

Rowe Family of Newfoundland

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Introduction

The Rowe Surname in Newfoundland

According to Seary, Rowe was the 78th most popular name in Newfoundland in the 1955 Official List of Electors, with 354 entries (White was the most common with 1835 entries).

The current (2013) telephone directory lists 314 individuals with the name Rowe in Newfoundland.

In 1864 (one of the earliest comprehensive NL directories) the name appears in Heart's Content, Carbonear, St. John's, Old Perlican and Point Verde for a total of 32 times (20 of which were in Heart's Content).

Around that time the name also appears in church records for Catalina, Chance Cove, Cupids, Green's Harbour, Seldom, Trinity, Whiteway and St. George (west coast).

One of the first, and by far the most significant appearances, of the name Rowe occurs at Trinity in the mid-1700's.

Edward Rowe, an Englishman, (b. circa 1700 in Yeovil, Somerset) is listed in several documents as a Justice of the Peace in Trinity in 1753.

A 1753 census lists him with a wife, four sons and two daughters. The children appear to have been born in the 1735 -1745 time frame.

Edward died rather suddenly in 1754.

Of those six children, only four have been identified: - sons, Thomas, James, Edward and a daughter Christian.

The daughter Christian is said to have married in 1766, to Thomas Street, a prominent businessman in Trinity.

Their offspring were born between 1768-1791.

Records that have been found to date show that of the sons of Edward, Thomas had one daughter, no sons,

Edward had five daughters, no sons and James had six daughters and six sons - five of whom survived to maturity and had large families of their own.

James married in the mid 1770's and in 1783 relocated from Trinity to Heart's Content and founded a family ship-building enterprise that lasted nearly 100 years.

His children were born between 1774 -1791. Virtually all of the Trinity Bay (Green's Harbour, Whiteway, Chance Cove, Dildo) and Seldom Rowes trace their roots back to him.

A bit of confusion surrounds the wife of James - whether it be Ann Sheppard or Mary Burridge or both.

The first Rows noted in Carbonear were Benjamin (1786 -1849) who was a constable and Henry (178?-1833), a school teacher and they were possibly brothers.

The first Rowe in Bonavista/Catalina, was a Henry of Bird Island Cove who married there in 1823. There is a strong possibility Henry was a Heart's Content Rowe.

The first in Point Verde, a William (1828 -1900).

The first in Cupids, a William (1808 -1873)

The first in Old Perlican, a William who baptized a son there in 1826.

Any or all of these could have had a connection to the Rowses of Trinity/Heart's Content but, if so, I haven't found it.

A prominent family using the spelling Row appeared in St. John's in the early 1800's and seem to be descended from a John and Betty Row of Torquay, Devon.

This line produced William Bickford Row and Thomas R. Row both prominent politician/business men of the mid -1800's

Most of the west-coast Rowses are descended from Auguste Reault, an immigrant from France, who arrived in Newfoundland in the 1850's and took up residence in Port au Port.

The French Reault was anglicized to Rowe around the time he married Marie Gaudet from Nova Scotia.

Anglicization of French names was very common in the area at that time, e.g. Lejeune became Young, Leblanc became White, Dutreuil became Dutrey, etc.

It would be safe to say that about 80% of the Rowses in Newfoundland today are descended from James Rowe of Heart's Content or Auguste Rowe of Port au Port.

During the 20th century there was considerable migration of Rowses to all parts of Newfoundland and all over Canada and the USA.

This book contains a breakdown, by town, of the Rowses I have been able to link together into families. It is broken down as follows:

Chapter 1	Rowe of Trinity/Heart's Content
Chapter 2	Rowe of Heart's Content descended from Edward, b.1776
Chapter 3	Rowe of Heart's Content descended from John, b.1783
Chapter 4	Rowe of Heart's Content descended from James, b.1785
Chapter 5	Rowe of Heart's Content descended from Thomas, b.1787
Chapter 6	Rowe of Heart's Content descended from Martin, b.1789
Chapter 7	Rowe of Carbonear
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An appendix contains a compilation of all the Newfoundland Rowes I have come upon in my research.

Many of them I have been unable to link to specific families but what I have uncovered is partly shown there.



Chapter 1 - Rowe of Trinity/Heart's Content

The patriarch of the Trinity Rowes was Edward Rowe, listed in a 1753 census as a Justice of the Peace and flourishing planter with a wife, four sons and two daughters, living at Trinity South. Research in England has revealed that he was the son of an Edward Rowe and Mary Richards who were married on May 25, 1686 in Martock, Somerset (near Yeovil) and that he was baptised July 27, 1699 in Yeovil, Somerset. No record of his actual birthdate was ever found, thus the assumption that it was sometime prior to mid-1699. The same records show he had siblings baptised as follows: Samuel on June 8, 1701, Betty on Feb.4, 1706 and John on Mar.11, 1710. About 1730 he married his wife, Christian (maiden name possibly Sheppard) in Yeovil and their first son James was born there in 1733.

Sometime in the 1740's the family emigrated to Newfoundland. Though the census of 1753 indicates the family consisted of two daughters and four sons, only one daughter Christian, born about 1745 and three sons James, born about 1733, Edward, born about 1744 and Thomas born about 1735 are mentioned in any subsequent records. Edward became a prosperous planter in Trinity and by 1750 had been appointed a Justice of the Peace or Magistrate for Trinity Bay – a role in which he would have been involved with settling disputes among the resident fishermen. All court cases in the Bay were signed by Rowe and his fellow Magistrate Thomas Warden until Rowe's untimely death in 1754.

Edward's daughter Christian married Thomas Street, a prominent Poole merchant, ship captain and ship owner around 1766 and proceeded to have at least four children between the years 1768–1781.

Edward's son Edward married Patience (maiden name unknown) about 1777 and had no male heirs as far as we know. His known offspring were all daughters beginning with Christiana, baptised in 1778, Elizabeth, baptised in 1783, Mary, in 1785, Sarah, in 1786 and Ann in 1789. Birthdates are not recorded. Edward died May 27, 1790.

Edward's son Thomas is a bit more elusive. Anglican parish records at Trinity show that Ann Rowe, a daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Rowe of Trinity was baptised on December 5, 1757. The same records list the marriage of Thomas Rowe and Elizabeth Hurdle on July 8, 1776. Is this the same Thomas? He could have been married to an Elizabeth in the mid-1750's who later died and he re-married Elizabeth Hurdle in 1776. At any rate this Elizabeth presented him with a daughter, Susannah in 1779 (baptised Jan.23). She married Capt. Joseph Burrage on Sept. 6, 1796. Once again, no known male heirs.

Of the known children of Edward, James is the only one with traceable Rowe descendants and with five sons all living to maturity he is the ancestor of more than half of all the Rowes in Newfoundland. It appears that James was born in 1733 in Yeovil, Somerset and arrived in Newfoundland sometime in the 1740's with the rest of his family. Sometime in the 1770's he married (no record has been found) – some say Ann Sheppard, some say Mary Burrage.

A closer look at this confusion is warranted: (This is a quote from an unknown, but recent source, with which I do not fully agree.)

Considerations on the name of the wife of this James Rowe:

On the first name of James' wife:

From the baptism records of James' children, one may conclude that James Rowe was married twice; to Mary and Anne; but the birth dates of the children below do not support this theory. In the Trinity C of E baptisms in Aug. 1793 we have one entry of James and Mary having three children baptized in Heart's Content and their ages were: James age 7; Martin Sheppard age 4, Charlotte age 2; (therefore born in 1786, 1789, 1791) Then we have three separate baptisms in the Harbour Grace C of E records where three children are baptized to James and Anne Row(e): one daughter, Christian Row, in 1778 and residence given as Heart's Content; one son William Sheppard Rowe in 1780 and a daughter Ann Sheppard Row baptized on Oct 21, 1788. It is unlikely that three mistakes were made in the Harbour Grace records at different times on the name of Anne Rowe; whereas it is more likely that one mistake was made in the Trinity records and there is only one entry there for a James and Mary Rowe baptizing children. There was no church in Heart's Content when those baptisms occurred so the Trinity clergyman had more opportunity to make an error in transferring his information from Heart's Content to the Trinity records.

I believe that the Trinity records are in error on the baptisms of the children of James and Mary Rowe and it should have been James and Anne Rowe and that there was only one marriage of James Rowe.

On the surname of James wife:

Several of those children had Sheppard as a middle name. The middle name of Sheppard would lead one to think that the mother's surname may have been Sheppard. However, it is not evidence.

There was a Martin Sheppard (surname Sheppard) having children in the Harbour Grace records in late 1700s so perhaps this accounts for the name Martin Sheppard in the Rowe family - just a thought.

Then we have the information from Melvin Rowe's book Heart's Content Shipwrights page 1 that James' had a brother-in-law, Joseph Burrage; implying that James' wife was a Burrage. No evidence is produced to support this. (note: the spelling Burrage and Burridge are both used in various documents)

Melvin Rowe's I Have Touched the Greatest Ship, p. 69 says: "At the time James (Rowe) moved into his new home (Heart's Content), Joseph Burrridge of Trinity operated a branch business in Heart's Content. He dealt with Burrridge - his wife's brother - until Burrridge sold the business to Slade & Kelson at the turn of the 19th century." Again, no evidence.

It is my opinion and it is the opinion of Ted Rowe in his book Heroes and Rogues and the Story of Heart's Content , that Joseph Burrridge was not James Rowe's wife's brother because the Joseph Burrridge who owned the business was married to James Rowe's niece, Susannah Rowe of Thomas, and we have that marriage record from Trinity. Joseph Burrage died in 1815 and we have a copy of his will. Joseph's wife was Susannah and the son was John. Susannah died in 1816 in Trinity before the will was probated.

There is a 1805-06 Conception Bay Plantation Book in which Ann Row is part owner of property in Carbonear along with Joseph Butt, Frances Baker and Ann Parsons. Is Joseph Butt the husband of Martha Butt in the will below where a reference to the James Row family of Heart's Content given? There is the will of Nov 30, 1811 of Martha Butt of Crocker's Cove (part of or near Carbonear) where the sons and daughters of James Rowe of Heart's Content are referred to in the will. Was Martha's husband the Joseph Butt in the Plantation Book? Are the two pieces of property the same or is one a part of the other? They are both waterfront properties and the name McCarthy is in both. I believe the Ann Rowe in the property listing of 1805 is James Rowe's wife of Heart's Content. I am unaware of any other Ann Rowe who would hold property in 1805. It is interesting that Martha Butt records James Rowe's children of Heart's Content as possible beneficiaries. Was Ann's surname Butt?

Regardless of who his wife was the fact remains that he fathered a large family. A quote from Melvin Rowe in the original manuscript of his Heart's Content Shipwrights states the following:

I have copied from a book of Common Prayer printed in London in 1783 giving the names, births and where each of the eleven children were born:

Children of James and Mary Rowe:

Mary	Dec.4, 1774	Trinity
Edward	Jan. 9, 1776	Trinity

Griffin (s/b Christian)	Jan. 24, 1777	Trinity
William Sheppard	Jan.18, 1779	Trinity
Ann	Jan. 22, 1781	Trinity
John	Oct. 20, 1783	Heart's Content
James	Sep. 11,1785	Heart's Content
Thomas	May 24, 1787	Heart's Content
Martin Sheppard	June 9, 1789	Heart's Content
Charlotte	Feb, 7, 1791	Heart's Content
Margaret	Jan, 20, 1801	Heart's Content

You will notice that he had six sons and all but William Sheppard lived to maturity and had large families of their own.

Thus James is the ancestor of nearly all the Rowses of Heart's Content, Green's Harbour, Chance Cove, Dildo, Seldom, Lewisporte, Whiteway and many now in St. John's.

James' daughters married as follows:

Mary to Joseph Taylor on Dec. 31,1796 at Carbonear.
Christian apparently died young.
Ann no record, maybe died young
Charlotte to James Sinyard sometime around 1816
Margaret to Michael Flynn on March 1821 at Harbour Grace

James' sons who carried on the Rowe surname will be looked at individually in the following chapters.

After his move to Heart's Content, James obtained a large waterfront property which became known as Rowe's Bank

where he built a dock and began a shipbuilding operation which thrived for over 100 years under the supervision of his sons and grandsons.

Eventually James became recognized by fishermen on the Avalon peninsula as a prominent designer and shipwright -

the first man to operate such a business anywhere in Trinity Bay outside of Trinity.

Melvin Rowe's records credit him with building and launching the two schooners FALCON and FLORA in 1804.

However since his death is recorded in 1803 it was likely his son James – in spite of his young age – who actually finished the job.

James death is recorded as October 13, 1803 and he was buried in the

Anglican cemetery in Heart's Content.

This family is extensive. Coverage will be done in five separate sections – one for each of the sons of James Rowe:

Chapter 2 – Edward Rowe of Trinity (1776-1816)

Chapter 3 – John Rowe of Heart's Content (1783- ?)

Chapter 4 – James Rowe of Heart's Content (1785- ?)

Chapter 5 – Thomas Rowe of Heart's Content (1787-1847)

Chapter 6 – Martin Sheppard Rowe of Heart's Content (1789- ?)