

# Harbour Buffet

- Population 1940: 445, 1966: 266
- Fishing settlement on Long Island, near the head of Placentia Bay
- 43 miles from Argentia
- Coastal Boats "Home", "Bacalieu" carried passengers, freight, and mail
- Nursing Station
- Customs office
- 17 radios (based on annual \$2.00 fee paid)
- Post and Telegraph office with money order
- A large, safe, deep harbour approximately one mile in diameter and protected by three islands at its entrance, is situated on Long Island in Placentia Bay.
- It is not known how the harbour got its name but it was probably named by the French who maintained a presence in the bay long before the English.
- It is known that a French naval officer of a similar surname was living in Placentia.
- An early glimpse of life and settlement of Harbour Buffett found in the Church of England School Society 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Report in 1849, was written by John Haddon who came to teach in Harbour Buffett in 1844.
- Haddon states that the community was first settled in the spring of 1831 when five families settled there; three of whom went away the following year.
- One of these families was probably the family of James and Jane Hodder of Rock Harbour, Placentia Bay who had three children; John born in 1828, born in Rock Harbour, James born in 1831 in Harbour Buffett, and William born in 1834 back in Rock Harbour.
- Although the population of Harbour Buffett was predominately Protestant, during early settlement it is difficult to ascertain the religious affiliation of its people.
- Churches were not established in the area and it is possible to find the records of families in the Church records not of their particular affiliation.
- Some of the earliest Church records in Placentia Bay are found in the Burin Methodist Records and include the Harbour Buffett family names of Hann, Jarvis, Coffin, Joyce, Drake, Kriby, and Tulk.
- Records of early Roman Catholic families are found in the Argentia Parish records and include the family names of Whiffen, Power, and Traverse.
- In 1836, Thomas E. Collett, who had relocated to Collett's Cove on Long Island from Petty Harbour, moved with several other families into Harbour Buffett.
- Shortly after his arrival, he formed the Harbour Buffett Society, its main objective being to erect a house for a schoolroom and a place for holding divine service.

- In 1837, a school/chapel was constructed by the inhabitants, and Thomas e. Collett became the first teacher.
- In 1840, Rev. Jeynes came to Harbour Buffett as the Anglican clergyman.
- The Harbour Buffett Society handed over the grounds and building to the Church and the Society dissolved.
- St. Paul's Anglican Church was built in 1841 and was consecrated on 14 of July 1843.
- Education played a vital role in the community. In addition to the school in Buffett proper, a school was built at the North East in 1899 and another at the Tickles in 1913.
- In 1836, there were ten houses and 58 people living in Harbour Buffett.
- By 1869, there were 37 houses and 240 people.
- The population continued to grow and peaked at 498 in 1921.
- After 1921, the population began a decline, and by the time of the resettlement in 1966, it had dropped to 266.
- Soon after settlement, merchant/traders moved to the harbour and set up business.
- These businessmen sold supplies to fishermen in exchange for their fish and also carried on a trade with other fishermen in the general area of Placentia Bay.
- These merchants brought supplies and fish into Harbour Buffett.
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- The fish was processed and shipped to overseas markets through merchants in St. John's, while the supplies were distributed to various communities around the bay.
- In 1870s the merchants and fishermen in addition to their involvement in the herring and salt cod fishery, began to invest in the lucrative lobster fishery.
- This diversity ensured year-round work for many of the residents.
- By the 1930s the lobster fishery had declined, after 35 years the Bank fishery was on the increase for the second time in the history of the community.
- This time the merchants involved in the Bank fishery were shipping their fish to foreign markets themselves.
- Involvement in these various fisheries provided prosperity for the community which now had become a financial and mercantile centre for this part of the bay.
- By the 1920s Harbour Buffet had a bank, nursing station, post office, customs office, fisheries office and a police station.
- This diverse economy in harbour Buffett based on the fishery employed people of many trades including fishermen, seamen, coopers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, boat builders, sail makers, carpenters, labourers, and clerical and business staff.
- When Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, the population of Harbour Buffett had already declined.
- In the years following, young people left to get an education and many of them never returned to live at Harbour Buffett.
- There had been a steady decline in the salt fish industry; the emphasis shifted to large fresh fish plants.

- In 1966-1967 the people of Harbour Buffett moved mainly to Little Harbour East, Dunville, St. John's, Burin, North Harbour, and Arnold's Cove.
- A resettled community, Harbour Buffet was located in buffet harbour on the southeastern side of Long island in inner Placentia Bay.
- Dick's Island lies at the entrance to the harbour with Issacs's island close by to the south.
- The harbour is 1.6 km (1 mi) in diameter, surrounded by hills ranging in elevation from 61 m (200 ft) to 107 m (350 ft), and is about 4 km (2.5 mi) north of Buffet head, a perpendicular cliff 91 m (300 ft) in height and topped by Ironskull hill for a total height of 183 m (600 ft). Buffett
- Harbour has a narrow entrance, but a deep channel to the north of the islands affords safe passage in and out (sailing directions Newfoundland: 1980)
- According to H.L Keenleyside (1944) the original name of the community was Havre Bouffe, roughly translated from the French into Squally Harbour.
- It was known in the Nineteenth Century as Harbour Beaufit and Harbour Beaufette. However, Wilfred Wareham, in the afterword to victor butler's cites a local legend which claims that the harbour is so named because of a flat edge of land at its entrance, which resembles a "buffet" (a local term indicating a rectangular, flat topped piece of furniture containing cupboards and drawers for storage of glassware and tablecloths)."
- As is the case with many communities in newfoundland, the date of first settlement is not known, although long island and buffet island are recorded on a chart prepared in the mid-1760's by the surveyors James cook and Michael Lane.
- The community was settled in four areas: the central area of Harbour Buffett (Known as the Harbour), northeast Harbour Buffett (referred to as the north east), the Ticks and coffins cove.
- Butler believes that the first permanent settlers arrived quite early in the Nineteenth and settled in the north east; Irish Roman Catholics, their names were Paynter, Power and traverse.
- An Englishman named Kirby settled in the same area in 1816. Other settlers of English extraction, with the family names Butler, Bendell, Burton, Collett, Dicks (Or dix), Hann, Reid Upshall and Whiffen, built their homes at the harbour.
- The first official census, taken in 1836, showed a population of fifty-eight, composed of twenty-two children, twenty-one adults and fifteen servants of unspecified age. Thirty-seven were Protestant catholic. The population rose to 313 by 1857 and it continued to rise slowly until it reached its maximum of 498 in 1921, where upon it began a steady decline until in 1966 it stood at 266.
- The early economy of Harbour Buffett was based on the inshore fishery.
- Fisherman either worked directly for the merchants and were paid with supplies, or fished from their own rooms and sold their catch to the merchants and were paid with

supplies, or fished from their own rooms and sold their catch to the merchant in return for supplies.

- As Butler pointed out (p.56), “Very little money was involved in these transactions. Money was a scarce commodity in those days.” The first merchant to set up business in Harbour Buffett was Thomas Hann, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.
- Hann, in addition to being a supplier for the community, owned a schooner which traded in other areas of Placentia Bay.
- His son George was the master of the trading schooner, which according to Butler, (p. 59), had its cabin fitted with shelves on which wares were displayed.
- Another merchant trader, James D. Chambers, went into operation in 1845, using the same trade methods as Hann.
- By 1857 there were four large vessels in the community and thirty-nine smaller boats. Most of which were skiffs each with a handling capacity of 200 to 760 kg ( 4 to 16 qlt). The census reported that in 1857 , 221 234 kg (4355 qlt) of offshore cod was processed by 123 fishermen who worked from thirty fishing rooms.
- Hanns son, George and William, both started business in 1860 (Butler, p. 63) by the time a salt fish business had been established by James Butler.
- By 1874 the number of fishing rooms had increased to thirty-five and the number of merchants and fishermen had reached five and 165, respectively. T
- The merchants owned a total of seven vessels which provided work for thirty-three men, the number of smaller skiffs, punts and jack boats had increased to sixty-five. Production, however was not appreciably increased.
- Thomas Hann died in 1876 and when George Hann went out of business in 1878, three merchants were left in Harbour Buffett.
- The 1884 census showed an increase of eleven fishing rooms but a slight decrease in both the number of fishermen and the total catch.
- By the time some of the merchants and fishermen were engaged in the Bank Fishery. Using schooners of between 70 and 80 tons. In 1890 such vessels from Harbour Buffett provided employment for thirty men and brought back 147 828 kg (2910 qlt) of cod.
- The inshore fishery for the same season produced 68 326 kg (1345 qlt).
- After 1890 the Bank Fishery was not pursued for nearly forty years, the inshore fishery, however, continued to thrive, its annual catch ranging from 101 600 kg (2000 qlt) in 1901 to 177 80 kg (3500 qlt) in 1921.
- By 1921 almost fifty percent of the total population was engaged in some aspect of the fishery, by 1935 the fishery had begun.
- In that year the Grand Banks were visited by ten Harbour Buffett vessels, the second highest number of vessels involved in that fishery from a single community.
- Of the Western boat fishery Butler (p.66) reported: “These boats would commence fishing around the first of May. The fishermen owned herring seines and seine skiffs which they rowed with long oars . . . . When they hauled their bait (I.E Herring) they

would ice it down in the holds of their boats in the lockers and get the boats under way to go to the fishing grounds. If the wind was south west, the race was on for Cape St. Marys.”

- Until the early years of the Twentieth Century dried cod was shipped to St. Johns by the Merchants (Who by then included Issac Wakley and Walter Chambers) for export to European markets. After 1910 however, Harbour Buffett merchants shipped the fish directly to Europe and the west indies, using their own vessels.
- The residents of Harbour Buffett were also engaged in the lobster and herring fisheries. In 1857 they took in 214 barrels of herring, the catch was low in 1874 (69 barrels). But by 1884 it had increased to 1294 barrels, and 1891, they saw a production of 2000 barrels. According to Butler (p.73), the herring fishery was a great boost to the economy of the community in the winter months, providing employment to fishermen and factory workers. T
- The firm of Wakely and Son established the first herring factory and Alberto Wareham of Spencer’s Cove began operating another in 1920, following Wareham’s purchase of the chamber’s property.
- The Wareham family also collected herring from the fishermen at Indian Harbour, Tacks Beach, and other nearby settlements.
- The lobster fishery came about in 1878 prior to this, Butler said (p.71) lobster had not been caught for commercial purposes: as a result, the supply was good.
- A man named Oates started the first lobster factory in Placentia Bay. From this factory, located in Long Harbour, he bought lobsters from all the local fishermen, paying ninety cents per hundred.
- Other merchants then established their own factories; Oates however found he could no longer operate at a profit and went out of business.
- Chambers set up a lobster factory complex, including a cookhouse and a bunkhouse, in Northwest Harbour Buffett at the mouth of Man-of-War River. He collected lobster from all parts of the bay.
- The number of factories in the community grew from three in 1890 to thirty-five in 1900, but production fell from 1417 cases to 695 cases during the same period. By 1910 eleven factories employing forty-seven persons packed only sixty-three cases. The lobster fishery gradually died out, as the over fished lobster grounds yielded less and less.
- According to Butler (p,72) the lobster industry had been revived by 1940 when the first firm to buy and export live lobsters, Maritime Packers of Pictou, Nova Scotia, began operations. The firms large diesel-powered boat collected lobsters from fishermen in all parts of Placentia Bay, paying five cents per pound. Eventually the local merchants, most notably the Warehams also began to collect and ship live lobsters.

- Other income for the community came from manufacturing. James Butler, in addition to trading fish, operated a cooperage which produced barrels for products such as herring and cod liver oil.
- George C. Fearn, who bought Hans firm, operated a tin shop which produced cans for lobsters, kettles, flanges, piping and other products.
- Alberto Wareham owned a similar shop. Employing people to make iron bands for masts, booms and gaffs, dory anchors and other iron products.
- Like most Newfoundlanders of the day, Harbour Buffett residents grew crops for their own consumption. The amount of land under cultivation, only .9 ha (2.25 acres) in 1836, rose to 13.3 ha (81 acres) by 1945.
- Potatoes, turnip, cabbage, and hay were the principle crops; the hay was used as winter fodder for the neat cattle, sheep and goats which supplemented the resident's diet; swine and poultry were also kept.
- The sale of animal products such as milk, butter, eggs, and wool supplemented family incomes.
- For some years after Harbour Buffett was established there were no organized communication links with the rest of the world.
- The first mail service was established on 1853, mail was taken overland from St. Johns to Long Harbour and then by boat to Harbour Buffett.
- The monthly service went by the boards in the winter when weather conditions forbade travel. When the Placentia branch rail line was completed in 1888 a weekly mail and passenger service was established.
- The first post office was built in 1891. It was according to Butler (p.76) "eight feet long and six feet wide. The little waiting room was so small only 2 persons could get in at the same time no matter how rough or rainy the weather was." A postal and telegraph office was built, along with a customs office, in 1911. As the population and volume of business increased, these offices became inadequate and a government building was erected c. 1914 to house the postal, telegraph, customs and fisheries inspections offices.
- The majority of the people living in Harbour Buffett were, from the community's earliest days, Church of England (Later Anglican) adherents. According to Wareham (in Butler p 145), "The first reference to a church at Harbour Buffett is in the 1846 House of Assembly Journal, which states that 'a church has been recently built at Harbour Buffett'."
- In fact, St. Paul's church was consecrated by Bishop Aubrey Spencer qv in 1843 (List of Missions of the Church of England in Newfoundland: 1877 p 25).
- Bishop Edward Field qv visited in the fall of 1845; he confirmed twenty-one people and noted that a rectory had been built and a school house was under construction.
- Field also mentioned that the resident missionary, Rev. William Jeynes (1842-1846), was responsible for all Placentia Bay residents of the Church of England faith. Field returned

for a second visit in 1848 and in that year Harbour Buffett became the headquarters of the Placentia Bay mission.

- The Church of England remained the dominant denomination throughout Harbour Buffett's existence
- The community had resident clergymen stationed there throughout the nineteenth century. These included Rev. William White (1847-1854) William F. Meek (1855-1891) and Rev. John Kingwell Jr (1862-1891) qqv. The small numbers of Roman Catholic and Methodist (later United Church) adherents (seventeen and six respectively, in 1945) rendered impossible the support of Churches or chapels of those denominations. The Roman Catholics attended services in the nearby Port Royal qv.
- Education appears to have been given major emphasis. According to the Journal of the Legislative Council (1837, App. P.8) it was noted that, in a letter to district M.H.A. Robert Sweetland dated November 1836, T.E. Collett had advised that "being in possession of some funds." The residents of Harbour Buffett had contracted for a school to be built by the following May. The sum of \$10 (pounds) was voted in aid of the school. In 1839 the teacher received \$10 (pounds) for teaching twenty-seven students; in the following year the salary was raised to \$24 (pounds).
- By 1857 another school had been built. The Journal of the House of Assembly for 1863 (App, p. 266) noted: "The inhabitants of Harbour Buffett have long enjoyed superior advantages to other parts of the bay. Since 1841, it has benefited from the labours of both a clergyman and a teacher, and we might reasonably expect to see some fruits for their labours, and accordingly on Sundays every person, great and small, holds a prayer book and joins in the responses and singing; that cannot be seen everywhere in the bay."
- In 1899-1900, according to Butler, (p.78), "the residents of North East Buffett got together and built a school house . . . . The first teacher in the North East school was Mary Lockyer from Isle Valen. She received a salary of ten dollars per month." Another school opened, at the Tickles, in 1913. Although there was reportedly no denominational distinction, very few Roman Catholics attended these schools.
- Before 1900 one of the two early schools was also the scene of political and other meetings, while weddings and social gatherings were usually held in people's houses.
- According to Butler (p. 79), around 1900, six men of the community got together and built a community hall which was used for all social gatherings. When the Society of United \*Fishermen qv was organized in 1863 its meetings were held in one of the schools; soon after, however, the S.U.F. built its own hall.
- Wareham (Butler, pp. 149-160) suggested that Harbour Buffett's decline may have been related to its initial success as a fishing community and a supply centre for Placentia Bay; the society had become stratified by the Twentieth Century and people were no longer content to work for the merchants, who were considered to hold the reins of power.

- Before World War 2, according to Wareham, “although there was clear evidence of stratification, there was not the strong emphasis on upward mobility which developed in the later period (post war years).” As young people left the community to further their education, they stayed away to find more satisfying employment.
- By 1965 only seven per cents of the work force were fishermen, and the population was only half that of 1921.
- When the government resettlement programme went into effect, the majority of residents decided to move and the rest eventually followed.
- In 1967 Harbour Buffett was abandoned as its last resident settled down to other areas. The majority of the people decided to move to Arnolds Cove, Dunville and St. John’s with smaller numbers going to Baine Harbour, Burin, Little Harbour East, Freshwater and Corner Brook.

Victor Butler (1980), Edward Field (1851), L.L. Hodder (1937), J.F. Imray (1862), H.L. Keenleyside (1944), Census (1836-1966), JHA (1833-1873 passim), Sailing Directions Newfoundland (1980), Statistics, Federal Provincial Resettlement Program (1975), Hand Book Gazetteer and Almanac, Newfoundland 1940, Arnold’s Cove: A Community History (1997)