

William Minty

William Minty (1798-1876), a fisherman principally but a prominent figure in the educational development of Bird Island Cove, was also Stipendiary Constable from 1847 until his death in 1876. Although he may have been busy in his daily duties, the bulk of his correspondence to the House of Assembly pertained to his salary (Journal of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, PANL, J 125 K3.)

Bird Island Cove Aug 29, 1849.

To the Honorable

James Crowdy - Colonial Secretary.

I humbly beg permission to transmit to your Honor a small account which you will find enclosed, which I will feel thankful if you would have the goodness to send me by the bearer the small amount which is ten shillings Sterling. I should apply for it in my own person but the sum being so little it would not pay me for the trouble in going to St. John's for it and if your Honor would have the goodness to send it in this way you will greatly oblige.

Yours very respectfully,

William Minty, Constable

To the Honorable James Crowdy, Colonial Secretary.

It is with the greatest humility I would beg permission in dropping a line to your Honor especially as you are an unknown gentleman, in asking a favour from you, but from what I have heard from your general character in the world, I write more boldly and believe that you will not be offended. I am a constable of this harbour sworn on the ninth day of August in 1847 by Mr. Wm. Sweetland, Chief Magistrate for Bonavista District, as the late Constable of Bird Island Cove was no longer able to fulfil his duty by reason of a chill that he caught so that I was appointed in his place under the greatest probability that at the formation of a new house of Assembly that a stipend would be given to the Constable at Bird Island Cove and other localities. But I am sorry to say I have not received one farthing as a remuneration for my services except a few shillings that I may get for the service of travelling with a summons that may be taken out for debt but not always paid for these services. Mr. Sweetland of Bonavista got up a petition and sent it to the member for Trinity in my favour but I received no direct answer from Mr. Job only stating on a letter that he sent to Mark Chard that my petition was presented to His Excellency and that he could not sanction it. But whether Mr. Job was disposed to use his influence or not or to ? his support I know not. But it really is painful to my feelings and I think would be to any other person moving in the same sphere as I do if they could not get anything for their labour. From the rude state of our society here at Bird Island Cove and its isolated situation being also four miles from Bonavista and nine from Catalina, considerably removed from the surveillance of the Magistrate, it became absolutely necessary to place a constable in it for the maintenance of order as well as the preservation of the peace which remark Mr. Sweetland made in the petition which has been sent in my favour. We are living in a situation to the north extremities of the District where our interest has not been so much regarded perhaps as it would have been if we had resided nearer to one of the Magistrates belonging to the District, but living as we are in such an isolated locality we seem not be owned by anybody, notwithstanding there are nearly five hundred inhabitants in it at the present day which no doubt if His Excellency did but know the number and state of the people he could not deny me a proper stipend commensurate with the duties I am called upon to perform for I am often called upon from my proper avocations to attend to service of Process and make thereof returns to court as well as to attend to other public duties that takes up a great deal of my time for nothing which is much to my prejudice and that of my family. Perhaps your Honor will take it into your serious consideration and use your influence with the Governor in my behalf which if you do I shall be forever thankful for this instance of your favor. For I believe that every reasonable person whom it may concern would think it a hard case themselves were they in my place, that little harbours in Bonavista Bay where there is hardly half the inhabitants where the constables are getting £12 Sterling annually and I am receiving nothing. I hope your Honor will strive for me and please to reply to this note the first opportunity.

Yours in the greatest respect,
Wm. Minty, Constable.

In 1852 Mr. Minty again petitioned the Government:

Mr. Job presented a petition from William Minty, of Bird Island Cove, in Trinity Bay, which was received and read;- praying for a yearly stipend may be granted him after this and his services as constable there, the duties of which office he has fulfilled since 1847 without remuneration.

Ordered;- that the said petition do lie upon the table.

He petitioned again in 1854:

Also, from William Minty of Bird Island Cove, which was received and read, setting forth;- that he has discharged duties of Constable for that settlement since 1847 gratuitously; and praying that for the time to come a salary may be awarded him.

And again in 1857:

Mr. F. B. Carter presented a petition from William Minty, of Bird Island Cove, which was received and read;- praying that his salary, as Constable there, may be increased.

After several letters and petitions to the Colonial Secretary, in 1858, he was finally granted £12 annual salary.¹

From the Reports and Petitions to the Colonial Secretary, for 1876, p. 622,2 is the following extract from a letter written by G.H. Cole, Magistrate at Trinity, to the Colonial Secretary:

...I also beg to draw the attention of His Excellency in Council to the death, at Bird Island Cove, of Constable Minty, and the necessity of another appointment. I beg most humbly to submit for consideration the expediency of appointing one of our trained constabulary for their introduction in the outports. Applications have been made to the magistrates for the office of late Constable Minty, but said applications have been declined by them, to await your instructions relative thereto...

No Constable was ever appointed to replace Minty in Bird Island Cove.

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Information Provided by Mr. Doug Cole