

## The Carters

By Fred Carter

December 26, 1899 was a day of sorrow in our family when a major tragedy occurred: my grandfather Kenneth and his brother Frederick John, along with six other men from Greenspond, were drowned when the schooner *Puritan* ran ashore during stormy weather on Cabot Island. My grandmother was left a widow at age 23 with two small children: Fred Carter left a wife, but had no children. It was a tragic event for Fred's wife, Beatrice, whom he had married just the month before on November 20, 1899 at St. Thomas's Anglican Church in St. John's. Beatrice was the daughter of Henry and Eliza Peckford of Greenspond.

Aunt Laura (Meadus) Brewer, my father's half sister, told me Beatrice wanted to travel back to Greenspond on the *Puritan*, but Fred insisted she go back by train and catch the ferry from Port Blandford to Greenspond; this move was to result in saving her life. A year later, on November 21, 1900, Beatrice married Benjamin Day, who was a police constable in Greenspond, and whose first wife, Emily, had died in April 1897 in Greenspond. Ironically, Benjamin Day died in June 1908 of pulmonary tuberculosis and Beatrice was widowed for the second time at the age of 29. It must have been almost unbearable for her. She had two daughters for Benjamin Day, one of whom had died in 1906 at the age of 2, which was another tragic event for her.

My grandmother, in the meantime, married a widower, Darius Meadus, of Greenspond, whose wife, Joanna (Compton) Meadus of Twillingate, had died in May 1899, at age 27. Joanna's daughter, Gertrude, lived to her 94th year and died in the United States in 1990. Darius did not adopt my father and his sister, so it was this decision that enabled our branch of the Carter family to carry on. If his surname had been changed, it would have meant that Captain Charles Carter's branch of the family would have been terminated right there; there were no more male heirs in his line by the name of Carter. Darius and his family, including my father and Aunt Mollie, moved from Ship Island to St. John's in 1915.

Aunt Alice, grandfather's sister who married Darius Blandford III, the Customs officer in Greenspond, in 1906, endeavoured to keep the Carter name going by using it as their Christian names and also carried on by using the first names prevalent in the Carter family; her sons were named Frederick Carter Blandford, Herbert Alexander Blandford, twins Charles and Kenneth Blandford, and Eric Carter Blandford. Another son, Cluny Darius Blandford lost his life while serving in the Royal Navy when the warship he served on, *HMS Polyanthus*, was torpedoed by a German U-Boat in September 1943.

My father was the last family member to say goodbye to Cluny, when he accompanied him to the wharf on the southside of St. John's where the many warships waiting to depart on convoy duty were moored as many as three abreast. Dad said Cluny had invited him onboard to have a farewell "tot" with him, but he

was stopped from entering the area by the naval sentries; it was their final farewell.

Dad and Mom (she was Blanche Mary Baker, born in Broad Cove, Harbour Breton) did a fantastic job of making sure our branch of the family would be prolonged by producing seven sons and five daughters; the often teased one another about who was responsible for the large family, in jest. He would call her “Fertile Mary”.

Dad oozed with pride every time we asked him a question about his ancestors and, although his grandfather and grandmother Carter as well as his father were all dead by the time he was a month old, he must have been an inquisitive little tyke, because he could tell you many yarns about the family and their traditions. A lot of it, too, I would say, came from Captain Sandy Carter.

My father, God rest and bless his soul, sailed to various parts of the world during the First World War in the British Merchant Marine bringing food and supplies to countries such as England, United States, European and Caribbean ports engaged in the war, never ever considering himself a hero and never bragging about his exploits, except in a happy, jovial way. He was a hero in my mind and a Dad who was so kind and considerate of others.

Dad spoke so highly of his grandmother, Mary Ann (Green) Carter (he called her Pollie Carter), I sensed that he loved her so very much, although she died, at age 40, ten years before he was born. He must have had stories related to him concerning her while he was growing up, because some of her brothers and sisters, as well as Captain Sandy and Aunt Alice Blandford, lived long after her. Jane (Green) Meadus, for example, died in 1933 at the age of 88; Uncle Walter (Meadus) told me that even in old age, Jane, who was Uncle Walter’s grandmother, used to tend her garden etc., and actually, he said she died in Greenspond while working in her garden. Darius Meadus and my grandfather Kenneth were first cousins through the Greens.

There seems to be no end to the stories and reports of tragedies affecting most families in Newfoundland at one time or another. Captain Sandy must have been thinking of his two brothers who lost their lives in the shipwreck of the *Puritan*, when 12 years later he became involved in a similar incident in which he came very close to losing his life too.

According to newspaper reports he had gone to the mainland and purchased a schooner, the *May Myree*, at Gloucester, Massachusetts, and a few weeks later had picked up a load of coal in Louisburg, Nova Scotia, consigned to White Bay. While rounding Cape Race they heard Powell’s Head whistle and mistook it for Cape Race; it was densely foggy at the time and shortly afterwards they ran ashore upon the rocks. There was a big sea running and when he and the five crewmen left the schooner in a boat they narrowly escaped from being swamped. They said that if the accident had happened further out the bay not a man would have been saved, as the ship would have been in among the breakers.