

[Page 61 - Billy James MacNamara of Evanston](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 49](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1988/8/1

er fishermen and Boston fishermen--there were no freezers here then. No freezers around to freeze frozen bait like they do today. They used to come in and anchor out there in the bay. They'd come in there looking for bait. You'd see hundreds of them going through the strait, some of them going to the Madeleine Islands to get their bait. (Then) they'd go out back to the Banks, fishing. A lot of them came in here in this bay. All the (local) fishermen did, they picked their nets, rowed aboard there, and they'd give them so much a hundred for herring. They'd be buying the bait from the local fishermen. Oh, it was good. In those days, they used to get quite a pile. (So your father, he mostly made his living with the fishing.) Generally, mostly, yeah. He worked on the railroad, he worked on this road here quite a lot. And he worked on the railroad (the Intercolonial), Point Tupper over there, too--he used to work there quite a lot. On the track, and dif? ferent work. Repairing stations, repairing the platforms around the stations, water tanks. They had carpenters on the railroad; they had carpenters and mechanics and everything, whatever suited the purpose to work. (What about keeping the railroad open in the wintertime? Did they have a plow?) Not in the beginning here. I remember one win? ter here at this--they've got plows on now, they just push this along the track, piles the thing right off--snowplows. But I can remember here, when that St. Peters line was built. There came a terrible heavy win? ter- -it was after it was completed; the trains were running back and forth on it. And it blocked everything, pretty well from Point Tupper to St. Peters, a terrible spell of a snowstorm. And the biggest part of it, they shovelled it all out by shovel. Yeah. Men with shovels shovelled the big? gest part of it out. They had no plow on it at all, here. They might have had one on the other road, but I don't know. It was nearly all done by manpower that time. To? day, men's arms ain't much good to them! (When you were growing up here, what did you think you were going to do?) I suppose, like every other young fellow, I had all kinds of dreams. (Like what?) Like going to sea, was mostly my dream--going to sea, at that time. And I went, too. I went to Glou? cester- -Gloucester , Massachusetts. I got the train here at that time in Point Tup? per. We went into Saint John, New Brun? swick. We took the boat from there. I land? ed in Boston out of her--for \$10 at that time. That's all I paid from Point Tupper to Saint John, New Brunswick, and trans? ferred to the Eastern Steamship Lines, into Boston--\$10. (Why did you choose Gloucester?) Well, I'll tell you. My father sailed out of Gloucest? er for 5 or 6 years. And he brought a book home here with him. It was called The Fish? erman's Own Book. It's gone now, years ago. I read that over and over. I read about the stories of the fishermen, what they went through in gales of wind, and how they fell overboard, and some of them survived and got back again. All these stories--most of them were real, true. What they went through. Some of them hove down on their beam ends--their sails in the water, their spars in the water. I don't know what kind of influenced me that I'd like to go through that experience! But there were times when I happened, did get in experi? ences like that, and I wished I--that book --that I'd never seen it! So that's how I happened to

go there. (But was there no opportunity for sailing right from here, then?) Oh, yes. there were. But there wasn't too much money in it. All you'd get there then, much, was around-- those days on the coastal vessels, it was \$20 a month. Maybe less than that. But I had it in my mind to get to the States. See, everything went to the States from here, them days. The majority of all the young men, it was either to Bangor, Maine, or Boston or Gloucester, to go fishing. There was an awful flow of people at that Cape Breton Auto Radiator co. RADIATOR HOSES • REPAIRING • CLEANING • RECORING • ' . COMPLETE CYLINDER HEAD SERVICE 518 Grand auto * truck * industrial Sydney Lake Road Complete Line of Gas Tanks 564-6362 island""Ttrim Auto Glass • Windshield Repairs • Safety Glass Plate Glass • Sun Roofs • Vinyl Tops Convertible Tops • Auto Upholstery 104 REEVES STREET SYDNEY, N.S. B1P3C5 539-0436 MIKE PETERS RES: 564-8633 Locally Owned and Operated Louisbourg Craft Workshops P.O. Box 83, Louisbourg, N.S. BOAIMO (902)733-3233 Handcrafts Produced in Our Workshops: Screenprinting, Metal Moulding Local Handcrafts * Other Maritime Kerns OPEN MAY 1 TO OCTOBER 31 May 1 to Mid-June and Mid-Sept, to Oct. 31: Weekdays 9-6, Saturday & Sunday 10-6 jvy t ' Mid-June to Mid-Sept.: 'xV'Jml Weekdays 9-9. Saturday & Sunday 9-9 S?' 'Refreshments' Available Guided Tours of. Workshops No Admission Fee