

°Squatters in Gander°, provided by Gary Pinsent

By July 24th, 1937 Sir Wilfred Woods and solemnly declared in a confidential dispatch to the Secretary of the Commission; “We must not permit a settlement of shacks to grow up there like the settlements at Grand Falls and Corner Brook outside the Paper Towns at these places”.

But as early as 1938 these shacks started to appear and Sgt. John Clarke of the Newfoundland Constabulary submitted a report to the Chief of Police L. Strange. The report had been directed by the Commissioner of Public Utilities and Supply. The report it is believed was submitted in 1947 or 1948.

There 13 squatters were confined to a location within two and one quarter miles of the Railway Station and therefore within the five mile area known as the “Airport Area”, i.e. a radius of five miles with the mile post 213 on the Railway as the centre.

The first was a one story wooden structure, measuring approximately 30’ x 18’ and occupied by one Maurice Power with a family of ten. The building was originally erected by Robert Rideout in 1938 who, at the time, was engaged in construction at the Airport. Six years prior (1940) he had been given permission by H.A.L. Pattison, interest in the building was transferred to Mr. Power. This building was situated on approximately one quarter acre of land. At the time Mr. Power was employed with Civil Aviation Division at one of the heating plants at the Airport.

The second residence was an annex to the former and measured approximately 20’ x 13’ and was occupied by Edward Power, son of Maurice Power, and comprised of one story with three rooms. The annex in question was built in 1944 at a cost of \$200.00. The annex was built without any authority. With the exception of the land upon which the annex was erected no other land was involved. Mr. Edward Power was employed with the Civil Aviation Division.

The third residence was a one story wooden structure as well and measured approximately 25’ x 20’ and contained four rooms. The premises was occupied by Michael Byrne and family. Byrne was employed by the Civil Aviation Division as a truck driver. Building was originally constructed by one A. Cole during the construction phase at Gander and was transferred to one Noah Trask during 1943. Trask received \$10.00 per month from the Byrne. This building was also constructed with the full knowledge of H.A.L. Pattison, who at the time was the Chief Control Officer for the Airport. With the exception of the land on which the was erected, no other land was taken in. The value of the premises was estimated to be \$300.00.

Building number 4 was a one story wooden structure measuring approximately 20' x 20' and contained four rooms. The value placed on this residence was \$600.00 and was constructed by the owner Alex Smith during 1943 who at the time was an employee of the Royal Canadian Air Force and was now an employee of the Civil Aviation Division. In addition to the land which the house occupied Smith had cultivated an area of approximately 70' x 100' and also operated a hennery. Smith was augmenting his salary by the sale of eggs and fowl to the local residents. Smith operated without the appropriate authority and the Newfoundland Government.

The residence numbered 5 was occupied by the original owner, Mr. Arthur J. Baker, who erected the building during 1938 on the authority vested in him by Mr. Patton, who, at the time was an engineer engaged in the construction of the Airport. The residence comprised of a single story wood structure, measuring approximately 52' x 23' and contained five rooms. The total amount of land occupied by this residence was approximately one acre. The valuation of residence and property was \$500.00. Practically all of the land in question had been cultivated and had been occupied for a period of some eight and one-half years. During the pre-war years and during construction of the Airport, Mr. Baker was employed as foreman carpenter and subsequent to the Airport being transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force he was he was employed by that service in the same capacity. Following the taking over of the Airport by the Civilian Aviation Authority, Mr. Baker had been unemployed and he at the time was not paying any rentals to the Newfoundland Government.

An annex was built unto the above residence by a Mr. Arthur Baker and comprised of three rooms being at the time occupied by his son Mr. Albert Baker. The son was not employed at Gander but was employed by one of the paper making concern at Deer Lake. The Newfoundland Government received no rentals in connection with this annex.

The next residence was constructed by Mr. William Chalk and was at the time the occupier. It measures approximately 13' x 13' and was constructed in 1944 at a cost of \$100.00. No authority was vested in the subject to erect the building. Total amount of land in question measured approximately 80' x 80'. The subject was employed by the Civil Aviation Division and he paid no compensation to the Newfoundland Government.

Residence number 8 was a one story wooden structure measuring approximately 18' x 15' and contained three small rooms. The building was erected in 1944 by Silas baker, son of Arthur J. Baker at a cost of approximately \$200.00. The building, at the time of the report, was occupied by William Feltham who was employed by the Civil Aviation

Division and who paid an amount of \$10.00 on a monthly basis to the owner. Baker was not an employee of the Government.

The forgoing list comprised of the residences constructed in an area that came to be known as "Union East". The buildings were constructed during that time when the RCAF had assumed responsibility of the Airport and were constructed with the full knowledge of the Senior Officers and were inspected by the Senior Medical Officer. The residences were constructed as no housing accommodations were available at the Airport proper.

The residence number 9 comprised of a one story wooden structure measuring approximately 25' x 30' and contained six rooms. It was occupied by a Mr. Howard Barnes, Chief Rigger, Civilian Aviation Division, Gander. It was built by Mr. Barnes in 1943 with the full knowledge and consent of the Director of Civil Aviation at an approximate cost of \$700.00. It was situated in close proximity to the Government Transmitters located on the Transmitter Road. The total land area comprised of approximately one quarter of an acre. No rentals were paid to the Government in respect to this property.

Residence number 10 was a one story wooden structure that measured 20' x 20' and at the time was occupied by Mr. James Noel and family. The premises was owned by Mr. Charles Warren, employee of the Canadian Government Department of Transport, Meteorological Division, Gander, who at the time was receiving \$15.00 per month rental from the occupant. The building was erected during 1937-37 by two carpenters at that time employed on construction at the airport and was transferred to the Mr. Warren during 1943. Mr. Warren was in possession of written authority from the Honourable Commissioner of Public Utilities to own and hold title to said premises. The building in question was situated just West of the junction of the Receiver Road and the railway crossing in close proximity to the buildings of Imperial Oil Ltd. In conjunction with this building no rentals were paid to the Newfoundland Government.

The next residence and the last on the list is number 11 and was build under similar conditions as specified as that above. At the time of the report the premises was owned by Mr. Thomas Lannon, Supervisor of the Motor Transport Section, Civil Aviation Division, Gander, who assumed control in 1938. At the time the occupant of the residence was Mr. Augustus Bailey an employee of Goodyear Humber Stores Ltd. who paid a monthly rate of \$10.00 to Mr. Lannon. Mr. Bailey later extended his generosity to the father of the author and between the two of them with the assistance of Mr. Bailey's 13 year old son, Ed, they acquired enough material to build on a 2 room annex. Gus Bailey and Jack Pinsent

remained good friends and neighbours for the remainder of their lives. The residence was in close proximity to that of Mr. James Noel.

Residences numbers 10 and 11 were erected well beyond the boundaries of the Airport proper and it was not until sometime later that the boundary lines were redefined to encompass these units.

The next two buildings are worthy of mention, the first being referred to as "The Log Cabin" which was erected in 1944 by Special Services Organization of the American Armed Forces stationed at Gander at an approximate cost of \$10,000.00. The location of this building was at Deadman's Pond and was used during the summer seasons by members of the Armed Services at Gander under the Supervision of the aforementioned organization. A verbal authorization was received from the Royal Canadian Air Force during 1944 and it was the ultimate intention of the American Forces to turn the site over to the Newfoundland Government. Again, and in conjunction with this building, no rental was paid to the Newfoundland Government.

The last building on the list of inventory was that of the "Piggery" which was located at 'Beaver Centre' and was originally erected from funds supplied by the RAF Welfare Committee by the British Air Ministry during 1943. The building measured approximately 240' x 40' with a wing measuring approximately 80' x 30'. The estimated cost was \$26,000.00 and Joseph R. Smallwood assumed ownership of the building on April 1st 1945 when he bought out all other interests and was at the time conducting an extensive business in the sale of pigs, pork, etc., which he was distributing in Gander and other outside points. There was also a residence attached to the facility which was occupied by the Smallwood family. This residence was built under the same conditions as the facility. The total land encompassing this enterprise was approximately one half acre. No rentals had been paid to the Newfoundland Government in connection with this operation.