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Wishie Rose: From 50 Years at Sea  
Wishie Rose, Baddeck: We had some good years--it wasn't all bad weather--but there was some rotten time, too, I was born in Jersey Harbour, Newfoundland, but I lived in Harbour Breton most of my time there. It was just a little village, an outport, maybe 25 families. People all fishing, nothing else. Some shore-fished, some Bank-fished--some went to Lunenburg, some Bank-fished in Newfoundland--that's what they call dory fishing, in two-masted schooners, you know. That's actually the reason I came here to live. Because we used to come to Lunenburg every year, make a few hundred dollars; you'd go back to Newfoundland, spend it in the winter to the merchants down there. So, my mother was dead a.ny ja.Y, and I figured if we had to come out of Newfoundland to make a liv? ing, why not stay out of it? Although in Newfoundland it's just as good now as any other place, maybe better, I don't know. The last time I went back, there were noth? ing but oil tankers back home, a busy place. But there's nobody in Jersey Har? bour today. (What did your father do?) He fished, too, in latter years. See, we had quite a lit? tle business there, I wasn't even born when we lost a Banks schooner. She was on? ly new, too--no insurance. All hands lost. The last man that saw her said she looked all right--they saw her in the evening. The breeze came up that night, and she nev? er was heard tell of afterwards. (Was your father aboard?) No, no. But my mother had a brother on her at that time. It was my father's schooner. Brand new--newly re? paired. She was an old schooner; he had her rebuilt new, you know. Her first year out, and no insurance on her. But that spring I heard poor old Dad say that there was a guy came up from St, John's, an in? surance agent, insuring schooners' crews. And Dad took a thousand dollars out on each man--there were 19 men on her. But that's all the insurance. Just the men were insured, but the schooner wasn't. And that winter--the schooner was lost in Au? gust-- that same winter our shop burned, the store, and no insurance. Just a little grocery and clothing store. Had 5 or 6 hun? dred dollars cash in it, too. In 1901, 1902. So that kind of knocked us back. Poor old Father, he only had a small schooner any? way, he wasn't out in the big ones at all. So he continued on fishing. And when we got big enough, we went fishing with him for awhile. I was 13 when I started. She was a little schooner, carried two dories, two masts, sails, had a little power too-- 8- or 9-horsepower--just enough to move her along if it was calm. But we made a living at it. It was just what you call shore-fishing, 10 or 15 mile off was the farthest. Didn't go on The Banks at all. Trawl with the dories. I'd hold the gear, bring it back aboard the boat. Had to split the fish, tod, salt it. But every? body was doing that; there was no particu? lar job. Just making enough to get a bite. You hardly knew what a dollar was. I was 16 when I made my first trip across in a 3-master--one of those foreign ves? sels taking fish across to Spain, Italy, those places. I wasn't quite 16--that was in July--they were loading fish home. And the captain wanted me to go with him. Poor old Mother, she didn't want it very bad-- me to go. But I really wanted to go. She said, "Look, Steve"--he was the captain of the schooner; they were reared up togeth- er--"if you look after him, he can go." I



wasn't long getting ready, I'm telling you. I wanted to get away so bad. But I got sea? sick, oh brother, seasick. Up on the masts of the schooner, stowing the topsails. If you were the last man to come aboard, you had the worst jobs. You had the foremast to look after--that's the forward one. And you had all the rigging to look after. You had somebody to tell you what to do, but you had to do it. And no use saying, "I'm not going to do it"--you had to do it. You h"ad the jumbo, you had the jib, and you CAPE BRETON'S MAGAZINE, NUMBER TWENTY-NINE WRECK COVE, CAPE BRETON, NOVA SCOTIA SECOND CLASS MAIL -- REGISTRATION NUMBER 3014