

Fire Patrol

Port Blandford played a significant role in the history of Newfoundland fire patrol. Legislation was first enacted by the Newfoundland Government on June 15, 1905 to protect the forest resources from the ravages of wildfire. This was the Forest Fire Act. The railway had created a major problem and caused hundreds of fires annually, eventually resulting in burning almost all timberlands adjacent to its right-of-way.

Very shortly after passage of the Act, a forest fire patrol was established by the government. Its staff consisted of four people; Thomas Howe, the Chief Ranger who was stationed at Port Blandford, and three assistants, who were located at Whitbourne, Robinson's Station in the Codroy Valley and at Deer Lake. Patrolling during these early days was done on foot and equipment was limited to water pails, axes, and shovels.



In 1920 the first hand pumps and velocipedes (a three-wheeled hand propelled track vehicle) were introduced. This continued as standard equipment until the early 1930's when the first powered pumps and powered rail cars (speeders) became part of the arsenal of equipment. The government authorized the establishment of the first fire lookout towers and construction was started in 1935. One of the first four towers was located at Mount Blandford, just to the southeast of Port Blandford.

Up until the closure of the railway in 1988, workmen from Port Blandford travelled on speeders that followed trains to watch out for fires and act as the initial attack crew.