

# The Sealing Voyage of 1857.

## All Rigs of Sailing Craft But No Steamers.

### Value of Seals Brought in the Greatest on Record—A Contrast in the Ships Then and Now.

In view of the interest attaching to the present sealing voyage, and the fact that it is the first day after day, while the ships are in the following article taken from the columns of the Evening Herald of St. John's, 1916, signed M.J.O.M. will attract our readers' attention. In the year 1857, two hundred and ninety sailing vessels of all rigs carrying 13,000 men, cleared from the port of St. John's, for the seal fishery, bringing in cargoes the total value of which was \$1,350,000. Last year (1921) the steamers only presented the seal fishery, their gross returns being but \$171,242, or little over one per cent of the proceeds of the same fishery sixty-four years ago. Mr. O'Meara writes with the ease and fluency of one well acquainted with the subject, and it gives us much pleasure indeed to reproduce his contribution to the Herald. It will be understood that St. John's is referred to, no mention being made of the sealing centres in the Colony, which also outfitted large fleets of sealing vessels.

**THE FROSTY SPRING.**  
As the seal fishery is a matter of great interest just now, I would kindly ask you to publish a few items concerning the sealing in the year 1857. The spring of 1857 was certainly one of the earliest and most successful in the history of the voyage. It was known as "The Frosty Spring," owing to the fact, that an intense frost prevailed during the early part of the season, from which many of the crews, whilst gathering the harvest, suffered severely. The number of vessels clearing from St. John's in the year 1857, was two hundred and ninety, comprising brigas, brigantines, and the proverbial "beaver-hat-men" crewed with 13,000 men. There was one exception, however, the Barbara, Capt. Billy Keane—a famous skipper of that day. He was father of Capt. A. Keane, now commodore of the present fleet, said to relate, prosecuting the fishery.

**THE FIRST ARRIVAL.**  
However, on the 22nd March, with the flag flying from her masthead, the first to arrive was the brigantine Wm. Stairs, Capt. Colbert, with 500 prime seals. The brig Evanthus, Capt. White, (late commander of the steamer Neptune) also arrived on the 23rd, with but little success, the crew, unfortunately, having had to abandon the voyage owing to illness. On the 23rd the brig St. John, Capt. P. Mullooney, who later successfully commanded the steamers Atlas and Ranger, arrived with 5,700 prime seals, and the Arthur O'Leary, Capt. "Terry" Halleran, 6,000. On the 25th, the Lena, Capt. P. Feehan, arrived with 6,500, followed by the brig, Capt. P. Cummins, halting at 6,000; the brig Eleanor Davis, McLaughlin, 7,000; the Wyoming, Kelly, 8,000; and the Crown, Carew, 5,000. On the 27th the brig Vulcan, Capt. Goss, entered port, having 6,000 prime seals; followed by the Caledonia, Capt. "Joe" Houlihan with 6,300; the brig, Coady, 4,500, and the brig Henry, Breen, master, 4,900.

**OTHER ARRIVALS.**  
On the 28th the Orient, Chafe, arrived; the Elizabeth, Capt. A. Graham, and the brig Margie, Capt. Goss (a very man) 5,700. The latter recalls the memory when, a few years later, Capt. Goss, in the brig Zambel, was the first to arrive from the icefields. It was on a beautiful Easter morning (1st) in the early '50s. The steamer, I remember, came up the harbor as the Cathedral bells were ringing, and the wharf-heads growled, whilst all her flags flying, in tow of the paddle-boat Blue Jacket, halting for the splendid load of 7,000 prime seals. The crews of all the ships referred to, made big hills, but the biggest, however, was that made by the crew of the

Elizabeth, Capt. Graham, each man sharing 255 (\$75.00).  
(Note:—On the 20th March the first of the Northern ships to arrive was the Ice King, Capt. W. Kne, with 6,000, followed by the Bearless, Capt. Keane, with 5,500. Later other of the ships arrived with good trips also.)

**THE PRICE PAID.**  
On the 28th March, however, including previous arrivals, twenty-five St. John's vessels had entered port with the splendid catch of one hundred and twenty thousand seals, in the aggregate, which were valued for \$35,000 (\$425,000). The price paid, per quintal, this spring, owing to an advance made by the enterprising firm of O'Dwyer, was 37c. 6d. (about \$9.00). The seals were mostly prime harps, with a considerable number of young hoods, averaging respectively forty and fifty-six pounds per "sculp." The total catch for the spring was 475,000, value for about \$1,350,000.

**LOSS OF THE JOHN AND MARIA.**  
"A terrible catastrophe occurred, at the beginning of the voyage, in the loss of the schooner John and Maria, and twenty-one of her crew—mostly Southern Shore men. This vessel sailed from St. John's in the forenoon on March 2nd, intending to call at Cape Broyle for some sealing gear, and was lost the following night at Brigus Head, where she unfortunately struck, and became a total wreck. The Captain (Thos. Carow) and one boy were saved, both having been rescued the succeeding morning from the schooner's rigging in an exhausted condition. The John and Maria was "beaver-hat" rigged—of which there were many of her kind in those days—and was owned by the firm of Ewen Stabb, a well-known commercial house in St. John's. The tragic story of the loss of this vessel has been handed down, and sadly told, from generation to generation, on the Southern Shore, to the present day.

**HELD OFF TOO LONG.**  
"The firm of P. Rogerson & Son had seven vessels prosecuting the voyage this spring, all of which returned with full cargoes, totalling some 35,000. With the high price obtaining, as previously referred to, a handsome turnover would certainly have been made, if an immediate sale of all cargoes had been effected; but, after disposing of a cargo or two, the firm, in anticipation of a further advance, decided to hold on to the remaining lot. In the meantime, unluckily, a considerable slump occurred, with the result that the fine old firm of P. Rogerson & Son sustained a great loss, one we regret to say, that staggered it for some years later. Mr. H. F. Shortis, who is, certainly, well-informed on our early sealing voyages, as well as an enthusiast on all matters pertaining thereto, will be surprised to learn of the splendid catch of the twenty-five St. John's vessels, already noted. Mr. Shortis, when writing of, and sentimentalizing over, the stories and prowess of the "men of the frozen pans," occasionally boasts of the superiority of the Harbor Grace skipper over that of his St. John's contemporary. But, Mr. Editor, facts are stubborn things, and consequently, we have yet to find, if ever, since the inception of the seal fishery, has the whole sailing fleet of Harbor Grace, in any one season, equalled the record catch of one hundred and twenty thousand seals, ashore and afloat in St. John's in March 1857.

**HEROES OF THE FROZEN PANS.**  
"The men employed in the seal fishery in those days required strength, endurance and activity. They usually had a long distance to travel to reach the pack—sometimes fifteen to twenty miles. They left their different ships in the early morning, each carrying a bliscut or two in his "jumper" pocket, and often didn't return till late evening, tired and hungry, with their "rope of fat." To-day,

however, through steam and its many appliances, the sealers' work is much easier.

#### THE UBIQUITOUS STOWAWAY.

"The stowaway was generally an interesting personage in the days of the sailing vessel. He received kinder and better treatment than he does today on the steamers. As soon as he had made his appearance, or had been discovered, the master-of-the-watch was informed, who in turn, acquainted the Captain—the latter requesting his presence in the cabin. Here the intruder was interrogated as to his name, age, parents, etc., all of which were entered on the ship's log. If he were found a hardy boy, and of ordinary size, he was outfitted with a suit of canvas, together with belt and sheath, knife and steel. After donning his new garb, in which he felt proud and happy, he strutted the ship's deck as independently as if he were the Captain's son, all ready for the fray. The stowaway was allowed half his catch, and, if proving a good lad, and happening to sail with a "jowler" skipper, his berth, all things being equal, was secure for the following spring. He was usually a favorite among the crew, and in many cases, through some little incident during the trip, acquired a nickname that forever followed him in after life.

**SOME OF THE OLD GUARD.**  
"A few of the "jowlers," who invariably arrived with bumper trips, were:—Captains T. Halleran, P. Feehan, Joe Houlihan, P. Mullooney, and P. Cummins, whose crews, each season, made big hills—forty and forty-five pounds per man. Consequently, these skippers, owing to their name and fame, always had the pick of material, as to men, to crew their ships. Some of these captains, at Election time, were eagerly sought by political aspirants to act in the capacity of chairman, and in other ways assist in conducting a campaign. One captain, I remember, while addressing a public meeting from the balcony of the old market-house, among other things, boldly declared that he "spilt more blood than the great Napoleon"—an assertion based, no doubt, on his fame as "a great 'sile-killer."

**A SUBJECT FOR AN ARTIST.**  
"It was a beautiful sight, on the first of March, especially if a fresh sou'wester were blowing, to see the large white-winged feet leaving for the icefields. Many of them, amid hustle and bustle, swung from the wharf-heads, awaiting the roll-call, as also picking up the belated stranger, who came along carrying his far, gat, "skins," and the other paraphernalia peculiar to the voyage. Other ships passed down the harbor, with mostly all hands aloft; loosening gaskets and unbending canvas, the latter stiffening to the breeze as they glided along, amidst hearty cheers from the waterfront, which were followed by lusty exchanges from the departing crews.

**ALWAYS IN COMMISSION.**  
"Several of the old sealing vessels, after returning from the hunt, prepared for foreign voyages. Some sailed with fish cargoes to the Mediterranean and West Indian markets, whilst others to England and Scotch ports, carrying the new season's oil. After discharging at the latter places, their destination was mostly for home ports, generally arriving in early autumn. Many of these old "ice-hunters" were fast sailers, often outstripping our Clyde-built in making quick passages. Many of them, however, were either owned or partly owned by their respective commanders. The names of the different firms manufacturing "fat" in St. John's at this time, which was chiefly conducted on the Southside, were:—Baine Johnston & Co., W. & H. Thomas, Kenneth McLea & Sons, Job Bros. & Co., McBride & Kerr, Bowring Brothers, John Barron & Co., Stabb, Row & Holmwood, and Robert Alsop. Those manufacturing on the Northside were:—Brooking & Co., L. O'Brien & Co., R. O'Dwyer, J. & W. Stewart, R. & L. Tessier, and T. Bond. The Southside firms referred to ran mostly from East to West, consecutively."

**A Pretty Mean Friend.**  
An Athlone, Kan., bride was the recipient of a cut glass bowl for a wedding gift. The bowl arrived broken to pieces, and each piece wrapped separately in tissue paper. The young bride wrote to the jeweler for an explanation and learned that the sender had entered the jeweler's store just as the bowl was dropped by one of the clerks. She bought the pieces and asked to have them packed and sent to the bride with her card. The jeweler sent the package, but ordered the bowl wrapped as it was received to expose the buyer's meanness.

**Plain Facts for Stomach Sufferers**  
Digested food makes us strong, vigorous, healthy. Dyspeptics are invariably weak and illing. All they need to make them strong and well is the power to digest food, and that is just what Foster's Stomach Bitters gives. It helps the stomach, liver and bowels to do their work efficiently. Sold in 50c. and \$1.00 bottles in drug stores.



**White Lawn Blouses.**

A new lot of Ladies' White Lawn Blouses; good value at \$1.98. Our price

Each, 98c.



**Ladies' Black Shoes.**

Two splendid lines of Ladies' Black Shoes, both lace and 3 strap; medium heel.

Per Pair, \$3.98



**Ladies' Overshoes.**

A splendid rubber for the money; low cut, medium heel; an extra strong rubber.

Per Pair, 88c.



**Ladies' Vests.**

Fine Ribbed Vests, narrow shoulder, comfortable V neck.

Each, 25c.



**Ladies' Boots.**

A splendid line of Dark Tan Boots, medium heel.

Per Pair, \$5.75



**Heather Wool Hose.**

New lot of Ladies' Heather Wool Hose in Brown and Green Heather. This was the favorite Hose this season; will wear much longer than any other Hose for the same money.

Per Pair, \$1.49

# FULL VALUE SALE!

## Murphy's Good Things.

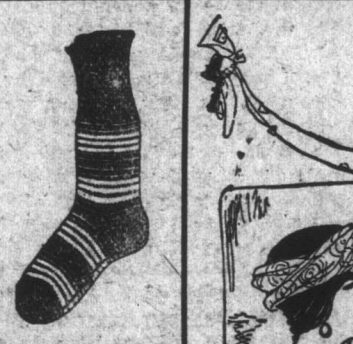
We've spent a lot of time and effort to make this Sale give all that it claims—FULL VALUE. Come in and see the items shown in this ad, and also the great number of values we had no space to mention. You'll agree that this event is extraordinary.



**Ladies' Pullover Sweaters.**

All our Pullover Sweaters are now reduced to \$2.98. These are all pure Wool goods, easily worth twice our price.

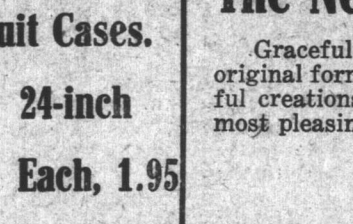
Each, \$2.98



**Ladies' Hose.**

In Tan and Black.

Pair, 19c.



**Suit Cases.**

24-inch

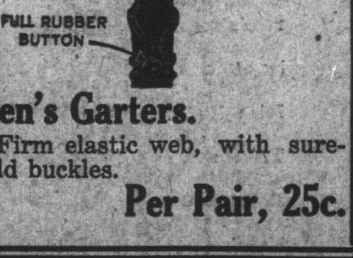
Each, 1.95



**Men's Silk Ties.**

Never was there such a splendid showing of Men's Silk Ties seen in our Store before. Beautiful patterns worth much more than our price; but then, our price is always the lowest.

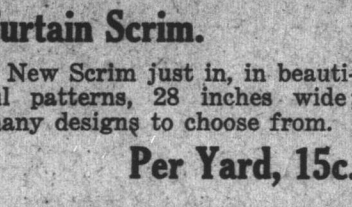
Each, 75c.



**Men's Garters.**

Firm elastic web, with sure-hold buckles.

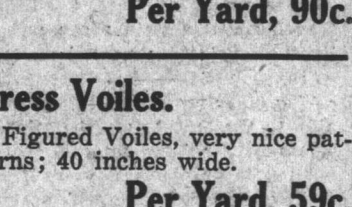
Per Pair, 25c.



**Curtain Scrim.**

New Scrim just in, in beautiful patterns, 28 inches wide; many designs to choose from.

Per Yard, 15c.



**Dress Goods.**

English Melton Cloth in many shades, 40 inches wide, suitable for Costumes and Spring Coats; worth \$2.00 per yard. Our price

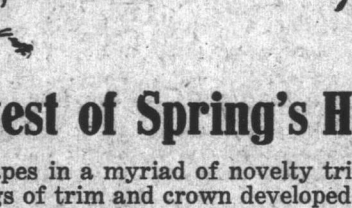
Per Yard, 90c.



**Dress Voiles.**

Figured Voiles, very nice patterns; 40 inches wide.

Per Yard, 59c.



**Striped Flannelette.**

Here's real value in Striped Flannelette; 27 inches wide.

Per Yard, 19c.



**Sweater Coats.**

About 100 lightweight Sweater Coats; pure Wool, in many shades. Reg. price \$7.49.

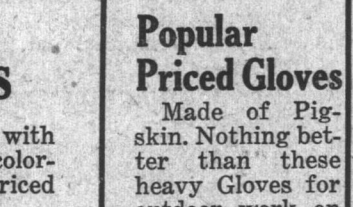
Now, each, \$4.98



**Leather Mitts**

Big Bargain in Heavy Mittens, made of good heavy leather with closely woven knit wrists. Excellent value at this special price.

Pair, 69c.



**Popular Priced Gloves**

Made of Pig-skin. Nothing better than these Heavy Gloves for outdoor work on cold days.

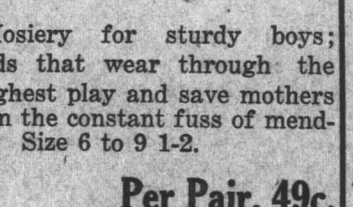
Pair, 69c.



**Quilt Cottons.**

Beautiful large pieces in Light and Dark patterns.

Per Pound, 38c.



**Boys' Hosiery.**

Hosiery for sturdy boys; kinds that wear through the roughest play and save mothers from the constant fuss of mending. Size 6 to 9 1-2.

Per Pair, 49c.



**Popular Hosiery.**

There is a saving and money saving in buying these Hose. Colors: Black, Tan, Navy, Grey.

Per Pair, 59c.



**Men's Work Shirts.**

Very well made Shirts for the heaviest strain that may be put upon them. They are excellent cutting. Shirts as well made up in Grey, Blue and Kakhi Flannel; full sizes.

Each, \$1.98



**Men's Dress Trousers.**

Well chosen materials; separate trousers for dress wear continue to be the fashion when worn with dark coat. Trousers at this price include handsome new striped weaves in all wool fabrics.

Each, \$5.98



**Wool Underwear.**

A full line; all sizes, heavy Wool Underwear. Reg. \$2.25 garments. Now

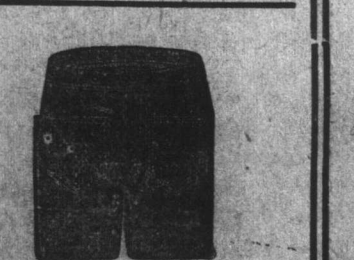
Per Garment, \$1.33



**Men's Caps.**

Stylish Caps of high grade materials; assorted patterns. We are fortunate in being able to place such a big value on sale at this price.

Each, 98c.



**Men's Overalls.**

Of heavy Blue Denim; extra quality.

Each, \$1.49

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317 WATER STREET.  
Store Open Every Night and Every Holiday.

**SPECIAL FOR THIS WEEK!**  
Lot of Men's Tweed Pants, Manufacturers' Odds and Ends, good value for \$5.50, your choice for \$3.25.  
**L. LEVITZ, 252 Water St.**  
(Opposite Dicks & Co.)

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