

island became a military base but remained primarily a fishing resource. William King, Under Secretary of the American Department of State, would write in 1793, "Newfoundland has been considered in all former times as a great ship moored near the Banks during the fishing season for the convenience of English fishermen only." Nevertheless some sailors—carpenters who'd been left ashore as "winter crews" to cut timbers and others who'd simply jumped ship—found havens in hard-to-get-to outports. The governors were instructed to withhold "whatever might

encourage them to settle on the island." The rude houses along the shore were meant for summer shelter only, and it was against the law to have an indoor fireplace. When fireplaces were found the house was burned down. It was not until 1813 that settlers were allowed to own land and build year-round houses.

The first resident governor, Vice-Admiral Pickmore, was appointed in 1816 and he and his successors ruled alone until 1855, when the first House of Assembly met and what might be termed the modern era began.

St. John's

"Canada's most dramatic historic and lovable little port." Harry Bruce in *Atlantic Insight*.

For the visitors who come by sea St. John's is approached through a gap in grey-green cliffs. It rises from the shore in regular tiers, a rolling, often misty terrain of modest, square frame buildings vividly painted.

Six great structures tower above the humbler

roofs, three old, three relatively new. When the Catholic Basilica was built a century ago, it was the largest church in North America. The Anglican Cathedral was the first example of Gothic architecture in the New World.

The massive grey limestone Colonial Building was built in 1847. The fourth tall building is Atlantic Place, a red brick geometric pile on the waterfront, which houses shops, parked cars and government offices. The fifth and sixth are the Royal Trust Building and Toronto Dominion Place, both office buildings.

Water Street, the first terrace, parallel to the sea, 100 yards from the water's edge, is the oldest thoroughfare in North America. It probably began in the late 1400s as a beach on which sailors bartered goods, and it has housed shops and business offices for centuries. It still has Harvey's, founded in 1770, and Bowring Brothers Retail Store, which arrived in 1811.

In the 1880s part of the street was still only six feet wide. It was then and is still a good street for walking.

The town's most resplendent hotel, the Newfoundland, above Water St. at Cavendish Square, is on the old site of Fort William, built in 1623. Across the street a stone cross commemorates Ethel Dickensen, who died nursing the sick during the great flu epidemic of 1918. Water Street is below, down the Hill O'Chips, which dates from the 1500s and may be the oldest short street in North America. Turn right on Water to Coghane, laid out in 1834 to link the waterfront to Government House. The biggest park in downtown St. John's is on the right, terraced on a lush, grassy slope, flanked by flights of stairs and topped by the Memorial to World War I. Halfway up the flight on the right is the Crow's Nest, a celebrated World War II officers' club, still in operation. A captured German periscope jutting through the roof offers a nice view of the harbour. The club's site has been devoted to alcoholic consumption, off and on, since 1750 when it was a tavern called the Ship. The last murder by sword in St. John's took place at the Ship in 1779 when Michael Darrigan dispatched Cornelius Gallery with a cutlass.

Newfoundlanders found individual ways to



St. John's Harbour.