that I expect to go to England this fall, and if I do I shall not be at your city until next June. I expect to bring out from England goods to the amount of ten thousand pounds, and then we will join interests; if you have not hired the store we talked of don't hire it, as it is uncertain the time I will be with you, as I have a great probability of getting my half pay in going home. I shall write you and shall prepare for the fishing business we talked of." The articles of partnership are dated 14th March 1787, and the goods did not arrive till the following year--what a contrast to ordering goods by cable and ocean steamers arriving from England in 7 or 8 days. I will take the original invoice before me, it would take up too much space to copy it, but it is very interesting, from the variety of articles, many gone now completely out of use (Tinder boxes for instance) and for comparison of prices with those of the present time. Having fairly started them in business, let us follow the medium of some old letters, yellow and time stained, glean some of the trials and tribulations that beset at the outset, and of the courage and stout heartedness by which they overcame difficulties and eventually entered on a long career of business prosperity and honored integrity. No saw mills were in operation at this time, and after taking in fish it was customary to send the vessel to Machias for lumber and proceed thence to one of the West India islands; after disposing of their cargo of lumber and fish, if the markets were unfavorable for a return cargo of rum and molasses, it was usual to run over to the Carolinas or Georgia, and bring pitch pine lumber back to the islands the Americans being debarred from the direct trade. It was the practice for one of the firm

to go personally on these West India voyages and superintend the business. The cargo was sold for cash, and anything left after purchasing return cargo was brought back in gold, or if not thought remunerative, the vessel returned in ballast with the whole amount in specie; it was a knowledge of this custom that caused the homeward bound track to be infested with pirates, an account of whose misdoings will be given later on. At all times a representative of one of the old firms would be found at one of the islands or voyaging about in search of advantageous markets. They were continually meeting and exchanging information, and often the only tidings heard in months from absent ones, was by a letter brought by some returning vessel. The following extracts describe in simple and graphic language, the mode of transacting business and the trials and disappointments often encountered: "Wilmington, North Carolina, Feb. 17, 1790. I am arrived here after a tedious passage, and find everything very dear and am not determined where I shall go next, but believe to the West Indies; from there shall come home; you may look for me in May. I hope Caleb is smart in collecting and taking care of our business at home; things go bad enough here, markets are low in the West Indies and expenses very high; an very glad I am with the brig or I should not own a stick in her by the time she would return. We had a terrible passage out--lost all of six weeks in a gale most all the time which did us much damage. I sold at Barbadoes, and think it the garden of the world, both for climate and society, I got so fat with good wine and pleasant entertainments that you would not know me, unless you can remember how I used to look when at Harlem in the year 1778, clear of all sorry complaints and aches, that I am subject to in that last part of the world and are in. I have no offers for the brig and shall be obliged to return with her as likewise Tony." The next letter is a continuation of the same voyage, dated "Grenada, St. Georges May 18 1790. I believe I shall get New York as a small freight offers, if so this will arrive before me. I can't send any fruit by Capt. Matthews as he stops at Machias; I don't send any rum or not. I wrote you last by Capt. Brown. I have no news to say, as I told you in my last of the bad markets that have attended me since I left home and are like to continue. It is so late before I can get the proceeds of my cargo, that it would be late to sail for St. John before the hurricane months, and am going to New York with some freight; you may look for me the last of June. I have never heard one word from you since the Sunday morning we sailed, which seems an age, as time hangs heavy while I am sinking money. Tell brother to be steady and smart in our affairs, and he shall go next voyage. I have visited all the Windward Islands and find it a delightful part of the world such as you have no conception of, but I am heartily tired of rambling, and wish the day would arrive when I could sit down with my family in peace, but an afraid there is not much time for me." I have no further account from the writer of this voyage, but the following letter from a business correspondent will give an idea of the state of affairs in the islands at this time. "Barbadoes, April 15 1790. I have not much news to give you, but I am heartily tired of rambling, and wish the day would arrive when I could sit down with my family in peace, but an afraid there is not much time for me." I have no further account from the writer of this voyage, but the following letter from a business correspondent will give an idea of the state of affairs in the islands at this time. "Barbadoes, April 15 1790. 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