

The earliest reference to any population for Burgeo is dated 1764. At that time the entire population for Burgeo, Port Aux Basques, and Harbour Le Cou consisted of a total of 34 people. In 1798, there was one family living at Lower Burgeo. John Currie and his family had moved to Burgeo from Rose Blanche sometime between 1760 and 1790. Two families of Andersons lived at the Western Sandbanks. The Anderson family name is the oldest and the most common family name at Burgeo even today. John Matthews and his wife Sarah, formerly Sarah Bagg, was the next family to move to the Burgeo area. He and his family came from Cape Lu Hune and settled on Slade's Island in 1796; the Island's name has since changed to Small's Island. In 1802 the total population of Burgeo was 23 people. In 1822, there were only 5 or 6 families. This was recorded by William Epps Cormack who visited Burgeo after crossing Newfoundland from east to west. He wrote: "In the vicinity there are five or six residing families."

Brake

The Brake families provide an interesting example of how aboriginal and immigrant cultures merged in west coast Newfoundland. Elements of both cultures were retained, but it seems that, in day to life, the Micmac way of life prevailed. The following excerpt is from an 1871 lecture by the Rev. M. M. Howley about his journey in the Bay of Islands:

As we sailed onwards we observed that both sides of the river were studded by numerous salmon nets... These nets belong to a family of the Brakes who live further down the river. They maintain themselves entirely by the salmon and trout fisheries...

The progenitor of these men came out from England over 100 years ago, he located himself on the banks of this river far away from the haunts of men and lived a semi Indian life, trading in furs and salmon and deer flesh. To complete his felicity he married a squaw, probably following the darwinian theory of natural selection, from whom there sprung up the present 10 or 12 families. They have divided into two parties on account of some dispute concerning a box of money stowed away from their first parent...

As we advanced up the river, there suddenly shot out from behind a wooden peak a small boat... It was manned by one individual of every extraordinary appearance. The features

presented a very marked type of the Micmac Indian, an enormous crop of coarse, bushy red hair stood out thick and matted upon his head, while a very sparse down of the same roseate hue flourished undisturbed upon his face and chin... This person was one of the Brakes... He appeared very much awed by the sight of so many human beings, in this solitary haunt, and seemed anxious to avoid us... [Howley 1882]

The progenitor of whom Rev. Howley speaks was Ralph Brake, his wife was Jane Matthews. Their descendants are multiple, through the Bay of Islands and elsewhere on the west coast. The following is the story of Ralph's family in England.

Ralph Brake, born March 30 1760 in Yetminster, Dorsetshire, England, was the son of Ralph Brake and Sarah Shave. Ralph and Sarah had three sons: Robert b. 1754, James b. 1758 and Ralph b. 1760 also a daughter, Mary, who died in infancy.

In 1761, Ralph Sr. became ill. He was a thatcher by trade, did he, perhaps, suffer an accident? We are not told, but, in his necessity Ralph had recourse to the Parish. On 5 October 1761, the following entry appears in Yetminster Vestry Book:

We authorize the Overseers to put Ralph Brake under the care of Dr. Bragg and to provide the said Ralph Brake with lodgings and all necessary accommodations as long as he is under Dr. Bragg's care and it is necessary for him to be at Sherborne.

J. Topham, Thomas Allambridge, Tim Hewlett, W. Warry.

It was almost unprecedented that a sick person should be sent out of the Parish to be treated at Parish expense. Ralph spent six weeks in Sherborne, he was boarded in three different households at a cost of 1p 5s 9d. All was to no avail, despite his bill for 5p 5s 0d, Dr. Bragg's treatment had no effect... [H]e died and was buried on 31 December 1761. The Parish had paid his funeral expenses which amounted to 13s 6d.

Over the next four years the Parish continued to make payments to Sarah for herself and her three small sons. Life for a widow was difficult and, alas, Sarah fell from grace! Mrs. Fox was paid 2s 6d for attending Sal Brake in labor. On 3 November 1765, Sarah, daughter of Sarah Brake was baptized. Sarah was taken before the magistrates to be examined concerning the father of the child.

Meanwhile, over the years, expenditure upon the children continued. Various women were paid for keeping them and a considerable amount was spent on clothing, both for the three boys and the little girl. They were growing up fast and, in 1772, it was decided that Robert, the eldest, should be sent to Newfoundland.

Yetminster rate-payers soon afterwards decided that James and Ralph Brake should also be sent to Newfoundland. One wonders if the brothers ever saw one another after their arrival in Newfoundland. Robert settled at Twillingate to the north, James at Marystown on the Burin Peninsula to the south and Ralph on the west coast at Bay of Islands.

Marlene Companion picks up the story:

When Ralph Brake settled at the Bay of Islands he met and made a union with an Indian girl by the name of Jane Matthews. Together they had eight sons and two daughters. Although not well educated, Ralph Brake apparently provided well for his large family, dealing with the firm of Joseph Bird of Poole England. Bird appears to have had just one ship, the 'Joseph', working out of Poole, but he owned the Market House in Sturminster Newton where he sold all manner of cloth and haberdashery. Ralph appears to have prospered as in 1818 he built a substantial boat of 43 tons called the "Hope". In 1830 this vessel was hired by Quebec merchants and subsequently was lost. (The "Hope" was registered in 1822 to its owner and builder, Ralph Brake of Bay of Islands. It was built in Bay of Islands in 1818, was 43 tons, 49 feet long, 14 feet wide, 6 feet deep, had 2 masts and 1 deck.)

Jane died in 1819 aged 46 and Ralph in 1842 aged 82. They had nine children: Ralph, Edward, James, Thomas, William, John, Catherine, Joseph, and Elizabeth - all surnamed Matthews Brake.

When my research first began several years ago little was known of Jane Brake, wife of Ralph. All that was known was that she was the daughter of "Old Man Matthews" an Indian man from the south east coast of Newfoundland. It was through combined efforts of myself and other family researchers that bits of information on this family began to surface and be pieced together. A letter written by Edward Brake was found. This letter to Bird and Pool has confirmed details of Ralph and Jane's death. A headstone was requested as follows:

I should wish to have a good headstone for my father and mother; their bodies are alongside of each other, with a gilded angel on each side. Sacred to the memory of Jane Brake who departed

this life August 23 1819 aged 46 years Sacred to the memory of Ralph Brake who departed this life May 4 1842 aged 82 years

Although we, as family researchers, have not yet pieced together Jane Matthews' family, there have been many entries in journals such as J. B. Jukes and Bishop Field that clearly stated that Ralph Brake's children were considered "Indian". Therefore Jane Matthews herself was of aboriginal descent. When Ralph Brake's will was found by researchers it showed that all of Ralph and Jane's children were given a second name of Matthews. This was a Mi'kmaq tradition, giving a child the name of the mother's father, more indication that Jane was aboriginal.

We found through research that after Ralph's death, the whole Brake family fell apart. There was bickering and feuding between brothers. At one point in their history, one family of Brakes would not even acknowledge that the other families of Brakes were related. It was found that the brothers were accusing each other of stealing Ralph's money. It was known that when Ralph died he had large sums of money at his property in the Bay of Islands. Each brother accused the other of theft. Because of this feud many Brake family members would not even acknowledge who their parents were. Because of these incidents it has been very hard for family members to trace their family's lineage. It was only after Ralph's money was found under pickling salt that family ties became strong again.

This is the dispute to which the Rev. Howley referred. Howley was not the only clergyman or visitor who wrote about the Brake family. Below are some references to members of the Brake families of the Bay of Islands as being Micmac.

Joseph Brake

Joseph was referred to by J. B. Jukes in 1839 (1993:52) as an "Indian":

On the opposite side of the sound to the old man's house we found an Indian wigwam, with an old Indian woman and her two daughters, one of the latter of whom has a daughter married to one of the old man's sons opposite. The old woman had a kind of moustache tattooed on each cheek, and spoke nothing but Indian, but one of the daughters could speak English. An Indian man, the husband of one of the daughters, was living with them, but was now away in the woods.

This daughter of the old Indian woman was Mary Mitchell. The old woman's husband was Captain Jock Mitchell [antecedent of Matthew Mitchell].

J. B. Jukes 1839: Joseph Brake 3 in family, Listed as a Native, Barber's Cove, age 27.

Joseph Brake is listed in Bishop Edward Feild's "List of Inhabitants 1849" as having 2 children with a total of 4 in the family living in Deep Cove, Bay of Islands. In Bishop Feild's journal on his voyage of visitation around the island of Newfoundland in 1849 (pp. 48-49) he writes:

August 3, 1849. We went on shore directly after breakfast to visit a family who had returned from the fishery yesterday evening. The man is a Brake, brother to the Brakes mentioned before. The mother is a Micmac Indian from St. George's Bay... Her father, she said, was Captain Jock. Four of their children were baptized with the conditional form.

James Brake:

According to Bishop Feild (p. 47) Aug. 2, 1849:

.. the children of J. Brake were baptized after the second lesson of the morning service, as those of his brother yesterday. His wife is an Indian from St. George's Bay...

Benjamin Brake (born c. 1841) son of Thomas and Mary Brake:

On December 18, 1876, Benjamin Brake committed a murder at his home in the Bay of Islands. The story about this event was first published in a Halifax newspaper. After a considerable time, the news of the event found its way to St. John's. Benjamin was charged with murder as is told in a newspaper article in the Royal Gazette/ Newfoundland Advertiser Tuesday, June 20, 1876. This article stated he was a "full-blooded Indian". Other newspaper articles and the court documents also refer to him as Indian.

Further reports were printed in the Terra Nova Advocate, December 2, 1876 and again in the Royal Gazette/Newfoundland Advertiser December 19, 1876.

James Brake, July 5 1880, son of Benjamin, is recorded as Micmac on the 1921 census. He included his children as aboriginal.

Thomas Brake, July 3 1882, son of Benjamin Brake is recorded as Micmac on the 1921 census.

Sarah Park or Parker, wife of Edward Matthews Brake: Folklore and family history says that Sarah Park or Parker was native from the south east coast of Newfoundland.

Another branch of the Brake family lives in Bay St. George. Their family history says that their Indian ancestry comes from the Brakes of the Bay of Islands, through Edward Brake, originally from there. Marlene Companion writes about Edward Brake and the available documentation on him and his family:

The original Edward Brake in St. George's came from the Bay of Islands. He married or united with a Catherine Vardy also from the Bay of Islands. We have documentation for their two descendants but it is of very limited value.

With my research I have concluded that this Edward Brake, husband of Catherine, may well be my great-grandfather who married Josephine Duval. The reasons why I have come to this conclusion are listed below.

1. Edward, of Catherine affiliation, was born about 1840 in the Bay of Islands, father unknown. No documentation has been found for this Edward's death in St. George's. Catherine's death record was not found either. Edward, of Josephine affiliation, was born about 1836, according to headstone information and baptism records of Bishop Feild.

2. No marriage record has been found for Edward and Catherine. There are two children confirmed for this couple, the first born in 1856 and the second in 1866. Edward and Josephine were married January 1878 in the Bay of Islands. Josephine was twenty years younger than Edward.

Until Edward returned to the Bay of Islands with Josephine, there are no records of an Edward being there. Family stories tell of Edward leaving the Bay of Islands by birch bark canoe and going to St. George's and living with the Micmacs. He returned with a pregnant and unmarried Josephine late in 1878. No one is certain how long Edward lived in Sandy Point before returning to the Bay of Islands.

3. All records from Edward Wix, J. B. Jukes and Bishop Feild show only one Edward Brake on the west coast until 1849. This was Edward Matthews Brake, son of Ralph Brake. After 1878, Edward

and Josephine show up in Humbermouth (Edward was baptized by Bishop Feild in August 1849).

Although there are two separate wills made out by Edward (of Josephine), there was no mention of any children other than those by Josephine. This is why it is hard to confirm that Edward (of Catherine) and Edward (of Josephine) is the same person.

After reviewing both wills, we Brake family researchers determined that two of Edward and Josephine's daughters married "foreigners" and left Newfoundland. Edward never spoke of them again; it was thought by family members that these girls died. Perhaps this gives a clue as to why Edward would also not mention his grown children in Sandy Point -- we simply don't know, but the possibility is certainly there that my forefather, Edward, is also the forefather of the Brakes in St. George's.

Ralph Brake, Snr.[1] Male 1705 - 1761 (56 years)

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Name Ralph Brake, Snr. Suffix Snr. Born 11 Feb 1705 Gender Male Died Dec 1761 Poole Dorset UK Find all individuals with events at this location Person ID I13020 Rumbolt Last Modified 31 Oct 2006

Father John Radolphus Brake, b. 1704, Yetminster, Dorset Find all individuals with events at this location Mother margaret Elizabeth Douglas Family ID F4119 Group Sheet

Family Sarah Shave, b. 1726, d. 8 Apr 1808 (Age 82 years) Married 6 Jan 1754 Yetminster, Dorset Find all individuals with events at this location Children + 1. Ralph Brake, Jr., b. Mar 1760, Yetminster, Dorset Find all individuals with events at this location, d. 4 May 1842, Humbermouth Find all individuals with events at this location (Age ~ 82 years) Family ID F4118 Group Sheet