
Battle Harbour, southern Labrador: from merely geologically interesting to geoheritage status

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Battle Harbour, situated on Battle Island (1 km by 0.4 km) in eastern Labrador, was established in the 1770s as a fishing station. Throughout the 19th century, it was the site of a thriving saltfish, salmon and seal-processing complex, and was the economic and social centre of southern Labrador. The once-abandoned settlement has recently been given a new lease on life as a result of a 7-year restoration project undertaken by the Battle Harbour Historic Trust, and is now a major tourist destination in southern Labrador. In 2007, C.F. Gower was invited by the Battle Harbour Historic Trust to spend a week at Battle Harbour as part of its Expert-in-Residence program, a program that has included the scientific disciplines of geology, botany, orthithology, mycology and cetology, and various craft skills. From reconnaissance geological mapping in 1987, it was known that the bedrock on Battle Island was more varied than seen elsewhere in the Grenville Province in eastern Labrador and included rock types that could capture the interest of non-geologists. The island is made up of metamorphosed supracrustal sequence of psammite, semi-pelite, and calc-silicate rocks, intruded by a metamorphosed mafic sill, voluminous pegmatite, and a Phanerozoic mafic dyke.

During the week spent on the island in 2007, a detailed geological map was prepared and numerous samples were collected. C.F. Gower was accompanied at times by visitors to the island and also conducted tours for groups on a request basis. Large samples of interesting minerals and rocks were collected for inclusion in a small rock garden. The results of the mapping were initially written up in the form of a Geological Survey of Newfoundland and Labrador (GSNL) Current Research article, and, later, when petrographic and whole-rock geochemical data were available, as a more comprehensive GSNL Open File publication. Neither of these was intended for the layman, although to make the Open File publication more accessible (e.g., junior undergraduate field camps), it included illustrated text boxes explaining some technical points, as well as an appendix providing a glossary of geological terms and a list of minerals with their chemical compositions. For the layman, a fold-out brochure was prepared that outlined a geological walking tour and explanations of some geological processes evident at various

places along the route. From feedback received, the brochure has been well received.

The final product of this project was a journal article on Battle Island that included U-Pb ages for various units. The samples were submitted for analysis more with the thought that it would be helpful if some quantitative basis could be provided to visitors regarding the age of the geological units, rather than having much expectation of obtaining scientifically exciting new data. Geochronology for tourists is perhaps an indulgence, but in any case, the reverse proved to be the case. The ages obtained indicate that the supracrustal rocks are the youngest pre-Grenvillian supracrustal rocks in the eastern Grenville Province and the only known example of their kind. Thus, from humble beginnings as a merely geological appealing locality, Battle Harbour has emerged as a site having genuine geoheritage status.