



The Town of Trinity (population about 700) is one of the oldest settlements in Newfoundland. Here Sir Richard Whitbourne held the first Vice-Admiralty Court in the Island's history, in 1615.

forbade English ships to carry to Newfoundland intending settlers or to leave behind any of their crews. The settlers already there were forbidden to cut wood, to build within six miles of the shore or to take any fishing places until the fishermen from England had arrived. Under these rules planters who had lived for years in the Island, who had cleared land and built homes, were deprived of all property rights.

In spite of these laws settlement did take place gradually. The laws were difficult to enforce, and the settlers built their houses in small coves where they could escape detection. There they brought up their families, raised vegetables and fished, clinging tenaciously to the land they had adopted in spite of all efforts to remove them.

The Rule of the Fishing Admirals.—With so many fishermen of different nationalities using the coast, there were bound to be disputes, and it early became an accepted custom that the master of the first ship to enter a harbour in the spring should be Admiral of the Port and dispense rough justice. At first there was a change of admiral each week; later the first arrival held authority for the whole fishing season.

An early attempt to establish formal justice in Newfoundland was made in 1615, when Sir Richard Whitbourne was sent out by the English Government in answer to petitions from the planters.