



June 2023

Volume 48 No. 2 ISSN 2817-1284

The Griffin

A Quarterly Publication of Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia



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The Griffin

A quarterly newsletter
published by

**Heritage Trust of
Nova Scotia**

Patron

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Editorial Committee

Donald Forbes, Joan Butcher,
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Contributors to this issue

Edward Wedler, Sandra Barss,
Louis Comeau, Michal Crowe,
Paul Harmon, Medea Holtz,
David Jones, Laurie Stanley-Blackwell,
Royce Walker

Layout: Douglas Porter

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We welcome submissions
but reserve the right to edit
for publication. Contributions
appear in both print and
web editions.

Deadline for the next issue:
31 July 2023

Please send submissions to
Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia
Box 36111 Spring Garden RPO
Halifax, NS, B3J 3S9
griffin@htns.ca www.htns.ca
902 423-4807

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All donations are tax creditable.

Cover image: Still Point Lodge, by Edward
Wedler, plein-air watercolour on paper, 20.3 x
25.4 cm.

President's Report



Sandra Barss

Over the past many weeks, Heritage Trust has watched and read with awe (not the good kind) about new and proposed developments throughout Nova Scotia.

If you have driven in Halifax recently, you might have seen the wasteland of vacant lots along Robie Street, where once proud homes stood across from the Halifax Commons. Though one person is primarily responsible for these demolitions, there is little to protect heritage properties, whether registered or not. Our opinion piece on the unintended negative effects of Halifax's Centre Plan was published in the *Chronicle-Herald* in late May. However, until section 18(3) of the *Heritage Property Act* is removed, and property tax changes are made to remove incentives to demolish rather than retain heritage properties, they remain at risk.

Though we talk a lot about what's going on in Halifax, not all questionable development occurs in Halifax – it's happening elsewhere, too. In Pictou, a new development to combine the town library with the deCoste Centre has the contractor driving piles into the ground across from historic stone buildings.

While these have stood the test of time since the 1830s, their security was not considered in decisions to allow such work.

The Town of Lunenburg is seriously considering allowing a developer to destroy historic Blockhouse Hill in favour of a development that will fill the site with modern residences. Based on the plans, the homes will be completely out of character with the history of the town, and certainly not complementary to the properties within the UNESCO World Heritage site boundaries.

In Bridgewater, the Queen Street site of the Fairview Inn, a provincially registered heritage property destroyed by fire in 2011, is undergoing development that will see two 9-unit buildings erected on that site. Each building will be significantly larger and not especially complementary to the remaining heritage homes on that venerable street.

Though it seems heritage buildings are 'under attack' throughout the province, there are some positive developments, too. The deGannes-Cosby House (c. 1708) in Annapolis Royal will soon receive a plaque commemorating its historic importance within that community and nationally. At the recent AGM for the Heritage Cape Breton Connection, I had the pleasure of hearing about the activities of each of that group's several member organizations in Cape Breton. Their ongoing work to promote and preserve heritage in their communities helps ensure that, though heritage might be under threat, many continue to work to ensure its survival.

In closing, I am happy to report that, for the first time since 2019, there will be a provincial heritage conference again. This year's conference will be held in Baddeck October 16–18. As we know details, we'll put more information about the conference on our website.

ARTIST

Edward Wedler

Edward paints urban and rural motifs in watercolour -- *en plein air*.

With a background in engineering research and applied science, he has a unique perspective on exploring patterns, shapes, and colour by studying earth and ocean satellite imagery. And, as a self-taught artist, we can see him one day immersed in computer code and technology; the next day preparing a humorous speech, exploring artificial intelligence in the arts, hiking, cartooning, or painting outdoors. He exhibits at the Teichert and Fisherman's Cove Galleries.

Edward belongs to six plein air art groups – three in Florida and three in Nova Scotia, having founded Plein Air Artists Annapolis Valley and Plein Air Artists HRM. He initiated an annual collaboration between Halifax Urban Sketchers and the Nova Scotia Association of Architects. Edward designed the plein air map at tinyurl.com/PleinAirMap now viewed by art-lovers almost 20,000 times.

He and his wife, Anne, have both embarked on a 6000 km en plein air painting trek from Nova Scotia to Lake Superior (and back). Their "Footsteps East" (tinyurl.com/FootstepsEast) project takes them through landscapes that inspired Canada's Group of Seven artists and culminates in an exhibition of original works in September 2023 at the Teichert Gallery in Halifax.

Edward was born in Melbourne, Australia, and now resides in Bedford, Nova Scotia. His dream is to "slow travel" across Canada and Australia painting en route and meeting like-minded artists. He still, however, seeks his benefactor.

See also painting on page 15.



Cameron House, 1351 Barrington (Halifax), by Edward Wedler, *plein-air watercolour on paper*, 20.3 x 25.4 cm



The Rope Shed, Brier Island, by Edward Wedler, *plein-air watercolour on paper*, 20.3 x 25.4 cm

The Long History of Finding Human Remains on St James Church Hill, Dartmouth

David Jones

On 28 February 2023, David Jones, teacher and local historian, gave an online lecture for the Nova Scotia Archaeology Society. Titled “Considerable quantities of bones have been dug up on the same spot”: Saint James United Church Hill, Dartmouth, the presentation was advertised as “an examination of reported human remains in Downtown Dartmouth.” The following article is derived from that lecture.

For over 126 years (from 1844, or earlier, to 1970), human remains have been uncovered on St James Church Hill, at the corner of Prince Albert Road and Portland Street in Downtown Dartmouth. Buildings currently on the site are St James United Church (1871), the Church Manse (1894), and the Church Hall (1954). St James Church Hill, Dartmouth, is located in the Sipekne’katik Mi’kmaq Grand Council District and in the Sackville River watershed. It overlooks the Sawmill River (Punmakati in the Mi’kmaq language), the stream flowing into Dartmouth Cove from the Dartmouth Lakes. The site is also next door to a small historic African Nova Scotian community (Prince Albert Road), with traditional family names such as Fairfax, Cromwell, States, and Mansfield.

1844 • (and “on several previous occasions”)

Dr John P. Martin, late town historian of Dartmouth, in *The Story of Dartmouth*,¹ states that the earliest known record of burials in the vicinity of St James Church “is contained in the *Chronicle* of July 1844. At that time Foster’s ‘Micmac Tobacco Manufactory’ was in full operation on the lot now occupied by the Dartmouth Medical Centre.” He quoted the newspaper as saying: “A quantity of human bones comprising the remains of seven or eight persons were discovered

last week buried in a hill in Dartmouth near the residence of William Foster, Esq. Considerable quantities of bones have been dug up on the same spot on several previous occasions.” The bones were said to be “in an advanced state of decay and must have been buried one or two centuries ago.” If we take those estimates literally, we are dealing with a burial date of 1644 to 1744. For context, the failed French invasion fleet (led by the infamous Duc d’Anville) sailed into the harbour in 1746, and Dartmouth was settled in 1750. “Whether these remains were interred then, or at a more ancient period, is a question worthy the attention of those versed in historical reminiscences.”

1870 • St James Church construction

The next recorded discovery of bones on the hill occurred in 1870, during construction of St James Church (completed in 1871). Again in *The Story of Dartmouth*, John Martin states that “Earth from this excavation was at first hauled to the foot of Portland Street and used as fill in the hollow near the present railway tracks. This procedure was halted when it was noticed that the debris contained numerous pieces of human bones . . . Some specimens of these bones, one of which was an adult skull, were presented to the Provincial Museum. They are now in the Museum at Halifax Citadel.”² Where are these bones located today, especially the ones presented to the Provincial Museum? Are there any human remains still located at the bottom of Portland Street?

1873 • “an excavation a few steps North of the Presbyterian Church”

The Acadian Recorder, March 3, 1873, p. 2, reports “a fresh batch of bones having recently been uncovered by an excavation a few steps North of the Presby-

terian Church, where there may at the present time be seen protruding from the soil – ribs, thigh bones, etc. still half embedded in their graves. Among them is a skull half unearthed . . .”. Further, the hill “is becoming surrounded with buildings, and whenever any excavation is made in it there are brought up quantities of bones – human bones – and it is evident that this spot has been chosen in times long by as a burial place – it may be of successive generations of [Indigenous people] . . .”. The piece goes on to say that the bones could also have belonged either to crew members from the failed 1746 French invasion fleet or to Indigenous people who died of disease from that same incident. These are common theories among contemporary authors.

1894 • Construction of the Church Manse

In 1894, excavations occurred at the site of the future St James Church Manse. Harry Piers, archivist, curator, historian, naturalist, and archaeologist visited the site. He found human remains and some artifacts (including a ground stone grooved hammer made from an “egg shaped boulder” ground smooth and pecked around the middle, 3½ inches by 2½ inches in size and weighing 19+ ounces). In 1896, he wrote in ‘Relics of the Stone Age in Nova Scotia’:³

My specimen (a grooved hammer) was found in July 1894, while the foundation was being dug for a manse, two or three rods to the northward of St James’s Presbyterian Church at Dartmouth. A great number of human skeletons have been unearthed at that spot, but after careful inquiry and personal search for anything which might serve to identify those who are there buried, I have only succeeded in obtaining this hammer and a linear-shaped piece of iron, 9.50 inches long, which I think must have been a



The knoll with St James Church, Hall, and Manse (behind), overlooking the buried waterway and the inclined plane of the Shubenacadie Canal (cove behind camera); drone image, 2023, (courtesy of the author)

dagger-shaped implement, or possibly a spear-point ... The bones were from one foot to two and a half or three feet below the surface of the ground. In one instance I succeeded in finding the remains of a nailed wooden box or rough coffin. It was almost entirely disintegrated and chiefly appeared as a dark-colored line in the soil. The grooved hammer was found close to one of the skulls.

The description by Harry Piers of the 1894 discovery of human remains and artifacts sounds very much like that of a Contact Period burial with a mixture of stone and metal grave goods (and potentially Christian burial practices if the wood was a coffin). Dr Roger Lewis, Mi'kmaq Grand Council Keptin and

Curator of Mi'kmaq Culture and Heritage at the Nova Scotia Museum, believes that Mi'kmaq would have been continuing to use pre-Contact technologies (such as a grooved hammer), while also adopting European trade items (such as an iron dagger or spear) during the Contact Period.

1954 • Construction of the Church Hall

The next unearthing of human remains occurred during the construction of the Church Hall in 1954, according to Dr John P. Martin:⁴

Specimens gathered at random were taken to Prof. Saunders' Dept. of Anatomy at Dalhousie University where Dr F.W.

Fyfe, the Associate Professor, made a very minute examination of the collection. His conclusions were that the specimens were portions of four separate persons. One definitely was a man five feet nine inches in height. All were over 25 years of age. The several teeth showed no evidence of caries, and the enamel was of good quality. Dr Fyfe intends to exhume more specimens (which were re-interred in 1954) of skull and tibia bones in an endeavor to ascertain whether the remains are those of Micmac Indians or of white men.

Where on the property were these remains buried, in 1954, and did Dr Fyfe ever return to the site?



View from mouth of the Sawmill River, 1872, showing St James Presbyterian Church (before removal of the spire) on the small hill overlooking the stream, two bridges over the canal, houses on Canal Street and Portland Street beyond, and the Starr Manufacturing facility in the distance at left (courtesy Dartmouth Heritage Museum, A03597)

1970 •

Repairs to St James Church

Eleanor Gillis, daughter of the late Rev. Grant MacDonald, shared information online with the author concerning the discovery of human remains near the Church in 1970. She said that during repairs after the church fire in 1970, bones were found in the small grassy slope adjoining Prince Albert Road. "Archaeologists came and they felt they were remains perhaps from [Duc d'Anville's] fleet that would have come ashore from the cove area (down Canal St to water). My Dad, Rev. Grant MacDonald, was minister at Saint James for many years. He was 99 when he passed away a few years ago." The identity of these archaeologists from 1970 is unknown (to the author, at least) and any information from readers of *The Griffin* would be appreciated.

Interpreting the site

Dr John Martin, in addition to surmising connections to the Duc d'Anville expedition or early Dartmouth settlers (St James is located just outside the edge of

the 1750s and 1780s Dartmouth town plots), explored First Nations origins of the burials, especially considering the proximity of the Hill to Mi'kmaw campsites known to him (the closest being on Pleasant Street near Erskine Street, roughly a block away from St James Church). This also aligns with the artifacts found by Harry Piers in 1894.

The *Acadian Recorder*, 1873, refers to "the knoll occupied by the residence of A. James, Esq.," Evergreen House, built in 1867, as a traditional Mi'kmaw campsite. The newspaper believed the camping ground in the vicinity of Evergreen House (now home to the Dartmouth Heritage Museum) was also connected with Indigenous contact with the Duc d'Anville expedition and the burials at St James Church Hill. "The sites of their wigwams are still clearly indicated by marks in the soil and herbage, and several of their stone tools have been found on the spot." Unfortunately, the backyard of Evergreen House was recently disturbed by heavy equipment in an attempt by the crew from *The Curse of Oak Island* to find a rumoured

inscribed stone describing the location of treasure.

Many questions about the burials on St James Church Hill remain:

- Who was buried?
- When?
- What is to happen on the hill?

To the author, it seems unlikely that the remains are of European origin, given the absence of buttons, buckles, military insignia, etc. I am inclined to believe that they are Indigenous, dating to Contact with Europeans.

It is to be hoped that the St James Church hill (and any potential human remains) will be protected, in full, by both the Special Places Protection Act and the Cemeteries and Monuments Protection Act. This site is deserving of commemoration, but is sadly under threat from development (the Church Manse is now owned by a development company, as are other properties surrounding the church and church hall).

David Jones is a teacher and local historian from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and a former Board member of the Heritage Trust. He is a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal (Nova Scotia).

¹J.P. Martin (1957). *The Story of Dartmouth* (Dartmouth NS, privately published), pp. 276-277

²Ibid., pp. 381-382.

³H. Piers (1896). Relics of the Stone Age in Nova Scotia. *Transactions, Nova Scotian Institute of Science*, v. 9.

⁴J.P. Martin, op. cit., p. 382

Schafner Point Lighthouse

Medea Holtz

Founded in September 2022, the Port Royal Lighthouse Association (PRLA) acquired ownership of the lighthouse at Schafner Point, Port Royal, from the Annapolis Heritage Society in October 2022. The group immediately launched a fundraising campaign with the hope of repairing and restoring the building in summer 2023. Restoration will cost about \$120,000. By April 2023, the group had raised over \$40,000 through grassroots fundraising, grant writing, and from sponsorships by local and regional businesses.

Comprised solely of volunteers from the Granville Road community, the group works tirelessly for just one goal: to save this historic building and local icon, and to set up mechanisms for its ongoing care and maintenance. PRLA is also seeking funding for erosion control measures which are vital to the future of the site: establishing a berm on the cliffside, and developing a 'living shoreline.'

Once the building is restored and the cliffside shored up, PRLA will seek funding to enhance the property with picnic tables and interpretive panels, creating a park-like atmosphere for all to enjoy.

Built in 1885, the Schafner Point (a.k.a. Port Royal) Lighthouse is the oldest surviving lighthouse in the Annapolis Basin. It is near the Parks Canada Habitation, believed to be the site of the first European settlement in Canada. As reported in the Annual Report of the Department of Marine (1885):

A new lighthouse has been erected on Shafner's Point, on the north side of the Annapolis River, in the County of Annapolis, and was put in operation on the 24th September. The work was done by Mr John Wagstaff, of Annapolis, under contract, for the sum of \$900.

The light is fixed white, elevated 55 feet above high water, and should be visible 11 miles . . . The illuminating apparatus consists of a small size dioptric



Schafner Point Lighthouse awaiting restoration (author photo)

lens. The light is intended for the guidance of vessels navigating the Annapolis River, and especially to indicate the position of Goat Island Shoals.

The last lightkeeper was Lloyd Shafner of Karsdale. The Schafner Point Lighthouse is still a working (automated) light today, guiding boats through the tidal waters of the narrow navigation channel around Goat Island.

According to historian, Barry Moody, "The deed conveying the land is dated 21 July 1884, from Gilbert Shafner and Mary E. Shafner to 'Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria'. The purchase price by the government was \$6. It is a small piece out of the original grant which ran from high water mark on the Basin to high water mark on the Bay of Fundy."

In the 2010s, the federal government began to divest itself of lighthouses. The Annapolis Heritage Society (AHS) was awarded ownership in 2015.

When extensive structural rot was found, AHS elected not to move forward with the needed repairs. Eventually local residents banded together to save the lighthouse, founding the PRLA. The future of this iconic structure depends on us.

PRLA is seeking grant money at all levels, as well as fundraising locally. We look to our local community and lighthouse lovers around the world for individual donations. Your gift is so important, and will be greatly appreciated!

Medea Holtz is Chair of the Port Royal Lighthouse Association.

Kentville's Red Store

Louis Comeau

James Edward DeWolfe was born in 1800, a descendant of United Empire Loyalists from Saybrook, Connecticut, who had settled in Mud Creek (now known as Wolfville). He was the fourth son of Stephen Brown DeWolfe. In his teenage years he would learn the mercantile trade from his father.

In 1828, James DeWolfe moved to the nearby and recently renamed settlement of Kentville. Originally known as Horton Corner, the name Kentville had been chosen to honour Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent (father of Queen Victoria), who had visited in 1794 while on a hunting trip.

The young DeWolfe, who had just turned 28, found himself in the small village that would become his lifelong home and place of business. Here, he built a modest building on the corner of Horton Street and the road to Cornwallis District, marking his acquisition with a corner stone inscribed with the date 1828. Thus began the Red Store's long presence as a Kentville landmark and James DeWolfe's career as a merchant and businessman.

James's son, Melville Gordon DeWolfe (b. 1846), worked alongside his father, as the latter had done himself in Mud Creek. Meanwhile changes were coming to Kentville. In 1869, Vernon Smith began construction of the Windsor and Annapolis Railway, (later, in 1894, to become the Dominion Atlantic Railway). The coming of rail would lead to a tripling of the town's population in just three years, and its eventual incorporation on 7 December 1886.

By 1878, Melville had taken over the business when his father retired, and he began to introduce improvements. One of these was an innovative delivery service by young boys dressed in bright uniforms, carrying orders to their customers' homes using push carts. Melville joined the newly created Kentville Board of Trade in 1894, serving as its president



The Red Store, c. 1900, with the sign "DeWolfe & Lamont"

from 1895 to 1897. Later he would be elected President of the Maritime Board of Trade.

Both DeWolfes (father and son) lived not far from the store, in a home James purchased, which had been built by George Chipman in 1815. This would become the family home until 1919, following Melville's death in 1909. It seems that Melville had bequeathed his property to the Anglican Church for use as a building lot and the house was demolished. Here the Anglicans built their new St James Church in 1922.

Melville hired Ralph Lamont as a clerk in 1870, and made him a partner in 1895. As Melville looked to retirement, a notice shortly appeared in *The Advertiser* (Kentville's newspaper) that, as of 31 December 1899, Ralph Lamont would be the sole owner. A dozen years later, in 1912, Lamont's son-in-law, Stephen N. Steadman, became his new partner.

The store, under Lamont & Steadman, celebrated its centennial year in 1928, also the year of the town's second Summer Festival. By 1934, Lamont and Steadman took on another junior partner, John L Cohoon. Six years later,

in 1940, both Lamont and Steadman retired, leaving Cohoon as sole owner. Again this was not to last, for Stephen Steadman's son, Wilbert, joined the grocery as the new 'junior' partner.

John Cohoon died in 1950, leaving the store now in the hands of his widow,



Melville Gordon DeWolfe



The DeWolfe home, looking west; probably Bessie and Melville (postcard)

Jennie. Three years later, she sold the business to George Wade, a successful local grocer. But times were changing by the late 1950s, with the growth of the postwar baby-boomers. Now larger groceries, such as Dominion Stores, began attracting many customers, creating serious competition for the little Red Store.

Within six years, George Wade sold the building to Eric Kinsman for \$40,000 in late 1959. Kinsman tore down the 132-year-old landmark and built a newer brick building, which still stands today.

It was sad to see such a long-established business come to a close. As for the 1828 stone, it disappeared some-time in the war years.



The Red Store at 100, decorated for the Summer Festival

Louis Comeau is an author and local historian in Kentville. This article is based on his talk at the Annual General Meeting of the Kentville Historical Society in March 2023. For readers who may be in the neighbourhood, the Society's Heritage Centre in the former VIA Rail station is now open for the season.

All illustrations courtesy of the author

Canadian Bank of Commerce Building, 5171 George Street, Halifax

Michal Crowe

No doubt you have walked up past 5171 George Street, headed towards the Grand Parade or the Town Clock, or you have rushed past the building on your way down the hill to make the ferry. Either way, you were intent on your destination and not paying particular attention to your surroundings. The entrance to the building is set back from the sidewalk and up a short flight of recessed stairs, so that if you are not watching carefully you will be unaware of its classic Ionic and iconic beauty. In order to fully appreciate the building, one needs to stand back half a block to the south or across the street and down the hill to the east.

Then you will see the perfect treasure in all its handsome splendour. These days, surrounded by high-rise office towers, it is somewhat overwhelmed but still retains its original façade: an image of stability and grace.

Designed by prolific Detroit architect Albert Kahn and his associate Ernest Wilby, the building was commissioned as a branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1906.¹ It was a typical banking hall of its day, projecting an image of a firm foundation and solid demeanour to impress and assure its customers of serious business within its walls. This granite-faced edifice presented itself as a pillar of the community, guarding its financial dealings and conveniently close to the seat of government at Province House, across the street.

For 70 years the building was a banking landmark downtown. Following the Bank of Commerce merger with the Imperial Bank of Canada in 1961, it continued to serve as the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce main branch in Halifax until 1977. It then became the offices of Merrill Lynch, another financial company, until 2002. During this time, and since, the



The Bank of Commerce building sometime between 1977 and 2002, during the tenure of Merrill Lynch, showing front and side elevations; note corner of Province House fence at right (photo © Alvin Comiter)

property has been owned by various Canadian and foreign investors and holding companies, and has been inhabited by various clubs and bars.

During Merrill Lynch's tenure, a restaurant and café were established which morphed into the Merrill Café and Lounge. This was followed successively by Scoundrels, Locas Billiards, and the Elephant & Castle.²

But this building's history did not stop there. It has become the new home of Pacifico Club, a popular, high-end restaurant, dance club, and wedding venue. It is also a 'space extraordinaire' for fund-raising events, such as the recent musical evening to raise money for Ukrainian relief.

Who would have thought such a traditional, stalwart, granite building would become the home to so many night clubs and bars? Maybe there was a lot of repressed laughter and merriment within the financial institutions and it was encased in the walls until given a

chance for release.

This is repurposing at its best. Instead of tearing down the building and erecting something else at great cost, the original building is still providing a business venue in the city core, while perpetuating its contribution to the streetscape. It is still the iconic building it was when first built.

There have been proposals advanced to redevelop the entire block, but the bank building has been saved thus far.³ Designated as a Municipal Heritage Building in 1981, this important structure continues to offer a note of grace in the Legislative Precinct.

In case you are wondering what criteria were used to designate the building, here is a list of the distinctive features (the so-called Character Defining Elements) which contribute to its heritage status.³ They will help you understand the beauty of the edifice and why it is important to our city.



Banks old and new, looking up George Street to the Grand Parade, showing the old Bank of Commerce building dwarfed by the TD tower, with CIBC tower visible in upper right (courtesy and © Richard Novossiltzeff)

- A prominent position as a corner building facing Province House.
- Three-storey, granite block construction designed in the classical Greek Revival style with a 'Temple Front' with substantial entablature and pediment carried by paired Ionic columns on massive granite plinths.

- Flat roof with overhanging eaves and a stone bracketed cornice and roof-top balustrade/parapet.
- Granite steps leading to the main entry which has massive wooden doors framed by pilasters and a narrow frieze with relief carvings and a dentilled cornice.

- Main entry is set within a two-storey, recessed, centre bay framed by chamfered pilasters and a voussoir lintel with keystone.
- Windows on the front elevation flank the central bay, with central ganged windows at the second and third floors.
- The side elevation is five bays wide with three centre bays recessed and framed by engaged columns and pilasters.
- Ground-floor windows on the side elevation are large, recessed, hung windows with decorative hood mouldings.
- Second floor windows smaller and paired, while the third floor windows are triplicate and smaller again.
- String course between the second and third floors.
- Temple front entablature is carried around side elevation.
- Single-storey, granite, rear addition with large recessed hung windows with a flush sill and flat arch above. The addition has a flat roof with a simple cornice and parapet.

Next time you are on George Street, going up or down, stop and take a look. Even better, make a special trip to the city centre and admire it from several angles. It will make you smile and feel part of its history.⁴

Michal Crowe is a long-time member of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia and of The Griffin's Editorial Committee.

¹Albert Kahn, in *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950*, <http://www.dictionar-yo-farchitectsincanada.org/node/1722>

²James Hunter, <https://www.nacity.com/halifax/10-halifax-bars-closed-not-forgotten>

³Heritage Advisory Committee, submission to Halifax Regional Council, Item 11.5.1 (2014). Case H00395: Substantial alterations to 5171 George Street (Bank of Commerce Building); 1813 Granville Street (Hayes Insurance Building); 1819 Granville Street (Merchants Bank of Canada Building); 1824 Hollis Street (Champlain Building); and 1820 Hollis Street (Ainn Building) - 5 municipally registered heritage properties. Attachment E: Bank of Commerce Building (<https://legacycontent.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/140513ca1151.pdf>)

⁴Special thanks to Sandra Barss and David MacGillivray (CIBC/Wood Gundy) for assistance with historical details.

Martello Towers of Halifax - Part I

Royce Walker

The Prince of Wales Tower in Point Pleasant Park is a well-known Halifax landmark and National Historic Site. Many area residents are aware that the tower is a “Martello Tower,” a British military defensive structure associated with the Napoleonic era. In Halifax, a city rich with historic buildings and other structures, including a wide variety of military buildings, the full story of the Martello Towers of Halifax may not be well known.

There were five Martello towers built in Halifax between 1796 and 1828. The Prince of Wales Tower, the first built in North America, is the only intact tower remaining in the city. The lower floor of the Duke of York Tower at York Redoubt remains as well. The other towers were the Duke of Clarence Tower, at Fort Clarence on the Dartmouth shore, the Georges Island Tower at Fort Charlotte,

and Sherbrooke Tower at Maugher Beach, McNabs Island, all of which were demolished by 1946. There are no above-ground features of these three towers, except for a few pieces of cut granite from Sherbrooke Tower scattered near the Maugher Beach Lighthouse.

I am aware of only one image which shows all five Halifax towers in one view. This is *Halifax Harbour Seen from McNab's Island*, by W.W. Lyttleton painted after 1840. The artist's view is from the high point on McNabs Island looking north. It appears Lyttleton deliberately chose a wide perspective in order to include all five towers, which are prominent built features in the city landscape captured in the painting.

The origin of Martello Towers

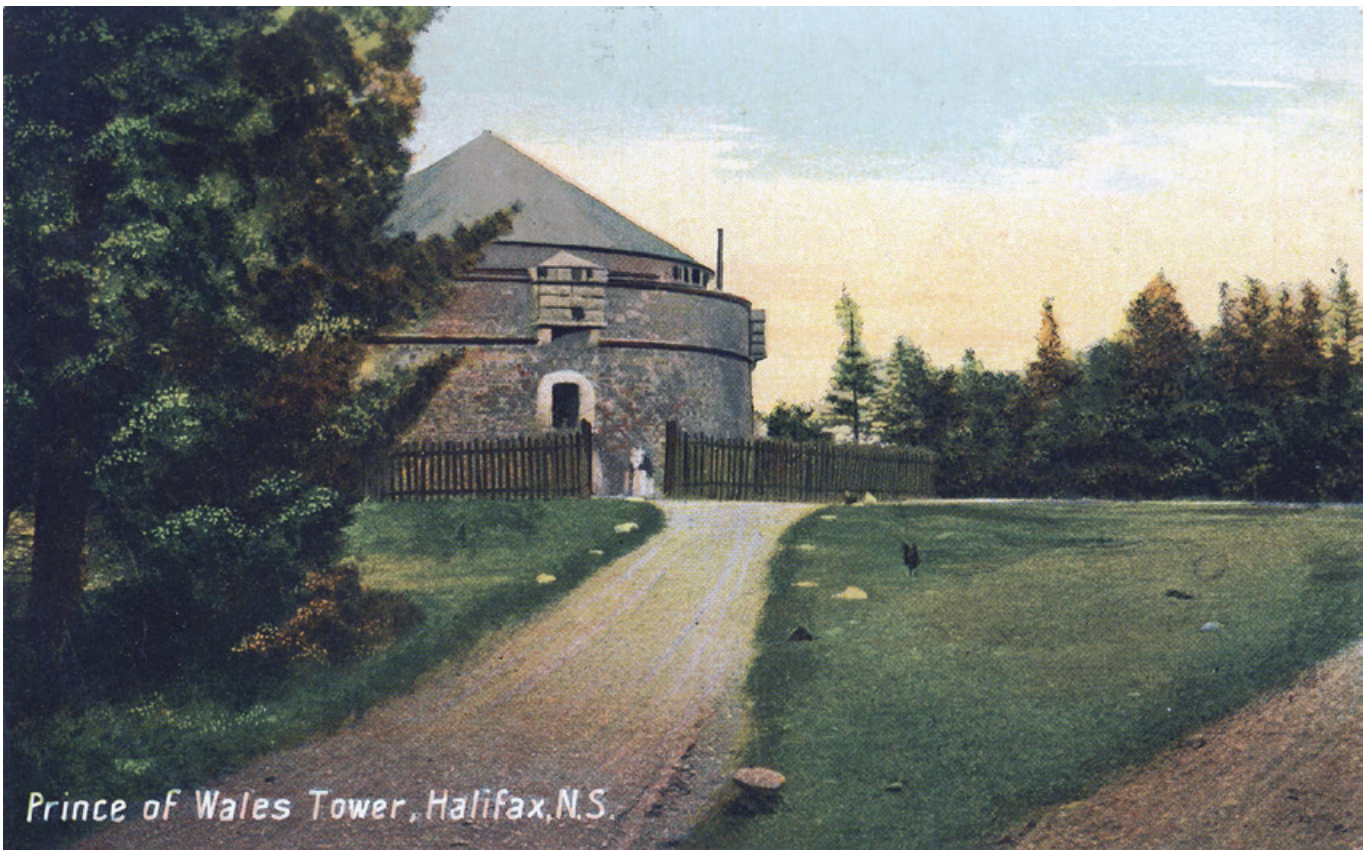
Often in accounts of the origin of Martello Towers, a single British naval siege of an ancient round tower at Mor-

tella Point (Punta Mortella), Corsica, in February 1794, is credited as the event leading to Martello Towers. However, in reviewing background material on British coastal defence planning in the early years of the 1800s, in the face of imminent invasion by the French, there is a lack of evidence for the Mortella Point action being the direct inspiration for the construction of defensive towers, which nevertheless came to be known as Martello Towers. Available records indicate that the development of the tower design was much longer in the making, for complex political and practical reasons.¹

There is a remarkable overlap of people present at, or connected with, the Mortella Point action, and those same people involved in the debate, decision, and in some cases the construction of towers. It is unfair to assume that Mortella Point had no impact on future tower design and development.



Halifax Harbour seen from McNab's Island, c. 1840, by Westcote Whitchurch Lyttleton (1818-1879), watercolour, touch of gouache over pencil on paper, 31.9 cm x 76.8 cm (with permission of ROM (Royal Ontario Museum), Toronto, Canada; ©ROM, 960x 276.121)



Postcard view of the Prince of Wales Tower, c. 1910 (private collection) (Is that Mrs Smith by the gate?)

Is it possible that the story of Mortella Point was seized upon or ‘embellished’ to support the adoption of towers?

Within a year of the Punta Mortella action, construction of two towers began in the Cape Colony, followed quickly by three early towers in Halifax. The five early towers constructed before 1800 appear to have been built in response to immediate military threats, and fit within the local military plan and landscape, rather than any predefined design. In the accounts of the months-long debate prior to beginning construction of English towers, there appears to be no mention of the towers constructed in the Cape Colony or Halifax, as if they did not exist. On the other hand, earlier towers constructed by the British in Minorca, Guernsey, and Jersey (before the Punta Mortella action) seem to have formed the model for future towers.

Approximately 200 towers were constructed and eventually became

known as “Martello Towers.” They were built across the British Empire between 1795 and 1870, with the greatest number between 1806 and 1812. Generally, those built in the United Kingdom conformed closely to the standard design and placement. In British North America, there were 16 towers, built in response to various political events and military threats, from the early 1796-1799 Halifax towers to the last group erected in Kingston, Canada West, between 1845 and 1848. One author observed that “Martello Towers were, everywhere and always, a compromise that met the capacities of the British government, even if they did not completely fill the requirements for permanent fixed artillery defences.”²

The Halifax towers were built in two phases in the history of Martello Towers. The Prince of Wales, Duke of York, and Duke of Clarence towers were the three early towers, constructed during the

substantial reconfiguration of the Halifax fortifications by Edward, Duke of Kent. Anticipating a French attack, construction began in 1796 and was completed by 1799. The early towers were designed by Captain James Straton, commanding Royal Engineers, more than five years before the British decision for the broad use of towers for coastal defence, the standard design for towers was adopted, or the term ‘Martello’ was even in use.

In Halifax, as in many other locations across the Empire, a number of additional towers were later recommended at different times and locations to address perceived strategic shortcomings of the Halifax Fortress. Martello Towers had come to be viewed as an effective solution to numerous military and political problems. The towers were seen as relatively inexpensive and easy to build, often completed in one construction season, visually pleasing, and popular with both the public and politicians,

who welcomed them as permanent fortifications.

By 1865 at the latest, all the Halifax towers (except the Prince of Wales Tower) were stripped of ordnance, and all had lost any military value related to their original design and roles. All but Georges Island Tower continued to function in new but diminished roles for a number of years.

Prince of Wales Tower

The Prince of Wales Tower in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, was the first North American Martello Tower, and arguably the third in the British Empire. Construction began in July 1796, just months after the first two towers were started in Cape Colony, South Africa. Still standing today, it is 72 feet (~22 m) in diameter and 26 feet (~8 m) high, making it larger in diameter and shorter than other Martello Towers. Original access is thought



Wills's Cigarettes card, based on c. 1880 sketch (collection of the author)

to have been by an external staircase to the top of the tower, the ground-floor door being added about 1808, when the magazine was constructed. The external stairs were removed by 1812, and the typical second-floor Martello Tower entrance was added about 1860.

The tower was built to provide protection from a land attack on the three gun batteries at Point Pleasant. It served as an elevated gun platform and defensible keep. In 1784, prior to the construction of the tower, the Duke of Kent had recommended 'log guardhouses and palisades' to defend the rear of each of the gun batteries at Point Pleasant. But by early 1796, the plan had changed to the single stone tower on the height of land behind the batteries. In November 1796, when the tower was two-thirds complete, construction was halted temporarily due to a financial controversy. Despite this delay, however, the tower appears to have been functional as a keep as early as the end of 1797, though not fully complete until 1799.

Several features of the completed tower differed from the eventual standard design, and were later seen as significant shortcomings. These included:

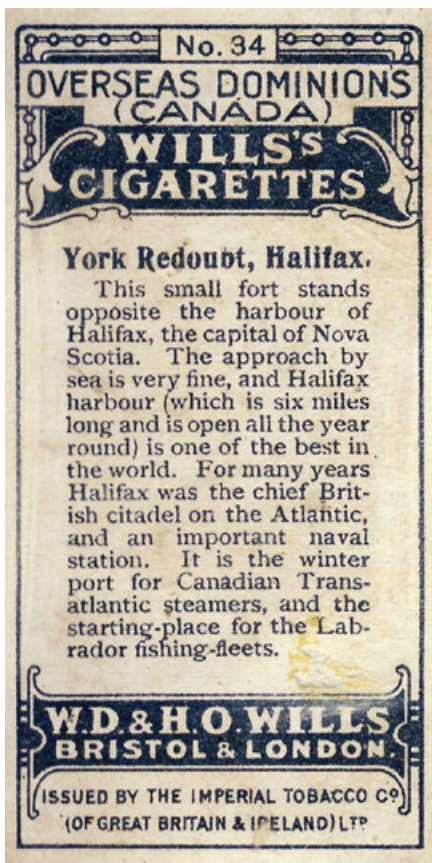
- the wooden roof (not bomb-proof),
- absence of stone arches supporting the roof,
- hollow central pillar,
- no second-floor door,

- no magazine,
- lower floor loopholes,
- terreplein parapet embrasures.

An interesting account of repurposing of the Prince of Wales Tower is offered by Janet Kitz and Gary Castle in their book *Point Pleasant Park, an Illustrated History*. They recount a family living in the tower. Mrs Euphemia Smith resided there following the death of her husband, William, in 1922, aged 86. According to his death certificate, he was Keeper of the tower. Euphemia died in 1925. Theirs was the last family to reside in the tower. They lived on the second floor – the barracks floor. During the Great War, the children were told not to enter the ground floor, where German prisoners were housed.

Duke of York Tower

The Duke of York Tower is the other tower of which part can still be seen today. It was the third of the three early Halifax towers built by the Duke of Kent and Capt. Straton. Constructed in 1798, it was designed as a keep in the rear of the gun battery on the high bluff overlooking the harbour mouth across from McNabs Island, well to the south of other gun batteries at the time. Built of local freestone, it was the smallest of the first three towers, with a diameter of 40 feet (12 m) and straight walls to a height of 30 feet (9 m) at the terreplein plus a 4 foot (1.2 m) high wooden parapet.



Text on reverse side of the York Redoubt Tower cigarette card (collection of the author)

ARTIST

Edward Wedler

Original access appears to have been by an external staircase to the top of the tower.

The original wooden overhanging terreplein and parapet formed a machicolation gallery, a structure which allowed defenders to fire muskets at the base of the tower in the event attackers were attempting to enter there. This gave the Duke of York Tower a very distinctive appearance (machicolation galleries were later added to the Prince of Wales Tower). The wooden upper structures of the Duke of York Tower were an ongoing problem for leaks and rot until replaced in stone about 1870.

The Duke of York Tower became an integral part of Prince Edward's visual telegraph signal system, which extended out the harbour to Camperdown. By 1869, an electric telegraph line was in place from Fort George (the Citadel) to York Redoubt.³ In 1892 the upper floor of the York Redoubt Tower was damaged by fire. It was then removed, leaving only the lower floor, which was then used for storage, and remains today as part of York Redoubt National Historic Site.

Royce Walker is a founding member of the Friends of McNabs Island Society, a member of HTNS, and long-time Martello Tower 'enthusiast'.

¹S.G.P. Ward. Defence works in Britain, 1803-1805. *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, v. 27, no. 9 (Spring 1949).

²Ivan J. Saunders. *A History of Martello Towers in the Defence of British North America, 1796-1871*. Parks Canada, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, no. 15 (1976), available at: https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/pc/R61-2-1-15-eng.pdf

³J.H. Morrison. *Wave to Whisper: British Military Communications in Halifax and the Empire, 1780-1880*. Parks Canada, History and Archaeology, no. 64 (1982), available at: <http://parkscanadahistory.com/series/ha/64.pdf>

To be continued – Part II in our September issue will recount the stories of the third and very different early tower at Fort Clarence, on the Dartmouth shore, and of the other two 'Martello' towers at Fort Charlotte and Maugher Beach.



Le French Fix, by Edward Wedler, plein-air watercolour on paper, 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough Counties



202 Faulkland Street, Pictou (author photo)

Laurie Stanley-Blackwell

New Life at 202 Faulkland Street, Pictou

This 1½-storey clapboard house, with its two distinctive five-sided Scottish dormers, is one of Faulkland Street's most striking residences. Built c. 1850 by Adam McKean, this house features eave returns, pilasters, and a central, pedimented front entrance with columns, transom, and sidelights. It is regarded as one of the earliest of Adam McKean's houses in Pictou and exemplifies his exceptional building skills. Although McKean distinguished himself early on in his career as a builder, he became one of Pictou's most prolific architects and left a distinctive imprint on the town's architectural landscape.

This remarkable building was purchased in 2021 by artist and OCAD Associate Professor, Catherine Beaudette. She was initially drawn to the house by its large central stone hearth, wooden spiral staircase, built-in dresser/drawers in the upstairs hallway, fireplaces, and mouldings. In 2021 and 2022, she undertook extensive renovations, creating a beautiful living space, as well as a location for GALLERY 202, a non-profit artist-run space. The next exhibition,

titled "Wooven" by Louyze Caro and Barbara Louder, opens on July 7th.

Heritage for Sale: 75 Denoon Street, Pictou

The handsome clapboard house at 75 Denoon Street, Pictou is currently for

sale. Listed by Blinkhorn Real Estate Ltd, the asking price is \$289,900. Built c. 1876, this house originally belonged to Amelia Gordon, the widow of William Gordon of Sutherlandshire, Scotland, and mother of the Rev. Daniel Gordon, one-time Principal of Queen's University. This house still boasts much of its original interior mouldings and trim. The exterior features a wide variety of architectural flourishes, such as bracketed eaves, dentil trim, rectilinear drip moldings, and a projecting central frontispiece with clear Italianate antecedents. Further Italianate components include the rounded side lights, rounded transom, and the rounded second-storey dormer windows. The house also pays stylistic homage to Second Empire with its steep pitch mansard roof.

New Wine in Old Bottles, New Glasgow

Recently, The Riverside Inn, a luxury hospitality, opened in a handsome building



75 Denoon Street, Pictou (author photo)



Tilly's Restaurant, New Glasgow (author photo)

situated on Riverside Street, beside the East River in downtown New Glasgow. This building, constructed in 1883, has been extensively modernized. Although many of its late 19th-century features have been swallowed up by vinyl siding, the building retains some of its original exterior character-defining elements, most notably its mansard roof. The decorative bay windows and bracketed eaves are also consistent with the fashions of Canadian architecture during the late 1800s.

The Riverside Inn demonstrates that a growing number of local entrepreneurs appreciate the business potential of repurposing old buildings. This attitude is also seen at Tilly's Kitchen, a newly opened high-end restaurant in New Glasgow, which occupies the Edwardian house formerly used for Hebel's Restaurant. The building still retains its ample proportions, stained glass windows, dark stained woodwork, and grand staircase. In 1916, this house was the residence of William McIntosh, owner of William McIntosh & Co. which was "the largest of all millinery stores in Eastern Nova Scotia". The current owners of Tilly's Kitchen have plans for opening a boutique hotel, as well as host-

ing activities at this location. This past New Year's Eve, the house served as an elegant setting for a Downton Abbey-themed event.

Post-Fiona Update on Calvin Presbyterian Church, Sunny Brae

Sunny Brae's Calvin Presbyterian Church, a simple, frame, meeting house-style structure built in 1854 was damaged extensively during Hurricane Fiona. This church was founded by the celebrated Gaelic poet and Presbyterian divine,



Former Calvin Presbyterian Church, Sunny Brae (author photo)

Rev. D. B. Blair. Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair was also minister there from 1866 to 1888. Owing to extensive damage, due especially to the spread of black mould, the church was decommissioned in a service on 11 Dec 2022 and the building was put up for sale. Realtors billed the property to potential buyers as an "opportunity to purchase a piece of local history and restore the original building back to its glory." The church was on the market for only fifteen days. It will be interesting to see what the future holds for this fine old building.

LEGO Contest Captures Imaginations, Antigonish

The recent LEGO contest at the Antigonish Heritage Museum, featuring replicas of Antigonish's built heritage, was a huge success. Sponsored by the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, Antigonish Heritage Association, and Antigonish 5¢ to \$1, this contest showcased pre-1920 heritage buildings in Antigonish (town and county) and consisted of two categories for participants, ages 12 and under and ages 13 up. Some of the buildings recreated by LEGO enthusiasts included the Antigonish Court House, Royal George, Victorian Inn, Cape George Lighthouse, St James United Church, St Paul's Anglican Church, and St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church, Arisaig. Many of the submissions showed exceptional skill and methodical planning.



Replica of St James United Church (c. 1862-64), Antigonish, winner of First Prize, Adult Category, and People's Choice Award; submitted by Jonas and Adam Tkacz (author photo)

Fifteen entries were submitted, the majority by children, the youngest being 5 years old. This event attracted considerable media and online attention. Approximately 600 people voted online for the People's Choice Award and at least 200 people attended the reception and awards ceremony at the museum on March 16th. Given its successful debut, this LEGO contest is going to be an annual event at the Antigonish Heritage Museum. Approximately \$165 in donations was collected at the door for Antigonish Affordable Housing.

Based on the Antigonish Heritage Museum's positive experience, it is clear that a LEGO contest is an effective way to make heritage architecture more appealing and accessible to young people. It has the potential to serve an educational function, making them more attuned to their architectural environment, and helping to invest built heritage with positive associations. The LEGO contest helps build community,

as well as building interest in heritage conservation and revitalization.

Ongoing Renovations at St Anne's, Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation

Restoration work on St Anne's Church at Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation started in October 2022. According to Elder John R. Prosper, "Cement supports have been installed below the pillars to keep them from caving in. The roof is no longer leaking. The floor is currently being replaced. The roof will be replaced when the weather warms up." I am grateful to Elder John R. Prosper for providing me with the accompanying photograph, which documents the significant progress that is being made in the restoration of this historic church.

Goldboro United Baptist Church, Guysborough County

Another Nova Scotian church has recently joined the ever-growing list of demolished wooden churches. In April 2023, plans were underway for dismantling the Baptist church in Goldboro. The United Baptist congregation was established in 1899. The construction of the church started shortly thereafter and was completed by 1904.

Goldboro's United Baptist Church was an imposing structure, in terms both of its size and its hill-top location. The church has been described as "unique architecturally". Some of

its distinctive features included the contrasting yellow and white painted clapboard exterior (believed to have been the original colour scheme), rectangular steeple, tin ceiling (an affordable alternative to plaster), and elaborate trim boards and mouldings, all indicative of a high level of craftsmanship. Fitted with maple pews which could accommodate no fewer than 400 people, the church exemplified the prosperity, growth, and optimism generated by gold mining and ship building.

By the 1940s, when the mines closed, the church began its steady decline. By 2017, the once plentiful congregation was reduced to two surviving members, who were left with the painful decision of deciding the church's fate and putting it up for sale.

With thanks to Elder John R. Prosper, Professor Catherine Beaudette, Teresa MacKenzie, Dr. Michael Linkletter, John Marshall, Dr Barry MacKenzie, Judith Haggerty, and John D. Blackwell

Dr Laurie Stanley-Blackwell is the retiring Regional Representative on the HTNS Board for Pictou, Antigonish, and Guysborough Counties and recently co-founded the Pictou Bee Press.



Ongoing restoration at St Anne's Church at Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation (photo courtesy of Elder John R. Prosper)



Goldboro United Baptist Church, Goldboro (source: Atlantic Baptist Built Heritage Project, <https://atlanticbaptistheritage.omeka.net/items/show/271>, accessed 2023-05-29)

NEWS

Doors Open for Churches 2023

Doors Open for Churches is an annual tour of church buildings in Nova Scotia. It is presented by the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia in partnership with community members.

This year the tours will be a combination of in-person visits (masks encouraged) and virtual tours. It will be possible to visit all the churches virtually, as material about each church will be posted on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/DoorsOpenForChurchesNS>).

We will be on tour from mid-July to mid-October 2023, beginning in Kings County and ending alongside Celtic Colours in Cape Breton.

Please join us in celebrating these markers of our communities' history and culture.



NEWS

Knaut-Rhuland House in Lunenburg

This National Historic Site and late 18th Century (c. 1793) provincially registered former home in Lunenburg has been badly in need of structural repairs and other major conservation work. The Lunenburg Heritage Society, which operates the house as a museum, has been actively fundraising for some time. The project began with a conservation plan in 2021 and foundation stabilization work was initiated in 2022. We hope to have an update on the components and status of the project in the next issue. In the meantime, further details are available on the Society's website (<https://lunenburgheritagesociety.ca/museum/>), where a link for donations can be found. Also note the ad at left for the Lunenburg Heritage House Tour, scheduled for Saturday 9 September.

Tickets available at
Knaut-Rhuland House Museum, 125 Pelham Street, Lunenburg
and
Online: <https://lunenburgheritagesociety.ca>



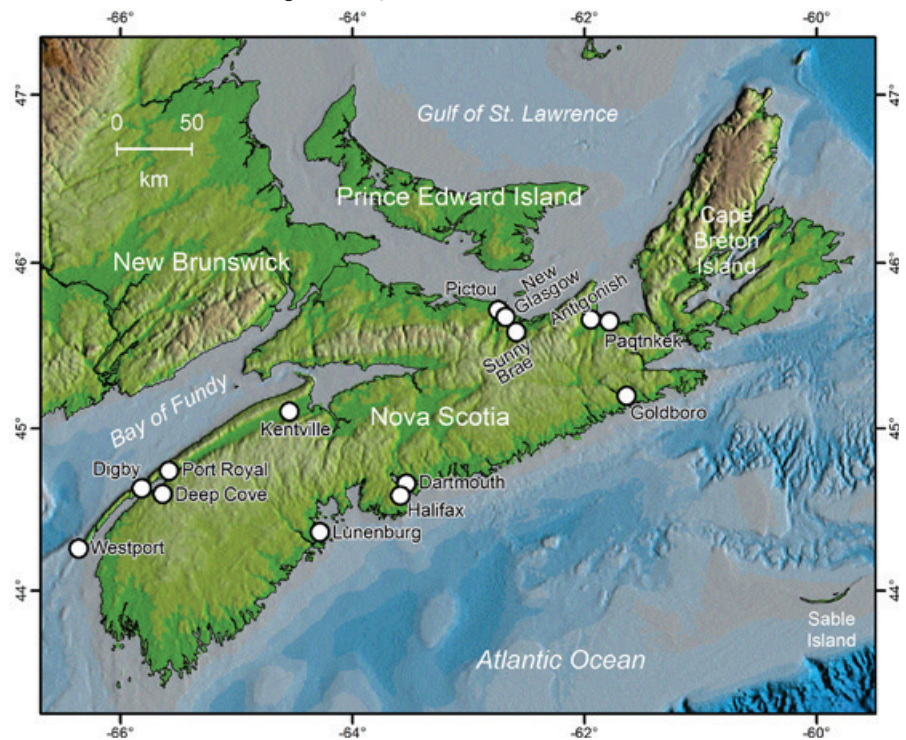
Water Street, Digby



A busy noon hour on Digby's main street in the mid- to late 1930s (courtesy of Paul Harmon)

Much has been lost. The tall building at left, built 1901, still stands (with a better roof, but a blander façade), as does its neighbour (looking quite handsome today). Can you pinpoint the date? Whose limousine is on the right (and is that the owner or the chauffeur)? In the 30s, were fish still dried on flakes along the Digby waterfront (behind the buildings on the left)? One photograph from 1939 suggests they were. Comments or recollections to the Editor (griffin@htns.ca) would be welcomed.

Locations of subject matter in this issue



Base map data courtesy of Geological Survey of Canada, Natural Resources Canada