

Settlement of Pouch Cove

A History of the Sullivan Family

The community of Pouch Cove, Newfoundland was first settled early in the 1600s, according to historical sources, with early settlers coming mainly from Ireland and the west of England. Through the next two centuries, settlers continued to arrive. Typical of those who settled here and helped develop the life and traditions of the community were the Sullivans.

The following details are taken from a student research project completed by Ralph A. Billard for a geography assignment at Memorial University, based on interviews with Herbert Sullivan, Sr. and the records of the Anglican Parish and the Newfoundland Archives.

Francis A. Sullivan was the first of the Sullivans of Pouch Cove to arrive. He settled and built his original dwelling along the shore at Gould's Cove, north of the main cove.

His house would have had a large kitchen, with an open fireplace over which cooking and baking were done, on the main floor. Sand was used to keep the floor tidy. It would be regularly swept up and replaced.

Upstairs there were three or four bedrooms. The house also had a porch to protect the house from the wind and to be a storage space for wood and other supplies. There was a large *woodbox* there for firewood. A longer porch, called a *linney* or *lanney*, was also attached to the house for further storage.

There was a small *kitchen garden* around the house where potatoes, turnips, cabbage and a few carrots were grown. Further from the house were larger gardens, fenced to keep out roaming livestock. Cattle, pigs, sheep and goats were common in the community at this time. From May to October the animals were free to roam over the community Commons, while some may have been confined to fenced pastures.

During the summer everyone worked at the fishing: men, women and children. At the same time, gardens were planted and tended, and livestock were roaming. In the fall and winter fishing came to a standstill. People kept busy "staying alive," using the food they had caught, harvested, gathered and stored. During the fall and winter some people hunted for birds and rabbits.

By 1874 there were at least three merchants in Pouch Cove. The Gruchys and Robert Mundy were among the earliest. Typically, supplies for fishing and basic food were taken "on account", and the merchant would keep a record of the items sold. The account would be paid off yearly, if possible, in dried and salted cod and agricultural produce.

J&A Gruchy

Philip Gruchy opened Gruchy's General Store and fish buyer in about 1840. The business operated for more than 140 years. It ultimately became J&A Gruchy. In its best years it had up to 25 employees working in the shop and fish store where you could buy anything from a needle to a burial casket. The business closed in 1983. The shop and fish stores were torn down in 1984-85 after which the Gruchy family donated the land for the erection of a children's playground.

Owners:

Philip Gruchy 1840 – 1874

Thomas & Jesse Gruchy 1875 – 1888

Jess Gruchy 1889 – 1908

Jesse & Alex C. Gruchy 1909 – 1921

Alex C. Gruchy 1921 – 1971

Alex H. (Lex) Gruchy 1971 – 1983

History and photographs courtesy of H. Gruchy



J&A Gruchy store in 1970

The Sullivans came from Ireland, possibly from Dublin or County Cork. Although they were Catholics when they arrived, there was no Roman Catholic priest in Pouch Cove until the late 1800s, so they relied for religious services on Church of England missionaries who passed through the area frequently.

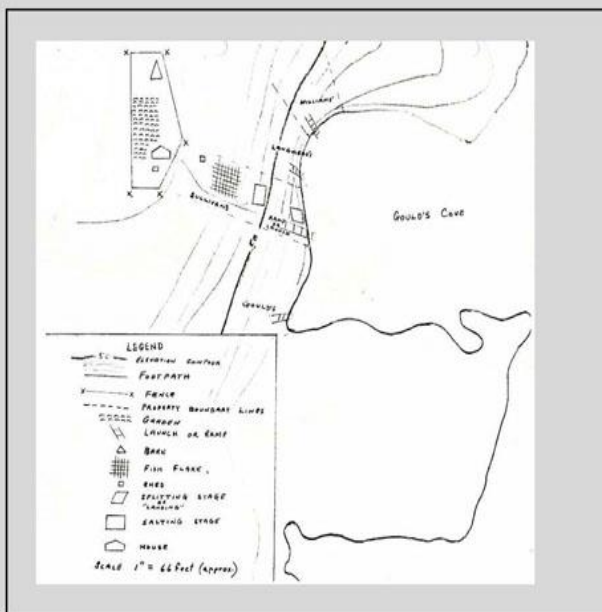
INTERESTING FACT: *There was a legend that "silver grew on the trees of Pouch Cove" and although no one literally believed this, it may have been a reference to the glitter of ice on tree branches after a winter's ice storm. The legend may really mean that in Pouch Cove it was possible to earn a good livelihood by being close to good fishing grounds, with land for building, gardening and farming and available timber.*

Francis A. Sullivan lived from 1818 to 1889. He arrived as a young man, eager to earn a living from the sea. His wife Ann, who was born in 1820, lived until 1893. She reportedly was a Whelan from Pouch Cove.

Francis established his fishing premises in an area known as Gould's Cove where fishermen found it a bit easier to put to sea than in the main cove. He originally squatted on the land, taking possession of an area not already claimed by others.

He enclosed some land for gardens and pastures and his fishing premises extended approximately fifty feet along the shoreline between the Goulds (to the south) and the Langmeads (to the north).

Fish were caught in cod traps or by line. Small fishing boats brought the fish ashore to be processed. Francis's locally built fishing boat would have been a *trap skiff*, about twenty-eight feet long. It would hold up to fifteen *quintals* (1700 lbs./800 kg) of fish.



There was no wharf, as such, but rather a *launch* running into the sea, used for hauling up boats. Behind the launch, close to the high water mark, was a *Landing Stage* (where fish could be landed, cleaned and split) about fifty feet inland, then carried in hand-tubs or hand bars to a *Salting Stage* (where they were salted).

Twenty feet behind the Salting Stage were tall platforms called *Flakes* where the salted cod were spread out to dry.



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Francis and Ann Sullivan had nine children: three boys and six girls. Two died before reaching the age of one year. Another daughter died when she was three. Their son, John Thomas, lived from 1838 to 1904 and inherited all of his father's property.

John Thomas married Grace Gould, from Pouch Cove, and they had ten children. The girls all married and left Pouch Cove, or moved off the family's land. Two of the boys moved to the United States, but George Reginald, John Thomas Jr. and James Herbert remained, to live, marry and raise their families in Pouch Cove.

The Sullivans have become an extensive family, with descendents living in other parts of Canada and the US. There are many Sullivans here in Pouch Cove, descended from Francis A. Sullivan.