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The Griffin

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The Griffin

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Cover image: Working the Parrsboro Weir,
by Poppy Balsler, 2018, watercolour on paper,
14"x21" (private collection, courtesy of the artist)

President's Report



Sandra Barss

When I last wrote we were anticipating the winter solstice; now the Daylight Savings time shift is imminent, and the April 8 solar eclipse is on its way. Thinking about daylight makes me think about those homes built before indoor lighting was a possibility. The advent of electricity and interior lighting has wrought such change in how we live that it's nearly impossible to imagine what our lives would be like without this convenience. Such advances bring the need for change, and Heritage Trust is not immune from the need to adapt to the times.

In that vein, the Board undertook two days of Strategic Planning at the beginning of December with a view to clarifying the focus of our work in heritage. Meeting in our new office space, Andrea Arbic (our Board Secretary, whose "past life" was as a governance consultant) led the discussion to refine the key objectives for the Trust over the next few years. This confirmed that our primary focus remains the preservation of heritage properties throughout the province.

With the implementation of the new federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), heritage buildings across Nova Scotia

now face yet another challenge. This Fund is being implemented in various ways by municipalities, some of which are quite positive, while others will continue with a "cranes in the air /carbon-bomb" approach that will see increased economic pressure to replace heritage buildings and already-tall towers built even higher. Though we don't know how each municipal unit will implement the HAF, we do know that heritage buildings remain at risk because of the lack of protection under the *Heritage Property Act*. This is the same Act that allows owners of municipally registered heritage properties to apply to demolish their buildings. We continue to press without success for amendments to this Act, which is unique across Canada in allowing such demolitions.

Similarly alarming is the Decision quashing the third-party sponsored registration of a Halifax heritage property proposed for demolition by the owner (Dalhousie University). That Decision is being appealed by HRM. The Trust has engaged legal counsel to apply for us to become an Intervenor. We want to address our concern that third-party heritage registrations must remain a possibility in Nova Scotia. Though there is no guarantee of success, we cannot ignore this issue.

Heightened awareness of the need to preserve heritage properties shows in our social media, which remain engaging thanks to our contributors and volunteers. Our E.D., Emma Lang, reports that she receives heritage-related inquiries nearly every day now. I'm also happy to report that donations to the Trust have increased this year, creating additional support for our Buildings at Risk fund. Clearly, extending contact within the larger heritage community has brought positive results that we hope will continue.

ARTIST

Poppy Balser

Poppy Balser is a Canadian painter who works in oils and watercolours.

Poppy has always lived within walking distance of the ocean, mostly on the shores of the Bay of Fundy. She developed an early connection with the seashore and this has deepened as she studies the sea and its environs through her paintings. She paints outside often to keep her observations fresh and accurate. Her goal is to transfer the open air feeling of being outside in nature into her studio work.

*“She paints outside often ...
Her goal is to transfer the open air
feeling of being outside in nature
into her studio work”*

Balser began the serious pursuit of painting in watercolours in 2003. She has since followed a path of self-directed study, choosing workshops by master painters from across the country. Over the last few years she has expanded her artistic practice to include oil painting. She has become an accomplished painter, known for both her watercolour and oil paintings. She holds signature or elected membership in several art societies, including the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour (CSPWC), the Oil Painters of America and the American Society of Marine Artists (ASMA). Poppy is currently the Vice President of the CSPWC.

For more about Poppy Balser's work, please visit www.poppybalser.com.



Quiet on the Water, by Poppy Balser, 2023, varnished watercolour on panel, 16"x20" (private collection, courtesy of the artist)



Last Light on the Casey Building, by Poppy Balser, 2016, plein-air watercolour on paper, 14"x21" (private collection, courtesy of the artist)

Once-Common but Disappearing Built Heritage

Our cover image this issue is a stunning rendition of a fishing weir at Partridge Island, near Parrsboro. This is one of several paintings of weirs by artist Poppy Balser, who has captured the dramatic geometry and challenging work environment of such weirs, which once were numerous in the macrotidal Bay of Fundy. At high tide, the nets (or woven brush barriers) would be covered by the tide and fish would be captured in nets or corralled and stranded as the tide dropped. At every low tide, night or day, the fishermen would go out with horse carts, and later trucks or ATVs, to harvest the catch. In comments on this image, Poppy pointed to the lower left part of the painting, where two fishermen can be seen at work. As she said, "This gives you a sense of [the] scale of both the netting and the tides of the Bay of Fundy."¹

Fish weirs are an ancient invention, stretching back into the mists of prehistory. Most, built with wooden stakes or poles and interwoven brush or nets, are swept away by winter storms and ice,

and then rebuilt each spring. Smaller stone weirs constructed by Mi'kmaq fishers near the heads of tide or in rivers are among the oldest built heritage in Nova Scotia. Mi'kmaq, Acadians, and later settlers exploited the large tides of the Bay of Fundy to construct weirs or trap-nets with which they caught large quantities of cod, gaspereau, salmon, shad, mackerel, sturgeon, and other species. Helen Battle, in a 1931 report,² gave numbers of weirs by county in 1890 (and 1930). In Nova Scotia, she counted 8 trap-nets and 87 weirs in 1890 (5 and 66 in 1930). Charlotte County, New Brunswick boasted 250 weirs in 1890 (237 with 11 trap-nets in 1930). Details of construction can be found in Battle's report, and in a fascinating 1993 document by Joleen Gordon, entitled *The Woven Weirs of Minas*.³ The weirs all had names, such as the *Point Weirs*, the *Grab-all*, the *Rock Weir*, the *Nest*, the *Win the Day*, or the *Cheverie* – built so far out that folks asked if they were building it in Cheverie.⁴

These were iconic features of the

cultural landscape of Nova Scotia, disappearing and reappearing in an annual rhythm for centuries, and now all but vanished. Like the water trough and the phone booth, these examples of everyday infrastructure have passed into memory. They should remind us of the importance of the cultural landscape and the role of heritage structures and streetscapes in adding to the visual interest and quality of life, for tourists and residents alike, in the communities we call home.

- DLF

¹Poppy Balser, on *Working the Parrsboro Weir*, <https://www.poppybalser.com/work-zoom/2791497/working-the-parrsboro-weir/#/>
²Helen I. Battle, *The Fundy Survey: Weirs and Trap-Nets*. University of Western Ontario (1931).
³Joleen Gordon, *The Woven Weirs of Minas*. Nova Scotia Museum, Curatorial Report no. 73 (1993).
⁴Margaret Beattie, Weirs, Economy Point Down, *The Cobequid Outlook* (United Church Bulletin), vol. 5, no.4 (1981), reproduced as Appendix 2 in Gordon (1993).



Poppy Balser

Spring Colours of Bear River, by Poppy Balser, 2018, *plein-air watercolour on paper, 11"x14"* (private collection, courtesy of the artist)

CELEBRATION

Hear All About It! - Celebrating 50 Years of Atlantic News, Halifax

Michal Millar Crowe

A 50th Anniversary is indeed a reason to celebrate – be it a birthday, wedding anniversary, business milestone, or retirement.

In September of 2023, owners Michele and Stephen Gerard were proud to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of Atlantic News. The business was created originally to address an appetite and interest in newspapers and magazines. As time went on, it became a place to purchase cigarettes, drinks, sandwiches, puzzles, postcards, notecards, lottery cards, and other items more common to a corner store, even milk and bread.

The twenty five years of the Gerards' input and hard work ensured that the 50th Anniversary of Atlantic News was a time for celebration, with cake, balloons, carry bags, and door prizes. Truly a festive affair. The Halifax community has been extremely supportive of all their endeavours and continues to support the business.

The House on a Suburban Corner

The building is located at the corner of Morris and Queen. On the Queen Street side, it faces the former St Luke's Parochial School, turned Greek Orthodox Church, turned condominium. In 1965 the civic numbering changed from 90 to 5560 Morris Street.

As the address has a business located within, thus a large street presence, one tends not to stand back and look at the building as a whole. When we do, we see that, like several buildings on the street, it is a Second Empire house, having a mansard roof with steep sides, bell-curved eaves, a flat roof, and multiple dormers. It is a wood-frame structure with later brick veneer on the ground floor.

It is believed that the building was constructed between 1861 and 1864



John (left) and Pat Doherty, probably 1980s (courtesy of Joan Doherty)

by George Blaiklock, during his ownership of the property (1861-1868). On the 1865 Church map,¹ a building is shown on the lot at the corner of Morris and Queen. Other owners over the years, as summarized in the Schmitzville Heritage Conservation District Plan,² included Philip Colford (Gentleman, 1868-1882), John Smith (Merchant, 1882-1883), Bank of Nova Scotia (1883-1886), Charles (Barrister) and Annie MacDonald (1886-1904), Alexander and Edith Mackintosh (1904-1908), and John Wood (Broker, 1908-1934).

The Drug Store Years

Mr Frank L. Fry, a pharmacist from Sydney, purchased 90 Morris Street in 1934.² He had attended the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacy (which many years later became the Dalhousie College of Pharmacy), and was in its first class of graduates in 1912.³ Mr Fry lived upstairs with his wife Muriel, operating a busy and successful pharmacy.⁴ In those early days, some of the equipment included a cachet machine, Konseal apparatus, a suppository machine (likely an Archibald press), and old-style balances and scales.

An innovative communication system was installed, operated with Morse code. The addition of a soda fountain proved very profitable, attracting customers from the nurses' residence at the Halifax Infirmary and from the Air Force quarters nearby. Mr Fry passed away from a heart condition in 1953 at the age of 68.

In 1955, Dr Srul Tulio Laufer, cardiologist, and his wife, Irmgard, purchased the building from Ralph and Rose Gould. For the next 18 years, the ground floor was leased as a pharmacy, continuing its function as a drug store since 1934. Dr Laufer was born in Romania in 1903. He graduated in medicine in 1930, and became Chief of Cardiology in Naples. In 1939, he left Italy and was admitted to Canada as a medical specialist. He arrived in Halifax with his wife, Irmgard, and their three children, and became an associate at the Halifax Infirmary. He was later Chief of Medicine and a professor at the Dalhousie Medical School.⁵ Dr Laufer and his wife were active patrons of the arts, supporting the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), Neptune Theatre, the Boy Scouts, and the Halifax



Atlantic News, bedecked for 50th Anniversary, 2023 (courtesy of Michele Gerard)



Stephen and Michele Gerard, February 2024 (Griffin photo)

Sinfoniette, which ultimately evolved into Symphony Nova Scotia. NSCAD created a scholarship fund in their honour in 1987.⁶

The Newsstand

The building's life as a newsstand had its origin in the vision of Pat Doherty and his wife Onough. Although they called it Atlantic News, the registered name was Norwood Enterprises, and it opened in September 1973. Norwood purchased the building in May 1977. At that time, it included two upper storeys comprising three apartments above the commercial street front. Reminders of the building's previous life as a pharmacy were evident in one of the back rooms—a rolling ladder to reach high shelves, still in place if needed.

Pat's vision was to create an atmosphere of welcome, with the opportunity to learn from the books and magazines on offer. With a degree in Commerce from Saint Mary's University, Pat had worked as an accountant until he was 27. It was a challenge to open a new business, so they were open seven days a week. Pat's father Michael, mother Ruth, sister Joan, and brother John all pitched in to help. Joan Doherty recalled that her mother came down every day to count the money. The first day they made \$100.

To help grow the business, Pat's father, a retired Platoon Chief with the Halifax Fire Department, would go and open up the store at 7 am – two hours before the posted 9 am opening time. This extra two hours of opening helped to swell the coffers. For the first year, Atlantic News was run as a partnership with Bunny Sheffman (Pat called him The Rabbit.) Then Pat bought Bunny out.

Pat was an astute businessman and tried many ways to grow his business, including devoting Saturdays to electronically controlled racing cars. He created Mighty Small Cars and built them himself, along with his brother, John Doherty, and friends Geoff Davis, an electrical-mechanical technician at the Halifax Infirmary, and Bruce Armstrong, an electrical engineer. This little



New owner, Chris Green, in the store, February 2024 (Griffin photo)

part of the business was eventually taken over by Geoff Davis and moved to Dartmouth, where it remains at 552 Windmill Road.

During the Dohertys' time of owning Atlantic News, there were no other newsstands in the city, but subsequently other businesses and outlets emerged. The magazines and newspapers were delivered from the distributor, H.H. Marshall. Pat passed away in 1991 after a brief battle with cancer.

Gerards at Atlantic News

The Gerards' association began when Michele and Stephen started working for Onough Doherty, Patrick's widow, in 1994. Four years later, in January 1998, they bought the business and Atlantic News continued to be a destination newsstand in Halifax. It has remained family-owned ever since, catering to everyone from students and local

residents to those who come in on the weekends to purchase the big out-of-town newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Globe and Mail*. Being open seven days a week was initially a challenge for the young family, as they had a two year-old toddler and a two month-old infant.

The business thrived and they continued to offer something for everyone and to make people feel welcome. In October of 2007, Stephen opted to work for Ravenrock Stone Masons for about ten years as a change, and Michele continued to satisfy all who came through the door. However, computers and the internet posed a challenge to the business model, driving a decline of the newspaper and print industry, as more and more readers were getting their news online. Over time, Michele reported that they were carrying about half the number of titles as they had in the past. To keep up with the times, they invested in an authorized print-on-demand site for *Press Reader*, which carries 2000 newspaper titles per day in 60 languages.

The Gerards made several renovations to the store. The floor plan was changed, the cash register moved, and a new floor laid. They commissioned a custom-made wrought iron gate, for security, but also to enhance the entrance to the store.

Although the demand for newspapers diminished, customers continued to patronize the store for its vast selection of specialty magazines. Non-fiction books were introduced, with an emphasis on local content. Customers remained loyal to the business and the personal atmosphere generated by the owners.

The anniversary celebrations gave the Gerards pause to consider new paths. After much consideration, they felt it was time to spend more time with family, to visit Stephen's home in Australia, and to explore new horizons. By a twist of fate, a young American couple, who were looking for a small business, visited the shop. Chris Green, his wife Kate, and their eight year-old son had moved to the area in 2023 with

a view to starting a new business. After chatting with the Gerards, they came to an agreement to purchase the building and business. Michele Gerard continued for a while to work on a part-time basis to help with the transition.⁶

Visiting the store recently, it was a pleasure to meet one of the new owners, and to hear a buzz of conversation. There was a constant stream of people buying armloads of their favourites, greeting their old friend Michele, and exchanging greetings with friends and strangers. It was truly a popular gathering spot, with the flavour of a small cocktail party!

We are sure that this business has been passed on from good hands to good hands. We wish the new owners a warm welcome and much success in the years to come.

Michal Millar Crowe is long-time member of the Trust, a frequent contributor to The Griffin, a member of the Editorial Committee, and a magazine reader.

¹A.F. Church, Topographical Township Map of Halifax County, Nova Scotia (1865), Sheet 2 of 2; Halifax Municipal Archives, CR10-067, https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/about-the-city/archives/cr10-067_church1865-sheet2_300dpi.pdf (accessed 2024-02-27).

²Halifax Regional Municipality, *Schmidville Heritage Conservation District Plan* (n.d.), p. 301-303, <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/about-the-city/regional-community-planning/SchmidvilleHCDPlan.pdf> (accessed 2024-02-25)

³MacCara, Mary E. *Dispensing Knowledge: One Hundred Years of the College of Pharmacy 1911-2011*. Glen Margaret Publishing (2012).

⁴<https://findingaids.library.dal.ca/a-history-of-f-fry-drug-store> (accessed 2024-02-25)

⁵Medical Society of Nova Scotia, Senior Membership Citations, Dr Srul Tul Laufer. *Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin* 55(6), p. 204-205 (December 1976), <https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/handle/10222/42765> (accessed 2024-02-25).

⁶NSCAD University, Awards, Bursaries and Scholarship, <https://nscad.ca/future-students/apply/awards-bursaries-and-scholarships/> (accessed 2024-02-26).

Acknowledgements: Thanks for help and information to Joan Doherty, John Doherty, Michele Gerard, Mary MacCara, Dr Allan Marble, Andy Murdock (NSCAD), Elizabeth Cushing (HRM), and Elena Cremonese (Halifax Municipal Archives).

Good Use and Re-Use: the Parish Halls of Christ Church, Dartmouth

Joan Butcher

The Heritage Trust's new office space is located in the parish hall of Christ Church, situated on a large, treed lot, bounded by Ochterloney, Wentworth, North, and Dundas streets, in downtown Dartmouth. Steeped in history, this Anglican church and its halls have played key roles in the religious and social history of the community, and continue to do so. Our organization is pleased to be situated within a fine example of built heritage, and intrigued to find out more about the history of the buildings.

The building of Christ Church began in 1817. The architect was W.M. Blaiklock and the cornerstone was laid by the Governor, Lord Dalhousie.¹ The first service took place in May 1818 and the church was formally consecrated in August 1826. Today it is the oldest surviving structure in Dartmouth used exclusively as a church. A Quaker Meeting House was erected in 1786 or shortly after, at the corner of King and Quarrel (now Queen) streets. This was later replaced by Central School.²

Initially a chapel in the Parish of St John, Preston, where a small church had already been erected, Christ Church later became the Parish church of Dartmouth. Clergy serving here travelled on horseback to Preston, Eastern Passage, Cole Harbour, Porter's Lake, Three Fathom Harbour (Seaforth), and Tuft's Cove.¹

A municipally registered heritage building,³ it is a charming example of colonial Georgian architecture, with a unique weathervane on its steeple – a depiction of Halley's comet. In 1865, the church was lengthened by 20 feet under the direction of Dartmouth architect, Henry Elliot, who lived nearby at 22 North Street.⁴ The design of the addition respected the initial Georgian design of the church.³

The ornate design of the triple, round-topped, chancel windows was replicated in the southwest gable end



The present parish hall, as built, looking up Dundas Street to the corner of North; note five bays and large dormers, no longer present (courtesy Christ Church Historical Committee)



The old hall below the parsonage on Wentworth Street, with the newly completed parish hall in the background, documenting the short time when both parish halls were standing on the property (courtesy of the Christ Church Historical Committee)

of the old parish hall (1853). The double round-topped windows beneath a semi-circular hood in the other gable end (now the Victoria Street façade) provided the pattern for the ornate windows in the present hall (1905), many of which have (unfortunately) since been

replaced. Arthur Wallace, in *An Album of Drawings of Early Buildings in Nova Scotia*, states that "Like St Paul's, [Christ Church] has lost some of its colonial character by the replacement of the small glass window panes with memorial windows of leaded glass."⁵ The church records



Christ Church parish hall today (February 2024), seen from the corner of Dundas and North, showing six bays and entry to HTNS office at right (Griffin photo)

note that in 1898 “the present chancel window, representing the Ascension of our Lord, was installed by Messrs Spence & Sons of Montreal.”⁶ It is not clear whether this included a new design for the ornate moulding.

The Old and the New Parish Halls

In 1853 a modest structure referred to as the Old School House was built beside the church on Wentworth Street, below the steep slope on which the parsonage was later constructed. This small hall was used initially as both a day school for the town of Dartmouth and the venue for Christ Church’s Sunday School.

In 1867, the Warden’s report noted that “The Town of Dartmouth having the necessary school accommodation for the District, we deemed it proper ... to authorize the repairing, cleaning and fitting up the School House for the sole use of the Sunday School and Church.”⁷

In the same year they also planted some ornamental trees and erected a barn “for the use of the rector’s horse.”⁷ At some point in the years prior to 1891, the Sunday School building was lengthened by 27 feet and an infant room and library were added.⁸

Near the end of the 1800s, the clergy and laity of Christ Church decided that a larger parish hall was needed to meet the requirements of an expanding church. The old School House was deemed to be too small to play host to the burgeoning number of meetings and events. A decision was made to donate the building to the Black Baptist congregation. Instead of being demolished, it went on to have a successful second life as the Victoria Road United Baptist Church (see below).

Parishioners and the community of Dartmouth alike have benefitted from the parish’s decision to build a

larger parish hall. Carefully tended and upgraded over the past hundred or so years, the Hall has provided the locus for an amazing array of activities, events, outreach, and entertainments.

The Build

After some years of deliberations about the costs of constructing a new hall for Christ Church, in early 1905 the vestry (parishioners who meet to conduct parochial business) determined to start the process in earnest. A few months later, having received an acceptable estimate of \$6750, the recommendation was made to start work as soon as “cash in hand and promises”⁹ reached \$3500.

Progress was swift. Money was raised, the architect and builder engaged, and the site was being prepared for construction by July of 1905. The architect was R.A. Johnson of Halifax and the contractor was Fred Walker.¹⁰



HTNS office on the top floor of the added sixth bay, at the southwest end of the parish hall (Griffin photo)

In February 1906 the new hall had its dedication ceremony.

Situated with a gable-end frontage on Dundas Street, the hall was impressive in style and size, measuring 76 feet long by 46 ft wide.¹¹ It featured two and a half storeys above a basement on the southeast side, while the second floor was at ground level on the northwest (North Street) side. As originally built, large dormers provided light to the attic. The side windows lighting the first and second floors mimicked the double round-topped windows under a semi-circular hood, as seen on one end of the old hall. These windows offered a panoramic view of the lower town and harbour (a feature of the new HTNS office!).¹²

With a main hall that could accommodate 600 people, the building was able to host large-scale activities including performances. Two class rooms, a stage with dressing rooms, a large gallery, and a full-size basement with kitchen made the structure a true multi-use facility.

A Busy Venue

The Parish Hall quickly came to life, hosting the meetings and events associated with an ever-broadening array of parish organizations. Notably, there was a Sunday School, which by 1933 boasted a larger attendance than any other in

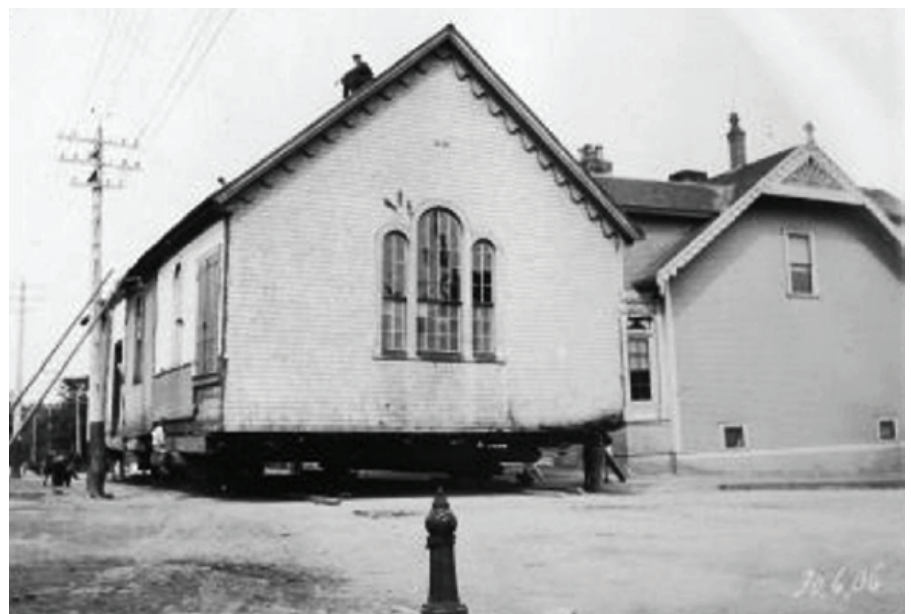
the Maritimes - six hundred students. A Senior Women's Auxiliary was organized in 1907, followed by the establishment of a Girl's Auxiliary and a group called the Little Helpers. Other organizations included the Church Lads' Brigade, the Brotherhood of Saint Andrew, the Young Men's Bible Class, the Mite Society, and the Church Men's Society. There was a library for Sunday schoolers and gymnasium equipment was installed.

The secular community in Dart-

mouth also made good use of the Parish Hall for a broad range of activities. The Canadian Mental Health Association, the Public Good Society, Alice Housing, Metro Immigrant Language Services, Nourish Nova Scotia, blood donor clinics, AA meeting groups – these are but a fraction of the organizations that held meetings at 61 Dundas Street.

The Hall provided space for Greenvale School to hold classes after their building burned down in 1914. During World War I, the Home Guard regularly used the Hall, and the Garnet Rebekah Lodge and the YMCA hosted "patriotic" events. During World War II, dances were hosted for service men and the general public, along with card socials and sewing groups. The Hall served as a collection centre for warm clothing to send overseas. During the Great Depression, the stage in the Hall featured concerts with proceeds going to provide aid to those in need. Scouts and Guides have met in the Hall for many years [*That's where our boys went to Beavers in the 1980s – Ed.*]. Sports leagues for badminton and basketball and other athletic activities, such as gym classes for boys and girls were popular.

The kitchen, modernized in 1954 and again after a fire in 2000, has pro-



The old parish hall on the move along Ochterloney Street (courtesy of Christ Church Historical Committee)



Victoria Road United Baptist Church today, with former northeast gable end now facing the street to the southwest (Griffin photo)

vided delicious meals to support a range of efforts, serving mental health clients and the un-housed, and has held fund-raising dinners to aid Syrian Refugees and women facing oppression in Afghanistan. Since 1984, Christ Church has operated a food and clothing ministry that has grown significantly. Volunteers – parishioners and non-parishioners alike – serve up to 285 individuals weekly. During the winter of 2022-2023, cots were made available at night so that the un-housed could take shelter from the cold. The Hall has served as a polling station during elections, and as a venue for weddings, renewals of vows, art classes, and craft shows. Many entertainments have taken place during the Hall’s history, including musicals staged by the parish from 1997 to 2015. Movies and a TV special have been shot in and around the Hall. Various groups and artists rely on this space as a teaching, rehearsal, and concert/festival venue.

Finally, rooms in the Parish Hall have also been rented at various times by outside organizations, with a current tenant being The Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia!

Adaptive Re-use - the Old School House

Shortly before the decision was taken to build a new parish hall, the Dartmouth Lake Church of the African Baptist community at the end of Crichton Avenue (then known as “Coloured Meeting House Road”) burned down. In the aftermath, Christ Church offered the wood-framed structure to the African United Baptist Association.¹³

The entire building was lifted from its foundations, placed on rollers, and hauled by horses around the corner, along Ochterloney Street to Victoria Road, and up the hill to its present location – becoming the Victoria Road United Baptist Church.

This building is also now a municipally registered heritage property.¹⁴ Incorrectly described in Canada’s Historic Places as Gothic Revival in style (based on the roof angle and supposed presence of lancet windows), its simple gable roof, round-headed windows, and decorative fretwork along the eaves are more suggestive of early Victorian cottage design. The windows along the side of the building are very similar to those in the nave of Christ Church and

were clearly designed to complement the Georgian style of the main building.

As an early and very successful example of adaptive re-use, the Victoria Road United Baptist Church adds beauty and character to its neighbourhood and remains an active parish and community centre to the present day.

Joan Butcher is Publications chair on the Board of HTNS and a member of the Editorial Committee for The Griffin.

A significant amount of information and the accompanying historical photos were provided by the Christ Church Historical Committee, as well as the recipe for a Parish Hall specialty – delicious apple crisp.

¹Vernon, C.W., *The Story of Christ Church Dartmouth*, Halifax: Weeks Printing Co. Ltd (1917), available on-line at <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/ooci-hm.80672/4> (accessed 2024-02-21).

²See “Lecture/ David Jones: Downtown Dartmouth Heritage Conservation District” in *The Griffin* 45(4) (December 2020), p. 8.

³Canada’s Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=4583&pid=0> (accessed 2024-03-22).

⁴Henry Elliot also designed St. Luke’s School in Halifax (see forthcoming June 2024 issue).

⁵Wallace, A.W., *An Album of Drawings of Early Buildings in Nova Scotia*, Halifax: Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia and The Nova Scotia Museum (1976), Plate 17.

⁶Vernon (1917), p. 148

⁷Ibid, p. 120.

⁸Ibid, p. 141.

⁹Bayer, C.W., *Christ Church Dartmouth Nova Scotia 1817-1959*, privately published (1960).

¹⁰Vernon (1917), p. 150.

¹¹Chapman, H., *In the Wake of the Alderney, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, 1750-2000*, Dartmouth: Dartmouth Historical Association (2000).

¹²The original windows remain on the Dundas Street façade and facing North Street, but the decorative moulding has been lost from the south elevation as a result of later renovations.

¹³Riley, S., *Victoria Road United Baptist Church – the First 100 Years*, Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies (posted 9 July 2023), <https://acadiadiv.ca/acbas/2023/victoria-road-united-baptist-church-the-first-100-years/> (accessed 2024-02-24).

¹⁴Canada’s Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=3852&pid=0> (accessed 2024-03-22).

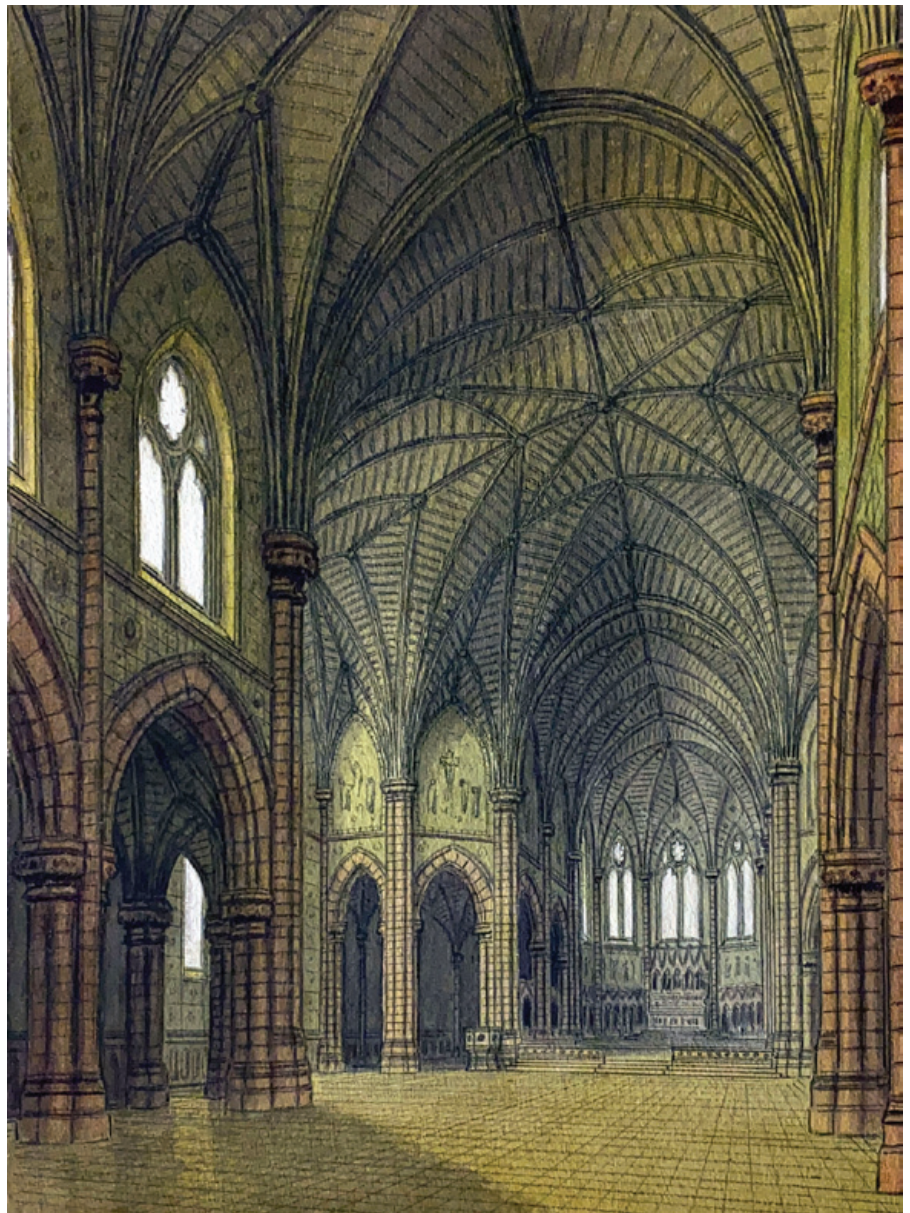
Dreams of Darkness and Light: The Gothic Legacy of William Critchlow Harris

Greg Shepherd

William Critchlow Harris's biographer, Robert Tuck, frames his subject's career in terms of stark contrasts. The triumphs of William's early work, All Souls' Chapel (1888) and St Paul's Church (1895), both in Charlottetown, contrast with the bitter disappointment he felt near the end of his career, when he lost the All Saints' Cathedral competition to an American. Tuck paints a picture of William as a sad and deeply disappointed man. This oversimplifies his legacy, reducing the creativity and complexity of a 40-year career to a handful of buildings and experiences. A better understanding of William's life emerges when his churches are understood as expressions of his artistic and architectural vision.

William is best known for his adaptation of the French Gothic style, particularly his reinterpretation of its rib-vaulted ceilings.¹ Less attention has been paid to his addition of fine art to his churches. William's decision to incorporate decorative art builds on an architectural and artistic heritage dating back thousands of years, and places him firmly within the Gothic Revival tradition that began with Augustus W.N. Pugin. We know from Tuck that the plans William prepared for his clients regularly included decorative features. Yet, despite his best intentions, only three churches included any of these elements. All Souls' Chapel in Charlottetown is the best known. The other two churches are St John the Baptist (1902) in North Sydney, destroyed by fire in the late 1950s, and Trinity Church (1903) in Sydney Mines. The latter is the only Nova Scotian church that realizes William's artistic and architectural vision.

Trinity was designed just three years before William began work on his drawings for the ill-fated All Saints' Cathedral competition. Given his habit of carrying motifs forward from one building to



Drawing for the All Saints' Cathedral competition, showing the proposed murals in the transept and chancel arches at upper left (William Critchlow Harris, All Saints' Anglican Cathedral, Halifax, NS, 1906, watercolour, graphite, pen and ink on paper, 58.0 x 42.8 cm. Gift of Keith Pickard 1994, Collection of Confederation Centre Art Gallery, CAGH-8170)



Interior of Trinity Church, Sydney Mines, still largely as designed, showing the rib-vaulted ceiling and Robert Harris's painting at the east end (courtesy of the Rev. Jackie Warren)

the next, Trinity's position in William's chronology may give us a glimpse of what the murals in his version of All Saints' Cathedral might have looked like. As the perspective drawings that William prepared for the cathedral competition illustrate, the chancel arches and the murals that were to fill them bear a striking similarity to the mural-filled arch at Trinity Church in Sydney Mines.²

Trinity's altarpiece, *Christ the Good Shepherd*, painted by Robert Harris, William's brother, is a stunning addition that both complements and elevates the overall design. Best known for his painting of the *Fathers of Confederation*, Robert's richly coloured Trinity mural depicts a solitary figure wearing a red robe, emerging from a stark, wind-swept landscape. The shepherd holds a crook and carries a lamb. Shipped from Robert's Montreal studio in May 1905, the twelve-by-six-foot painting was

well received by William, who wrote to his brother: "The shepherd on the wild mountainside with the little straying animal in his arms is very poetical in treatment and so simple and natural. It is going to be a great success."³

Years later, while on a visit to his Cape Breton projects, William visited Trinity, telling his brother: "I went up to Sydney Mines to the Anglican Church to morning service and had an enjoyable look at your oil painting over the altar of the *Good Shepherd*. It was wonderfully beautiful."⁴ These remarks underscore William's profound respect for his brother's artistic talents and their pivotal role in completing his artistic and architectural vision for Trinity. It is easy to imagine William describing the murals he planned for All Saints' Cathedral in similar terms.

Like his brother's architecture, the figure depicted in Robert's mural has a

long history. The image that we know today as the *Good Shepherd* traces its origins to the ancient world, where depictions of the "ram-bearer" or *kriophoros* were powerful symbols of sacrifice. One of the earliest Christian representations of this symbol is *The Good Shepherd* in the Vatican Museum (see endnote 5 for link to an image of this work). By the time Victorian-era painter William C.T. Dobson reimagined the image in his 1868 painting, reproduced here, the youthful fourth century shepherd had evolved into a bearded man. Dobson's and Robert's paintings are remarkably alike. In both paintings, for example, the figure wears red and carries a lamb in his arms, rather than on his shoulders, as in the Vatican sculpture. But all three works represent the figure's stare differently. In the Vatican sculpture, the shepherd and the lamb face each other. In Dobson's painting, the shepherd peers into the



William C.T. Dobson's The Good Shepherd, carrying the lamb in his arms, not on his shoulders, and facing away from the viewer (courtesy of and © Sheffield Museums Trust)

distance, away from the lamb in his arms, as if lost in thought. In Robert's painting, the figure of the shepherd looks out of the canvas, directly at the viewer. This difference is essential to Robert's mural because it makes the altarpiece feel less like a religious icon to be worshipped and more like a modern portrait with an approachable and human subject.

While the figure in Trinity's altarpiece engages with viewers, the figure in Robert's *Ascension of Christ*, the centerpiece of William's All Souls' Chapel, is portrayed quite differently. Instead of looking out toward the viewer, the figure looks downward into the sanctuary (see endnote 6 for link to photo gallery of All Souls' Chapel, including this painting). With the chapel's architectural features,

especially the dark wood wall panelling and oversized stone arch, William creates a contemplative space. Trinity, even though it has many of the same artistic and architectural elements, creates a completely different emotional experience, demonstrating William's genius. Perhaps recognizing the need for a less solemn version of the Gothic Revival style in Sydney Mines, then an industrial town, William designed Trinity to feel

bright and open. The glowing amber interior brings to mind the warmth of fellowship and community. Robert's decision to make the figure in his mural engage with viewers amplifies the embrace of William's interior design.

With little evidence to suggest that William was directing the choice of subject or the composition of Robert's paintings, sceptical readers may be tempted to doubt William's role in their



Robert Harris's Christ the Good Shepherd at the east end of Trinity; note the figure's gaze toward viewers in the nave (courtesy of the Rev. Jackie Warren)

Former Historic Inn in Great Village

creation and to doubt whose vision — William's or Robert's — is on display at Trinity and All Souls' Chapel. But imagine for a moment the different psychological impact that these spaces would have if the murals were swapped. Robert may have had the artistic freedom to choose his own subjects and compositions, but he understood William's vision and made sure that his paintings worked in harmony with it.

At the end of his biography of William Critchlow Harris, in a conclusion tinged with melancholy, Tuck tells us that All Souls' Chapel, a mystical place like a sun-speckled dark wood, is the closest expression of William's heart and mind that we have.⁷ While All Souls' Chapel may be the most artistically and architecturally complete expression of William's inner life, it shows us just one part of his soul. Trinity shows us another. It reveals a William full of energy and happiness, unaware and unconcerned with coming disappointments. With its glowing and welcoming interior, it is a garden on a midsummer's day, a reflection of divine beauty and promise, inviting all who enter to experience the joy of heavenly life.

A native of Nova Scotia, Greg Shepherd has a personal interest in Gothic Revival church architecture.

¹Tuck, R.C. *Gothic Dreams: The Architecture of William Critchlow Harris, 1854-1913*. Charlottetown: Confederation Centre of the Arts (1995).

²We know from Tuck that additional paintings were planned for Trinity's three remaining arches. Had these paintings been completed, the thematic parallels between Trinity and William's design for All Saints' Cathedral would be even stronger. See Tuck, R. C. *Gothic Dreams: The Life and Times of a Canadian Architect William Critchlow Harris, 1854-1913*. Dundurn Press (1978), p. 139-140.

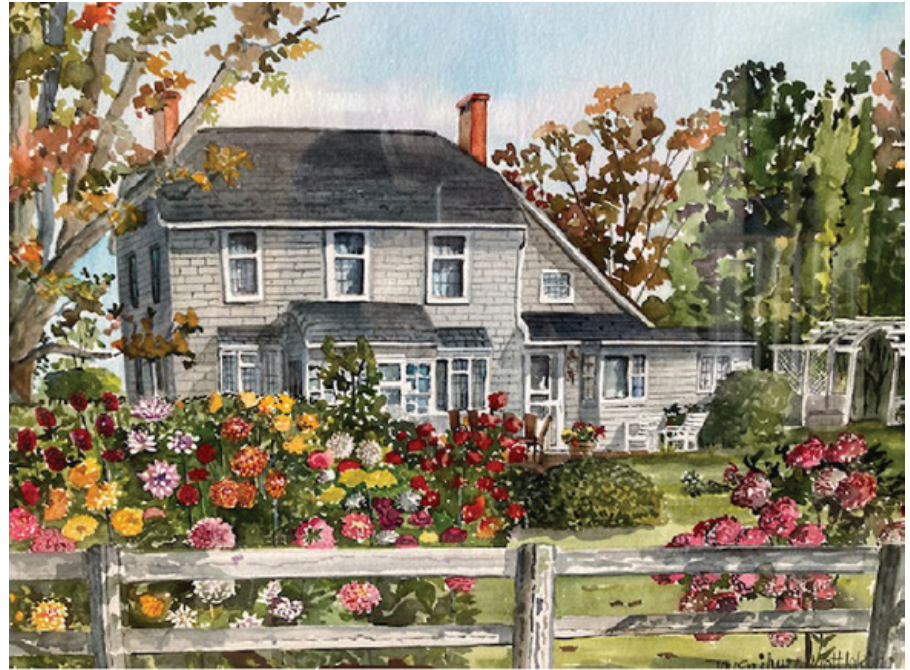
³Tuck, *Gothic Dreams: The Life and Times*, p. 140.

⁴Tuck, *Gothic Dreams: The Life and Times*, p. 212.

⁵An image can be seen at: <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-pio-cristiano/buon-pastore-egiona/statuetta-del-buon-pastore.html> (accessed 2024-03-06).

⁶Images of the chapel and paintings can be seen in the photo gallery at: https://slideful.com/v20180618_2255366704099537_pf.htm (accessed 2024-03-06).

⁷Tuck, *Gothic Dreams: The Life and Times*, p. 220.



Watercolour of the Langille home by Joy Snikur Wyatt Laking (with kind permission of the artist)

This former inn is located on a private three acre site in beautiful Great Village, overlooking both the village and Cobequid Bay. The house was constructed in 1810 as the first inn and coach house for Londonderry Township. Surrounded by pastures of grazing cattle and fields of crops, it also has a 1.4 acre undeveloped parcel of land providing access to the Great Village River.

Less than 10 minutes from Mass-town market, 20 minutes from Truro, 75 minutes from Dartmouth, and 25 minutes from Ski Wentworth. Substantially renovated and upgraded over the years, the building comprises five bedrooms, three bathrooms, new kitchen, oversized

dining room, sun room, unique living room, den, single car garage, unfinished basement and attic, economical heating systems, drilled well, and septic

The property includes a large in-ground, heated, fenced swimming pool and a former three-stall horse barn with one acre pasture, bunkhouse, unlimited gardening and landscaping possibilities, sizeable level playing field, and a white board-and-spindle wooden fence on two sides of the property.

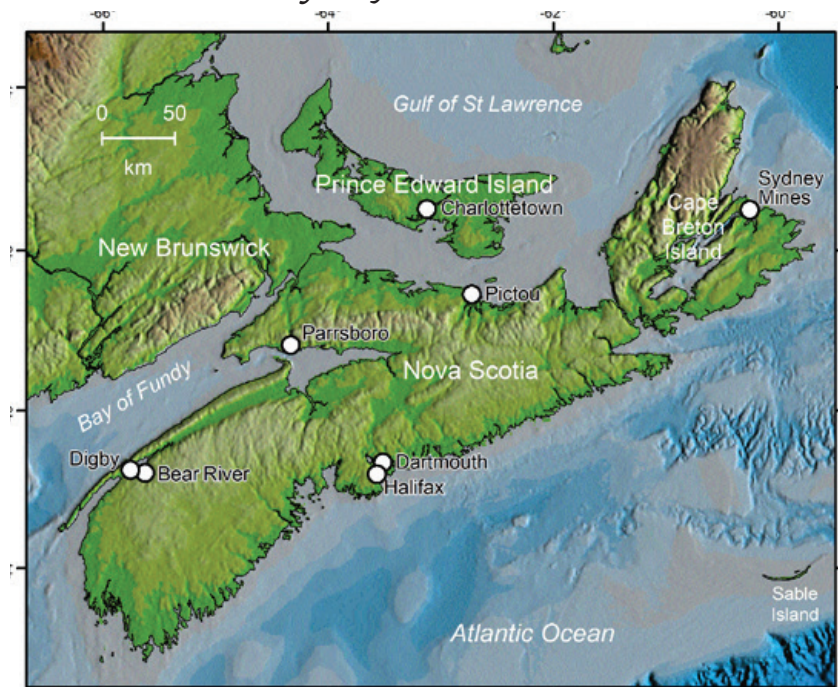
A unique family home. Asking price \$600,000. For more information, contact owner, Ken Langille at 902-789-2713 or email Isabel.langille@gmail.com.

1899 Crowd in Pictou



Crowd assembled at the ornate Pictou County Courthouse (1858-1987), with Pictou Academy in the background. This photo is thought to date from 1899 and may relate to the outbreak of the South African War in October of that year. Note leaves on the trees, band members rushing to take their places, and one of several variants of the Canadian Red Ensign flying from the Academy flag pole. Sadly, neither of these building survives to the present day. Photo courtesy of the Pictou Historical Photograph Society (www.pictouphotos.ca) and Beth Henderson.

Locations of subject matter in this issue



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