

The three sons of Ambrose and Susanna Forward, as already noted above, also left Sturminster Newton sometime around the turn of the nineteenth century, and emigrated to Newfoundland. The dates and sequence of their arrival are not known. All three were present in Dorset when the census was taken in 1801. The tombstone of George, the middle brother, who died in 1857, indicates that he was "upwards of 50 years in Newfoundland"; this would place his emigration at between 1801 and 1807.

Present evidence would suggest that Charles, the eldest son, and George emigrated together, and were later joined by John, several years their junior. Unfortunately, little pertinent research material has yet been located or checked for their presence in the colony between 1800 and 1825; as a result, the early role of these Forwards in Newfoundland is not known.

During this period, the four prominent West Country firms involved with Carbonear were Fryer, Pack and Gosse, Slade, Elson and Company, John and Young Green, and William Pike. The first two were Poole firms with strong connections to rural northeastern Dorset. Since Charles and George first appear in Carbonear, and in no other community, it is highly probable that they emigrated there as planters or agents for one of these firms. There is no trace of them, for example, working in Grand Bank or any of the other out-port communities prior to their appearance in Carbonear.

The first direct evidence supporting the presence of Charles Forward in Carbonear is a community petition of 1823, signed by Charles and his brother George, among others; the petition was a complaint concerning the lack of law and order there during the winter, indicating the quality of life that the early inhabitants were forced to contend with throughout the colony. The vices, crimes, lawlessness and general moral decay were, at this time, the despair of many a colonial administrator--and all the colonial ministers.

Charles appears again in Carbonear in June of 1825, when he and George Forward registered a newly built 59-ton (old measurement) vessel named, appropriately, the Ambrose (see Appendix D). The brothers were listed as merchants and co-owners of the vessel; the registration, however, names Charles first, indicating that he was the senior partner. The Ambrose would appear to have been their first venture into vessel ownership; the Newfoundland shipping registers go back to 1812, but prior to 1825, there is no trace of any Forward holding shares in a boat. It is likely that Charles and George, having "learned the ropes" through working for some West Country firm, decided to pool their resources in a joint merchant venture sometime previous to 1825. This method of apprenticeship was a common denominator in the later success of many Newfoundland merchants; another example in Carbonear was John Rorke, who began in the colony as an employee of Bennet and Ridley.

The partnership of Charles and George does not appear to have lasted overly long. In 1825, the brothers registered two additional vessels at St. John's: the Mary (42 tons) in January and the Joseph (80 tons) in June. There is no further trace of the firm in the shipping registers until 1835, when the Ambrose, having been enlarged, was subsequently re-registered in June of that year. The two brothers held 32 shares in each ship venture, but by 1835, George was listed first on the registration paper, indicating that he had become the senior partner.

After June 1835, however, there is no further trace of Charles as a member of the merchant firm. Beginning in November 1835, all subsequent vessel registrations are in the name and sole ownership of George Forward. Nevertheless, Charles was apparently still alive and in Carbonear. In 1838, the Episcopalian (Anglican) inhabitants of the community petitioned the Bishop of Nova Scotia (who had jurisdiction over Newfoundland) for a resident clergyman, and for recognition as a parish separate from Harbour Grace (see Appendix C). The 157 signatures included that of one Charles Forward. Again, when George Forward made his will in July 1848, one of the two witnesses was a "C. Forward", very likely his elder brother Charles.

Charles.  
Died in  
London  
George took over  
ESTATE +  
ASSETS.

Why Charles left the firm, or what became of him afterwards is not yet known. No doubt he married and left children in Carbonear, which may account for some of the so far untraced and unknown Forwards to be discussed later. There is no trace of Charles in either the Anglican or Methodist church records, however, so that for the time being, he must remain somewhat of a mystery.

His younger brother and early business partner, George, has left a path in Newfoundland which is considerably easier to trace. As noted above, George immigrated to the colony sometime between 1801 and 1807. The first definite record of him in Carbonear is in 1815, when he married Susanna Taylor in the Anglican church at Harbour Grace on 23 December; both were listed as being from Carbonear. Susanna's tombstone indicates that she was born on 27 August 1790. Who her parents were, or where she was born, are not yet known; the name Taylor is found in Dorset, and as has already been noted, George Forward's aunt-by-marriage, the first wife of Ambrose Forward, was an Ann Taylor. The surname was common, however, especially in Carbonear, so that any similarity is no doubt purely coincidental.

Present research would indicate that George and Susanna's marriage was rather a hasty one. The first child, Mark William, was born on 6 June 1816, less than six months later. Premature infants rarely survived in those days, but "seven month babies"--and younger--were very common, and such incidences are not to be mourned by posterity.

George and Susanna had at least two other children, Henry Frederick and Ambrose. By tradition, Ambrose, who was no doubt named for his grandfather, was the youngest of the family. He was supposedly sent to England in order to be educated for his father's business, but, like his two older brothers, he preferred the sea, and served on the Forward firm's Labrador vessels. Family tradition states that he was shipwrecked and drowned off Anticosti at some unknown date. However, when his father drew up a will in 1848, Ambrose was still alive, and present research indicates that he

may well have married and taken over the firm at least until the late 1800's.

The birthdates of both Henry and Ambrose are not known, since at present there is no baptismal record for any of George and Susanna Forward's children in either the Anglican or Methodist registers; Mark William's birthdate is taken from a family bible, and its accuracy rests entirely on that source. The absence of these baptisms is curious. No doubt the ministers were lax in updating their registers, but to omit the baptismal entries for three children over a period of several years, is unusual. Possibly the ceremonies were performed in St. John's, but again, this is unlikely. It is also conceivable, and perhaps more plausible, that the children were baptized during a visit to Sturminster Newton; international travel then not being what it is today, though, this is questionable. Perhaps the easiest and the most accurate answer, however, is that they were just not baptized at all. Such occurrences were fairly common at the time, and certainly the question of Anglican or Methodist allegiance was by no means settled in Carbonear during this period; possibly George and Susanna Forward had no fixed religion when their children were born.

It is unfortunate that the birthdates have not been established, however, since it is not known in what sequence the children were born. Later records and legal documents usually refer to the three brothers as "Henry, Mark and Ambrose", which would seem to indicate that Henry was the first born son. The 1815 marriage and the 1810 birthdate for Mark would apparently refute this assumption, however--unless Henry were the son of a first wife, and there is absolutely no evidence to support this supposition.

Between 1815 and 1823, there is no trace of George Forward's existence in Carbonear. No doubt this was the period during which he and his brother Charles were building up experience, and then establishing their own mercantile business. In 1823, George signed the community petition concerning the lack of law and order in the region, and as already discussed, he was definitely in partnership with Charles by 1825, with the registration of the Ambrose. This was a 59-ton schooner, 54 feet long, and built that

year by George Strickland in Carbonear (see Appendix D). The master was Richard Clark. No doubt it was used in the Labrador and Banks fishery, as well as for the coastal trade.

In 1826, George and Charles registered two vessels (see Appendix D). The first was the schooner Mary on 18 January, John Clarke master. She was 42 tons and 49 feet long; she had been built in Freshwater in 1818, but the Forward brothers had purchased her on 20 November 1825. No doubt she came with the name Mary, since it was considered bad luck to rename a vessel. Her certificate of registry was cancelled in 1841, as she had been broken up. The second schooner was the Joseph, registered on 8 June, with Thomas Oates as master. She had been built earlier that year by William Hilliar of New Harbour, Trinity Bay, and was considerably larger than the two earlier Forward vessels--80 tons and 60½ feet long. This may indicate that the brothers were venturing further afield, although not likely into the trans-Atlantic fish trade at this point. In any case, the registry of the Joseph was eventually cancelled, subsequent to the loss of the vessel at sea in 1837.

There are no further vessel registrations by the Forwards until 1831. During the intervening years, however, they were no doubt actively pursuing and consolidating the establishment of a business reputation. In 1828, George signed a petition protesting the imposition of any new taxes--a problem of prime concern to anyone trying to make a start in the mercantile community.

On November 30, 1831, George Forward registered the William the Fourth, one of the firm's best known ships. It is interesting to note that she was entered solely in George's name, indicating that Charles may have dropped from the business as early as 1831. This vessel had been built in Carbonear earlier that year by Thomas Roe, and was a brigantine of 122 tons, with a length of 68 feet and a man's bust for a figurehead; Samuel Taylor was her first master. The William the Fourth represented a sizeable investment, and was

without doubt the firm's initial venture into larger trade schemes. Their earlier activities were likely confined to the Banks and Labrador fisheries, and perhaps to coastal trade; the first vessels were not large enough to serve a regular trans-Atlantic trade route, except perhaps under an occasional charter to a large merchant to bring in supplies or export fish. The William the Fourth, however, was large enough to travel further afield, and as a brigantine, was no doubt designed for this purpose. She lasted many years with the Forward firm, and one of her canvas mail bags still exists in the family.

By 1834, George Forward must have been in a secure financial position, for in that year he came into possession of land at Burnt Head in Carbonear (see Appendix E), the first evidence that the family was expanding into large-scale property ownership. Later land consolidation by his sons turned this part of the community into a Forward enclave which did not diintegrate until the twentieth century.

The initial Burnt Head property was obtained during 1833 and 1834 from a Carbonear planter named William Gillaspie, who had evidently died without a will and in debt to George Forward, merchant. To recover this debt, George issued a writ on Gillaspie's property and effects, which were then auctioned off to the highest bidder--George Forward. The \$22 likely was the sum over and above the debt, plus the cost of the writ. The acquisition of the Burnt Head property, in the eastern part of the community near the harbour entrance, gave George a "plantation" with a house, a fairly sizeable garden, a potato patch and a pathway leading to a water-side fishing stage.

In 1835, as mentioned above, the Forward brothers appear again in the St. John's shipping registers. Early in that year, the Ambrose, their first vessel, had been enlarged at Carbonear by James Warren. She was now 59 feet long and nearly 7 tons. On 11 June she was re-registered (see Ap-

pendix D), as was required following any vessel alterations or change of ownership. This is, as already noted, the last instance of Charles Forward holding shares in any of the firm's ships.

On 30 November of the same year, George Forward registered a new schooner named the Eliza and Ann, of which he was the sole owner (see Appendix D). From this point on, there is no trace of Charles being actively involved with the firm. The Eliza and Ann was captained by Mark Forward, George's son. The vessel had been built at Crapaud, Prince Edward Island earlier that year, and had been sold to George on 5 October by the original owner; it was 67 tons and nearly 56 feet long. The Eliza and Ann was later lost, probably around 1843.

In 1837, on 10 May, the William the Fourth was re-registered by George; it was now only 100 tons, and was 65 feet long.

In 1838, George, along with his older brother Charles, was among the 157 Carbonear residents to sign the Anglican petition already mentioned above (see Appendix C). The religious situation in Carbonear was a peculiar one. As the petition points out, the Anglican church had not only established a meeting house in the community, but also, at one point, had provided a resident clergyman. The latter position eventually went vacant and by 1838, Carbonear was visited only weekly--with luck--by the Harbour Grace incumbent. The meeting house, suffering from such intermittent use, fell into the hands of the zealous and organized Wesleyan Methodists. So, too, did many of the good Carbonear Anglicans. Having decided that active Methodism was better than half-hearted Anglicanism, many residents switched their religious allegiance after the failure of the 1838 petition, and formed the basis of a solid Methodist congregation. Even when a resident minister and a parish separate from Harbour Grace were eventually provided for, the Anglicans could never challenge the strength or numbers of the Wesleyan adherents. Among the residents who altered their allegiance were George and Susanna Forward. It has been noted above that their marriage took place in

the Anglican church at Harbour Grace, and that no baptismal records can be located for their children in either faith. The burials of both George and Susanna, however, were duly noted in the Methodist registers at Carbonear.

In 1839, however, George Forward was far from dead. On 25 January he registered a new vessel, the schooner Clinker, which he had purchased two weeks previously (see Appendix D). This ship was nearly 80 tons, and was 62 feet long; her master was Samuel Taylor. The Clinker had been built in 1832 at Heart's Content; there is definite evidence that she was used in the firm's trans-Atlantic trade, but she did not provide long service, since by 1842 she had been lost at sea and the registry cancelled.

On 23 February of the same year, George registered a second schooner, the Jubilee (see Appendix D). This time, his son, Henry Frederick, owned 32 of the 64 vessel shares and was, in addition, the ship's master. The Jubilee had been built at Heart's Content in 1832; the Forwards purchased it on 22 February 1839. It was 64 tons and 59 feet long. This schooner lasted many years in the Forward firm. The ship's registry papers contain a list of several subsequent masters, some of them now illegible; Daniel Deane, however, was the captain in March 1851, and George Williams is another entry on 12 November 1853. The Jubilee was eventually broken up at Carbonear sometime previous to 1869.

1839 is the first year that any newspaper accounts of the firm are available for; research into earlier issues of Carbonear publications has yet to be undertaken. In the Carbonear Sentinel for 19 March 1839, however, a list of sealing vessels supplied by George Forward was printed. Sealing was one of the most lucrative new aspects of the general fishing industry in Newfoundland, and it appears that George was early involved in the annual hunt. In 1839, 5 vessels were supplied by the firm: Tyro, T. Pike master, 20 men; Jubilee, H. Forward master (George's son), 24 men; Clinker, S. Taylor master, 27 men; Eliza and Ann, G. Pike master, 18 men; and Ambrose, G. Soper, master, 19 men. Of these five vessels, the only



one not owned by the firm was the Tyro, a ship belonging to the Carbonear firm of Slade, Biddle and Company, which had gone bankrupt the previous year. The Tyro may simply have been chartered by the Forward business as an extra sealer, or the vessel may have been under the semi-control of George Forward, as in late 1840, he purchased her from the trustees of the Slade firm.

During 1839, the Sentinel recorded one trans-Atlantic voyage of the William the Fourth; since 1837, this vessel had been under the command of Samuel Cleall. In the issue of 4 June, the brig is mentioned as having cleared port bound for Spain, Portugal or Italy, with 1970 quintals of fish on board. On 24 August she returned from Lisbon, carrying 110 tons of salt, 1500 cartons of onions--and two boxes of lemons. The salt, of course, was for curing cod fish; the oranges and lemons were for the dinner tables of Carbonear.

In March 1840, the Sentinel again listed the ships supplied by George Forward for the annual seal hunt. This year, six were sent: Tyro, Pike master, 29 men; Fortitude, Taylor master, 20 men; Eliza and Ann, Forward master (probably Mark), 19 men; Clinker, Taylor master, 27 men; Jubilee, Forward master (probably Henry), 25 men; and Ambrose, Colborne master, 20 men. Again, the Tyro was supplied by the firm although still nominally owned by the Slade interests. The only other Forward vessel mentioned by the Sentinel for the year was the Clinker, Captain Forward, which arrived from Bristol on 28 September, carrying general cargo; she must have been lost shortly afterwards, according to the shipping registers (which, however, are not always correct in dating the loss of vessels).

The year 1840 may possibly have marked a turning point in George Forward's mercantile career. While his firm had definitely been successful up to that point, it does not appear to have seriously rivalled any of the older, more prestigious Carbonear businesses, such as Fryer, Pack and Gosse, or Slade, Elson and Company. During the 1830's and 40's, however, these older firms were losing some of their earlier pre-eminence through age and at-

trition. With the death of John Elson in Carbonear during the 1830's, the firm of Slade, Elson and Company had become Slade, Biddle and Company. After his death, however, the business went into a decline; there was apparently no resident partner in the community after Elson, and by 1838, the Poole firm was forced to declare bankruptcy. Their departure from business no doubt left a space in the Carbonear mercantile community for any aspiring individuals to come in and take over.

Such a manoeuvre likely could not be accomplished by a single individual, but would require a partnership, if not a company. It is interesting, therefore, to note that by 1840, George Forward had formed some sort of business co-partnership with William Willis Bemister, a fellow Dorsetman and Carbonear merchant. Bemister was from Corfe Mullen, a small community also on the River Stour, about half-way between Sturminster Newton and Poole. He was a merchant in Carbonear at least as early as 1818, when his name first appears in the shipping registers. Present evidence indicates that he was in partnership with William Howell for many years. By the late 1830's, however, Howell had died, as Bemister appears in an 1839 vessel registration as one of the administrators of the late merchant's estate. It is interesting to surmise that Forward and Bemister saw the opportunity to advance economically, and the ability to do so, by pooling their resources in a partnership.

In 1840, the Water Street business premises of Slade, Biddle and Company were put up for auction--at bankruptcy bargain prices. George Forward and William Bemister were the successful bidders, for £200, 13/--roughly \$10,000 in modern terms. This was a single piece of property in a prime location.(see Appendix E). It was bounded on the north and east by John Rorke's land, on the south by Water Street, and on the west by the property of Nicholas Nicholls. The premises were known collectively as "the Dock", and included a carpenter's shop, a fish store, a retail store, a salt store, a pork store and a counting house, a wharf and passage thereto, a section of beach, plus access to a common long wharf and crane wharf also utilized by Nicholas Nicholls, John Rorke and Edward Walmsley. Such

an acquisition was no doubt a major step forward for the firm, and at bankruptcy prices, an advantageous investment. In every sense of the word, Forward and Bemister had "arrived"; from here on, it would be "full steam ahead". In the years to come, the names Forward, Rorke and Gould became the touchstones of the Carbonear mercantile community, as the older firms faded into the past.

The final step made by the firm in 1840 was the registration of a vessel named the Tyro on 31 December (see Appendix D), another acquisition from the bankrupt firm of Slade, Biddle and Company. This boat was 63 tons and 55 feet long. As already noted, she had sailed for at least the preceding two years as a member of the Forward firm's sealing fleet. Thomas Pike was the master. The Tyro had a chequered history; it had been built in Conception Bay in 1804, but by 1825, had come into the possession of a Carbonear planter named James Forward (an individual to be discussed later). It had been rebuilt in 1827, and sold in 1830 by Forward to Slade, Elson and Company. In July 1840, John Elson's widow transferred her late husband's rights to the Tyro to the trustees of the bankrupt firm, and by 31 December, the vessel had been sold to George Forward--no doubt at a bargain rate. The Tyro was lost by 1843, and its registry cancelled.

It is interesting to note that George Forward was the sole owner of the Tyro. Indeed, in all the later vessels so far traced to the firm, there is no record of William Bemister owning any shares. For that matter, there is no trace of William Bemister in the firm, either. At this point, it is not known what happened to him, except that he lived until 30 December 1863. Possibly he was a silent partner and investor in the firm; possibly he took over the retail end of the business, allowing Forward to control the shipping interests. This is perhaps substantiated by the fact that all later mention of the firm's vessels in the contemporary newspapers is under George Forward's name. Or possibly the partnership rapidly failed. In any case, the two families were inextricably allied, for in 1844, George's son Mark married Bemister's daughter Mary.

In June 1841, the Ambrose appeared again in the Newfoundland shipping registers. This vessel had been rebuilt in 1835 and subsequently re-registered to George and his brother Charles, each with 32 shares (see page 18). Since that date, Charles Forward's half-interest had been sold to a Carbonear planter named George Soper, who was the vessel's master; this sale was likely in 1841, as the ship was again enlarged by June of that year in Heart's Content by John Young and Benjamin Bugden. It was now 70 tons and 62 feet long. By 1843, it was under the command of a Captain Colbourne, who took it to the seal hunt in March with 28 men; while in the ice fields, it was lost with 2300 seals aboard--the crew, however, were all rescued. It is not known why George Soper took over Charles Forward's 32 shares in the Ambrose; nor is it known whether he was an employee of the firm, or merely an independent planter, as most were by this time.

In 1842, George Forward purchased and registered two new vessels, indicating that his business must have been prospering. The first was the Fortitude, bought from John Wills Martin, another Carbonear merchant, on 5 February 1842 and registered in George's name several days later; the master was George Taylor. This schooner was nearly 88 tons and was 60 feet long; by 1852, it had been lost. (see Appendix D). The Samuel, registered on 2 June, was a schooner of similar size--94 tons and 60 feet in length; it had a scroll for a figurehead and the master was John White (see Appendix D). This vessel had previously been owned by Fryer, Lack and Gosse, from whom George had purchased it on 25 May.

The Newfoundland shipping registers from 1842 on have, unfortunately, not survived in entirety; until the 1860's, what remains are scattered vessel registrations, none of which provide any further information concerning the activities of the Forward family. From 1842 on, the firm can be traced to a certain extent through brief notations in the contemporary newspapers, but the question of just how far George Forward expanded his firm is at this point still largely unknown. How many vessels he ultimately owned, their size, and their utilization have yet to be discovered. Cer-

tainly the years between 1840 and his death in 1857 must have been the high point of his mercantile career. Another question yet unanswered is the possibility of his having expanded into the shipbuilding business. Up to 1842, all the Forward vessels appear to have been built and/or modified elsewhere, or purchased from other owners. Yet the tradition remains that George Forward's firm built its own ships. With the acquisition of the Slade, Biddle and Company premises in 1840, it is highly possible that George gained the necessary space and equipment to engage in shipbuilding; whether he became involved or not is, at present, not known.

In 1842, there is evidence that he became involved in a new venture--that of steamships. Their advent in Newfoundland was the newest novelty of the day, and George purchased shares in a projected firm called the Newfoundland Steam Navigation Company. This was no doubt the same venture which, by the early 1850's, was known as the Newfoundland Steam Packet Company; John Rorke was then on the board of directors. For some strange reason, George gave his place of residence when purchasing the shares, as Harbour Grace; there is, however, no evidence of his ever having resided there. His investment in the company was, of course, purely speculative; steam sailing vessels were not in general use until the 1860's, and there is no trace of his firm ever acquiring one.

In 1843, the Mutual Insurance Society of Conception Bay printed a list of their new administrative committee in the Sentinel of 14 March; among the members were George Forward and William Bemister, indicating that these two men were taking an active interest in community welfare and the safety of their vessels. In the days before Lloyd's and other large marine insurance firms, it was the responsibility of the local mercantile interests to protect their investments and interests.

In the same issue of the Sentinel appeared a list of Carbonear sealing vessels recently departed for the annual hunt. George Forward supplied six that year: William IV, Forward master (Mark, no doubt), 33 men; Fortitude, Taylor master, 27 men; Jubilee, Forward master (probably Henry),