

Place names of Atlantic Canada investigated by professor at Mount Allison

Place Names of Atlantic Canada by William B. Hamilton University of Toronto Press

DAMIAN PENNY THE BRUNSWICKAN

Ever wonder how the Newfoundland town of Barened got its name? The community may once have been called "Barren Head" or "Bearing Head" (the latter signifying it as a navigational landmark for sailors in the area), and original settlers, from Devon in England, would have pronounced it "Bareened".

Ha Ha Bay - Apocryphal stories abound as to its origin; however, it may be traced to an old French expression for an unexpected obstruction or dead end. In this example, a sand bar acts as the obstruction, preventing direct passage into Fisiola Bay.

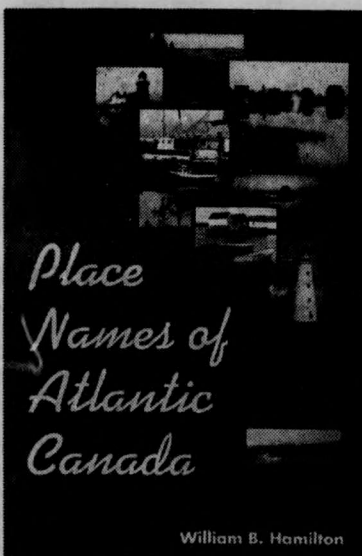
How about Summerside, P.E.I.? Once called "Green Shores Bedeque," a traveler to the town was sheltered from the winter cold upon nearing his destination, and remarked "It's like a summer side here." Before long, the name stuck.

There's a lot more of this stuff in William Hamilton's Place Names of Atlantic Canada, a book that must be regarded as a substantial achievement. There have been other books on the origin of place names in the Maritimes and Newfoundland, but this is the first such collection dealing with the region as a whole. Hamilton, a professor at Mount Allison University, has discovered the origin of the names of over 2000 communities.

geographical landmarks, and counties in the region, and has convincingly documented most of them. A few places are inexplicably omitted (most notably Baytona, Newfoundland, which until recently was called "Gayside"). Still, for historians, trivia buffs, or those interested in the history of Atlantic Canada, this serves as an important reference work.

Hamilton begins his book with an interesting essay outlining the general development of place names in the region, beginning with the brief arrival of the Vikings, through Cabot's landfall in 1497 (for which, by the way, Hamilton feels Newfoundland has a much stronger historical claim than Cape Breton), and up to the present day. Only after the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 did English names become common, but the French, Irish, Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and even Scottish and Portuguese origins of many designations are still evident. Hamilton also notes a few general differences between each province (names of French origin in New Brunswick, such as Saint-Francois-de-Kent, usually contain hyphens; those in Newfoundland, such as Baie-Verte, generally do not), and — other interesting developments, such as the changing of many Newfoundland names by a government board in the early century ("Piper's Hole" became "Swift Current"; "Famish Gut" was changed to "Fair Haven"), which Hamilton compares to today's political correctness.

As for the entries that make up the rest of the book, a brief browse through them reveals many fascinating stories. Bras d'Or lake in Cape Breton got its name from a cartographical error that placed Labrador far to the south of its actual location. Burgeo, on the South Coast of Newfoundland, gets its name from the medieval legend of the "eleven thousand virgins", sent on a crusade into the Holy Lands;



Kouchibouguac Bay, National Park and River, N.B. - This name is a corruption, partially through the French, of the Mi'kmaq Pijikogwek, meaning 'a river of long tides,' a descriptive for the length of the river's tidal estuary.

the town was originally called "Mill Virgines" and then "Virgeo" before receiving its current designation. As for Fredericton, in 1817, the Earl of Dalhousie wrote that the city is "insufferably hot in summer, and intensely cold in winter." A true prophet, that Earl of Dalhousie. There are plenty of interesting facts like these here. The unique place names of Atlantic Canada are part of the region's charm, and Hamilton's book captures that very well. Oh yeah, in response to a question that always arises whenever the subject of place names in Newfoundland comes up: the origin of "Dildo" is obscure, but Hamilton writes that Captain James Cook, who notes the name in the eighteenth century, "had a keen sense of humour and [was] not above enshrining descriptive names that might offend the overly sensitive."

Latest novel from Findley tells simple and realistic story

You Went Away by Timothy Findley HarperCollins Publishers

KAREN HENDRY THE BRUNSWICKAN

In his latest novel, You Went Away, Timothy Findley has set aside his humorous and fantastic way of delighting his audience and simply tells a story. It is a story of war and of loss; but more importantly it is the story of a woman, a son, an alcoholic husband, a lover and true friends. This is not to say that Findley has abandoned imagination. The basis of his narrative is an unmarked box of photographs. For sale in a flea market, they are described for the reader in the first four pages of the book. Who are these people? What is their story? Findley tells us their story, carefully reconstructed from the anonymous photographs, which he links together in chronological order, filling in the gaps along the way.

A young woman, Michael Forbes, suffers silently with the knowledge of her husband's drinking and womanizing. With the arrival of the war, Graeme joins the air force as an officer, all but abandoning his wife and children. He is a deeply troubled man who does not meet with the approval of his mother, standing in the shadow of his dead brother. As Michael diligently follows behind him she comes to the

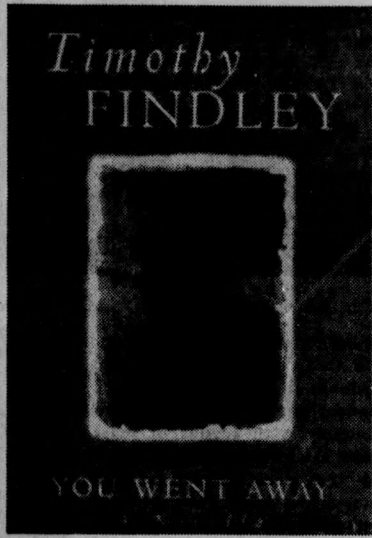
realization that her love is lost. She is a strong woman who endures many things alone, including the loss of a child and financial despair. She is also a dependent woman and she gives the reader cause to question why she is still with Graeme and why she does not just leave him and get on with her life; however Findley displays a very realistic situation here. What would a woman in her situation do in the early forties without the financial support of her husband? The only things she has in her life is her best friend, Eloise Best, a family of messed up in-laws, and her son, Matthew, a child who is struggling in his own right as he copes with a neglectful father, going to a new school, and being eleven years old.

Both Michael and Matthew find fulfillment in a relationship with Graeme's roommate, Ivan Henderson. He becomes a father figure to Matthew and a lover to Michael. He gives them a freedom they have never known. The airplane best symbolizes this freedom for the characters, freedom both won and lost. The airplane gives Ivan his freedom as he gives Michael hers; a freedom Graeme does not have. It also takes freedom at the cost of lives.

There are many minor characters in the story who are portrayed in a light which is beneficial to the overall situation in the main storyline. Each of them seem to represent an aspect of life or character that Michael does not have: the Mortson's are a happily married couple, Nella Mott is a woman with a passion, Rose Walter is a woman with a career and a sense of self-importance. They all have a sense of belonging to someone or somewhere.

By the end of the book, just as we are about to accept the story, Findley reminds his audience about the photographs. He presents to the reader the last one in the box, but in its description he lets us know that, just maybe, there may be other stories to be found within these pictures, that this is only one possibility. This one may be the correct story, or another; it may never be known.


The cover description of You Went Away describes the setting of the story as the home front and it certainly is that. There is a personal war waging here while the one in Europe is occurring in the background. It is an accurate portrayal of the family problems caused by alcohol, war, and financial trouble and how a woman will hang on to what she has even when it is not the best thing for her. This is a novella that is well written and well worth reading. I strongly recommend it to anyone who enjoys a good and serious book.



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