

The 1929 Newfoundland Tsunami

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Volume 21, numéro 2, autumn 2006

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds21_2nc01

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

0823-1737 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cette note

Ruffman, A. & Hann, V. (2006). The 1929 Newfoundland Tsunami. *Newfoundland Studies*, 21(2), 417–418.

Notes and Comments

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Alan Ruffman and Violet Hann have sent the following comments relating to their article, “The Newfoundland Tsunami of November 18, 1929: An Examination of the Twenty-eight Deaths of the ‘South Coast Disaster’” which appeared in *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 21.1, Spring 2006.

a) p. 110. Reta A. Kearley’s identification of the two men at the rear of the family photo arrived too late to be included. The photo is mid-1927 rather than 1928. The man standing behind Henry and Elizabeth Hillier is their son-in-law David Hepditch, father of the three young Hepditch children who were lost in the tsunami, along with their grandmother Elizabeth Hillier. The man standing to David Hepditch’s right is Henry Tulk, who was distantly related to the Hilliers by marriage. The house in the background is the Thomas K. Hillier home in Point au Gaul; Thomas K. was an older brother of Jessie Hepditch (née Hillier).

b) p. 123, note 23. The authors were under the longtime impression that Dr. Harris Munden Mosdell was the MHA who represented part of the dual riding of Burin. Our note 23 on pp. 123-124 stated that H.B. Clyde Lake was the MHA for Fortune. Premier Danny Williams, Q.C., kindly sorted this out in a letter of October 10, 2006:

Burin West was not a dual district in 1928 and 29. The previous dual district of Burin was split prior to the 1928 election into the single-member districts of Burin West and Burin East. So [H.B.] Clyde Lake was the lone member for Burin West in 1928 and 1929.

Dr. Mosdell was the member for the district of Fortune Bay in 1928 and 1929. He was first elected in Fortune Bay in the by-election of October 25, 1929 as a Liberal and [he] was re-elected as a Liberal in Fortune Bay in the general election of October [20,] 1928.

c) p. 128, note 57. Genealogists would prefer Violet Hann to be described as a “great niece” rather than as a “grand-niece”.

d) p. 129, photo of Thomas George Hillier. Caption error spotted by a sharp-eyed reader. Thomas George Hillier did not die on his 44th birthday, but rather he was buried on his 44th birthday on November 21, 1929; he died during the tsunami on November 18, 1929.

e) p. 143. In line 1 of the note at the bottom of the table, Bridget Bonnell’s middle name is spelled with an ‘s’ rather than a ‘z’ — i.e., Susannah.

f) p. 145, Table 8. In the entry for the youngest Hepditch child lost, Elizabeth (Betty) is noted as “niece of Jemima Hillier.” This could be confusing; Jemima was the aunt to all three of the lost Hepditch children.