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The Halifax Protestant Orphanage: 1857-1970 *by Don Chard*

Time has erased the most obvious evidence of the damage caused by the Halifax Explosion of 1917. Many of the businesses and institutions that existed in the Richmond district of Halifax at the time of the explosion disappeared with the Explosion and

did not return. The Halifax Protestant Orphans' Home was an exception. It took seven years for the Board of Directors to rebuild the orphanage, but in 1924 a new building opened to house the orphanage, on the same property on which the building destroyed by the Explosion once stood. That building, now known as Veith House, stands as testimony to the community's determination to care for Nova Scotia's orphaned children.

The impetus for the establishment of the Halifax Protestant Orphanage came from the reforming zeal of the 1850s, when reformers established a number of orphanages in different communities across British North America. As Halifax grew, people acquired the wealth to deal with a number of problems in the community. The Halifax Protestant Orphanage was established in 1857, through the efforts of Isabella Binney Cogswell and the Reverend Robert Fitzgerald Uniacke. The fourth son of Attorney General Richard John Uniacke, Robert Fitzgerald Uniacke was rector of St. George's Anglican Church from 1825 until 1870. Isabella Binney Cogswell was the daughter of Henry H. Cogswell, an attorney and president of the Halifax Banking Company. She was noted for both her business instincts and her philanthropic activities.

Support for the Protestant Orphans' Home came from a variety of sources. The early Board of the Home included many noteworthy Haligonians. One was Enos Collins, wealthy Halifax merchant and member of the Poor Men's Friend Society, who "gave generously to the blind and to other philanthropic ventures which were common in 19th century Halifax."¹ The first Annual Report for the Home, for 1857, included the following pillars of

Halifax society as members of the Board: the Honourable M.B. Almon, the Reverend R.F. Uniacke, William Cunard, Andrew McKinley, Martin Black, Jr., Dr. Cogswell, Edward Binney, and William Lawson. Subscribers to the Home's endowment fund, listed in the 1858 Annual Report, included Enos Collins, S. Cunard and Co., Alexander Keith, and William Stairs.

It is a reasonable assumption that women played an important role in the Home's operations from the beginning. Isabella Binney Cogswell was, after all, one of the Home's founders, and in the twentieth century the Home had a Ladies' Committee that was the effective governing body of the Home, leaving finances in the hands of an apparently all-male Board of Governors. There may have been a Ladies' Committee in place at least as early as 1875. The *Halifax City Directory* for that year states that the Home's secretary was a Mrs. Ross, and the treasurer a Miss B. Naylor. The Home had a female matron and a female teacher from the beginning. Many women supported the orphanage with donations. The Annual Report of 1878 lists donations to the Home that year including: three geese, cakes, and tarts from Mrs. G. Starr; two bbls of apples, four boxes of figs, and two boxes of raisins from Mrs. Harrington; a blank book and Christmas tree from Mrs. A. McKinley; and drums, bugles, and books from Miss Esson.

The first Home was the attractive stone house on North Park Street, whose purchase for £1,500 was reported in the 1858 Annual Report. By the 1870s the Home had outgrown the building. In 1872, schoolrooms had to be converted to

temporary hospital facilities during an outbreak of measles, because of a lack of space. This, and the increase in the number of residents (referred to as "inmates"), indicated a need for a larger facility. The governors concluded that the existing building and situation were unsuitable: the lot was small and the neighbourhood was building up rapidly, apparently in a manner not conducive to the Home. The Annual Report refers to the "character of the neighbourhood" being a factor in the Board's decision to seek a new site and building.

In 1875 the Board found a new site, in the Richmond district of the city. The residence and estate of William Jordan were available "at a reasonable figure." The property was located between Veith Street and Campbell Road, which later became Barrington Street. At the time, this was the northern suburb of the city. Nearby, on the shores of the harbour, was the clubhouse of the Royal Halifax Yacht Squadron. The *Nova Scotian*, of October 7, 1844, described the house, known as Rose Hall, as "large and airy, having an excellent basement." According to the paper, the basement included a laundry, bathing room, wash room, wine cellar, pantry, coal room, and a vegetable room. The principal storey contained a kitchen, front and rear hall, and two pantries. The second storey contained four bedrooms, and two sitting rooms or dressing rooms. The attic consisted of "three well-furnished rooms." In July 1873, the property was described in the *Morning Chronicle* as containing twenty-eight lots, forty by 100 feet. "The dwelling house is fifty by fifty-two feet, is one of the best built in Halifax, with stables, Coach House, wood house, hen



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Editorial committee:
Peter Delefes, Linda Forbes,
Janet Morris, Nancy O'Brien,
Leah Terry

Contributors to this issue:
Don Chard, Joan Dawson,
Marie Elwood, Wanda George,
Lorraine Lafferty, Allan Marble,
Hal Oare, Nancy O'Brien,
Philip Pacey, Sally Ross,
Lee Serieys, Leah Terry,
Deborah Trask, Janice Zann

Submissions are welcomed.
Deadline for the next issue:
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Please send your submissions to
Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia
P.O. Box 36111
Spring Garden Road RPO
Halifax, NS
B3J 3S9

Tel: 902-423-4807
Email material to:
heritage.trust@ns.sympatico.ca

house, etc., all in good order.” Annual Reports of the orphanage for the period described the grounds as “extensive”, and noted that “the children can play and take exercise without going into the public thoroughfares.” The property was at that time a safe refuge for the children, on the fringes of the city.

Little is known about the atmosphere in the Home in the nineteenth century. One source suggests that in the Home’s early days the children themselves were expected to do much of the work there. Heather Laskey, in her *Atlantic Advocate* article of November 1979, speculates that the Protestant Orphans’ Home may not have been a typically bleak Victorian institution, that the Annual Reports “convey an atmosphere suggesting that, during its early years, the orphanage was not typical of its time – in some respects.”² The Annual Report of 1858 refers to the home as “a happy and religious home...” Laskey suggests that the reports “show advanced thinking for the time.” At the same time, the Home followed traditional practices of placing the children, when they reached their teens, on farms and in domestic service. The *Halifax City Directory* for 1875, in a description of the Home and its purpose, stated, “Comfortable homes in the country are sought out and secured for boys and girls as they grow up.”

In 1914, attendance registers indicate that forty-four children attended the school at the Protestant Orphans’ Home. Fifteen of these children apparently lived in the neighbourhood and were not residents of the Home, as the attendance register gives names of parents or guardians and local addresses for these children. The teacher that year was Bernice Blakeney. The average age of children who attended the school was seven and a half years, with the youngest, four, and the oldest, twelve. By World War I, the Richmond District, and the Home, had grown. The Yacht Club was gone, and there was a sugar refinery on the other side of Campbell Road across from the Home. In addition to the main house, the Home now included a school building and a hospital building. The exact number of residents of the Home then is not known. Thirty-six residents attended the Home’s school in June 1917, along with another thirty or more students from the adjacent neighbourhood. There may well have been another half-dozen younger children in the Home.

On December 6, 1917, the Halifax Explosion de-

stroyed the Protestant Orphans’ Home. Most of the children in the Home died, along with the matron, her assistant, and the maid. Some of the children survived. At first, people connected with the Home clung to the hope that staff and children there had been rescued and had been taken out of the city. For example, on December 12, the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* listed among the missing Miss Johanna Meagher, aged fifty, nurse at the Protestant Orphanage. The same issue revealed that the following children had been rescued: Laura and Charlie Parsloe, Gertrude Reid, and Clarence Ross.

There are a number of clues as to what happened at the Home. According to an article in the *Morning Chronicle* for December 29, the matron, Miss Mary Knaut, “was last seen trying to gather those who were in the building together, in the basement as the best place of refuge from what was thought to be an air raid.” This came from “such accounts as the little survivors are able to give.” The Ladies’ Committee of the Home published this account, as a kind of memorial to Miss Knaut. The account makes it clear that the Committee had been hoping that Miss Knaut, her assistant, and at least some of the children had been “taken to some distant place of safety.” But in the same article, the Ladies’ Committee stated, “It is with the deepest sorrow that we have to record the death of Miss Knaut who perished in the destruction of the Protestant Orphans’ Home in the recent catastrophe. We cannot doubt but that this esteemed lady came to her end in her faithful caring for the little ones under her charge on that fateful day.”

It is not clear how some of the children from the Home survived. They may have been pulled from the wreckage of the Home, or they may not have been in the Home at the time of the Explosion. It is also not clear if Miss Knaut’s actions saved some children or caused them to be trapped under the wreckage of the Home. It is clear from newspaper accounts, and records of the Halifax Relief Commission, that the Home burned after the explosion. These sources make reference to a number of burned bodies recovered from the remains of the Home. A Halifax newspaper, dated December 12, suggests that soldiers may have rescued some children from the wreckage of the Home. According to this item, Stella Howard, a child who survived the Home’s destruction, claimed that one of the other children, Isabella Robertson, had been in the playroom on the first floor of the Home when the ex-

plosion took place, and that a soldier had rescued her and one of the Howard children. The article stated that if the story was true, the soldier might be taking care of the children in his own home, on the assumption that they had no close kin. The paper appealed to people caring for victims to report them immediately. Another item in the *Morning Chronicle*, dated December 15, requested that “soldiers who received children from the Protestant Orphan-



Original Home, North Park Street (courtesy NSARM) age on December 6th, kindly communicate with Mrs. Cunningham, 43 Cornwallis St.”

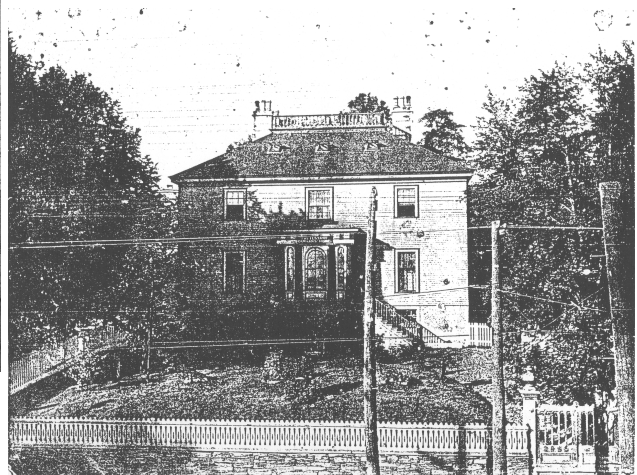
For weeks after the explosion, Halifax newspapers published descriptions of missing people. The *Morning Chronicle* published the names and descriptions of a number of missing children, including several from the Protestant Orphans’ Home. Among them was Theresa Lancaster, nine years old. The newspaper reported on December 12 that Theresa had “escaped from [the] Home, as yet no trace.” A later issue of the paper contained more information. It described Theresa as having “dark hair, brown eyes, Dutch clip...” and said that she had been “seen after the explosion uninjured. Seen later in the South End with a lady. She is from the Orphans’ Home.” The survival of Theresa Lancaster does not appear ever to have been confirmed in the Halifax newspapers, but the school attendance register for Tower Road School for 1918 reveals that Theresa Lancaster was there in the spring of 1918, and is identified in the register as a resident of the Protestant Orphanage. Although Theresa survived, her brothers, Gordon and Tom, did not. How Theresa survived, and what became of her in later years is not known. She was at Tower Road School for several years, then disappears from the school

records.

The Book of Remembrance lists twenty-seven children from the Home as having been killed in the Explosion. Included in the Book when it was compiled was the name of Theresa Lancaster.

¹ Diane M. Barker and D.A. Sutherland, “Enos Collins”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X (1871-1880), 190.

² Heather Laskey, *Atlantic Advocate*, Vol. 70, No. 3, November 1979, 26-29.



Rose Hall (courtesy NSARM)

From the Diary of Frances Murray Thurso House, Dartmouth



December 1917

Nearly a year since I wrote last, and what terrible, terrible things have happened since. The awful war still rages with its ever increasing toll of death. We in our little sheltered Dartmouth town have experienced our share of the horrors in the fearful explosion which occurred last Thursday December 6th on the munition ship Mont Blanc. For a few seconds I was stunned by the shock, then I rushed to the nursery. Rob and I met at the door and found the babies safe and sound although Mrs. MacAlpine was covered with blood from a nasty cut in the head.

We all thought it was an airship raid, and we rushed for the cellar but it was filled with sulphur and smoke...

Maggie was running around like someone distracted, blood flowing freely from her arms and hands. The streets were filled with excited people rushing hither and thither hardly knowing where they went. We were soon relieved to hear that it was not a German raid but an explosion...Soon the authorities sent word to leave the houses as another magazine was in danger of fire.

We ran with the babies hatless and coatless to make for open spaces. At one o'clock the danger was over and we returned to our devastated house. I think, no, I know, I shall never forget the picture it presented. Broken glass, broken woodwork, doors fallen from their frames, whole window frames removed - this is what met our gaze. Maggie had fled to the country so Mrs. MacAlpine and I tried to get something to eat and clear up at least a couple of the rooms.

I shall ever remember with horror the days and nights that have passed since that day. We have had three of the worst storms I can remember in my life time...The babies are nervous little wrecks and cannot be left alone a moment. The appalling tales of woe, the indescribable horrors we hear are enough to turn one's hair...I pray for the days to hurry by with the hope of brighter ones ahead.

See "Thurso House" in The Griffin, Vol. 32, No. 1.



Holy Cross Cemetery, Halifax Nova Scotia

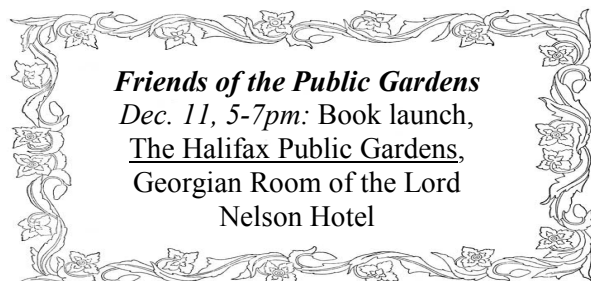
Holy Cross Cemetery, located in the heart of Halifax, was opened in 1843 and is the oldest surviving Catholic cemetery in Halifax. Resting within its boundaries are many Nova Scotians who contributed to the prosperity of our city, province and country, as mayors and aldermen of the city, as members of the Nova Scotia legislature, as members of Parliament and of the Senate. Notable among these is Sir John Thompson who served as

Canada's fourth prime minister. Also buried at Holy Cross are the founders of St. Mary's University, representatives of the Sisters of Charity who were responsible for the Halifax Infirmary and Mount Saint Vincent University, and representatives of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart who founded Sacred Heart School of Halifax.

Of the approximately 25,000 persons who are buried at Holy Cross, many were of Irish birth or descent. Inscriptions on the cemetery's headstones reveal that natives of the counties of Kerry, Cork, Waterford, Wicklow, Wexford, Galway, Carlow, Killkenny and Armagh, among others, are interred there. Prominent among the variety of crosses carried on the headstones is the Irish celtic cross.

Located on the grounds of Holy Cross, atop a small hill, is Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel, also known locally as the "Church Built in a Day". Archival records describe how, on August 31, 1843, eighteen hundred men - politicians, clergy, merchants, tradesmen and labourers among them - gathered at St. Mary's Basilica and marched to the cemetery on South Park Street. There, the frame and roof of the chapel were raised, lathed, boarded, shingled and painted, all in the day. Construction of the simple wood chapel was completed by 7 o'clock that evening.

Holy Cross Cemetery and Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel are registered municipal heritage properties. Unfortunately, the chapel and headstones have suffered from the passage of time, the weather and vandalism. A group of volunteers wishing to preserve the heritage of the cemetery's chapel and headstones has established The Holy Cross Cemetery Trust. These volunteers have been working at Holy Cross on Saturday mornings this past summer, straightening and stabilizing headstones. The Trust is also fund-raising to undertake further preservation and restoration of the cemetery and chapel. More information about the history of Holy Cross and this preservation project can be found at www.holycrosscemeteryhalifax.ca.



Friends of the Public Gardens
Dec. 11, 5-7pm: Book launch,
The Halifax Public Gardens,
Georgian Room of the Lord
Nelson Hotel

A Tribute to Lou Collins: A Man of Vision and Action *by Dr. Allan Marble*

I first met Lou in the late 1960s at a meeting of the Nova Scotia Historical Society. Since I was a new member of the Society, Lou singled me out and inquired as to my Nova Scotia roots. Before long we realized that we had a common ancestor in the person of John Higgins of Upper Musquodoboit. Lou reminded me that John Higgins had first settled as a Loyalist at Shelburne but, seeking more fertile land, had travelled by canoe along the south and eastern shores of Nova Scotia to the Musquodoboit River, paddled up that river, and settled permanently at Upper Musquodoboit. It soon became evident to me that Lou admired John Higgins for his sense of adventure and his ability to successfully establish himself and his family in what was then an unsettled part of Nova Scotia. Reviewing Lou's life one can identify the fact that, like John Higgins, he was a pioneer in that he took a leadership role in many areas, especially in the area of the preservation of heritage buildings in Halifax.

Louis William Collins was born in Halifax and lived on Liverpool Street in the North End with his wife Pam until his death in September of last year. Lou attended Chebucto and Bloomfield schools prior to entering Dalhousie University, where he earned Bachelor and Masters degrees in Arts as well as a Diploma in Education. Embarking on a teaching career which covered 35 years, Lou was an inspiration to many students because, in addition to teaching history and English, he also became involved in every aspect of school activities including coaching sporting teams and promoting debating societies; for many years, he was scoutmaster of the 14th Halifax Troop. Although he began his teaching career at Kings Collegiate School for Boys in Windsor, he returned to Halifax in 1950 to teach at Richmond Junior High School. At the time of his retirement in 1983, Lou was Principal of Cornwallis Junior High School.

It was while teaching at Richmond Junior High School that thirty year-old Lou Collins became known as a spokesman on the issue of pay equity. He was not the first to note that there was a significant pay differential between men and women teachers who held similar qualifications; however, he was among the first to take action to remedy that

discriminatory practice. As a founding member of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, Lou and others negotiated a contract which gave equal pay for equal qualifications, regardless of gender.

Lou's love of both history and the city of Halifax led to his participation in just about every historical and heritage organization in the city. He was a member and later President of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, an early member and twice Vice President of Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, and the first Chair of the Landmarks Commission. He taught courses on the history of Halifax for the Halifax Department of Continuing Education and also with Elderhostel programs at St. Mary's, Mt. St. Vincent, and the University of Prince Edward Island. For many years he held the title of Halifax Civic Historian which was bestowed on him by Mayor Allan O'Brien. In this capacity Lou conducted walking tours of Halifax explaining its history to tourists as well as to fellow Haligonians. His natural talent for humour and his vast knowledge of the history of Halifax made these tours memorable occasions for all.



Lou Collins' most significant contribution was undoubtedly as a preservationist of heritage buildings in Halifax. Due to his extraordinary knowledge of the provenance of buildings on Halifax's waterfront, he was able to convince the Halifax City Council of the significance of the buildings which are now known as Historic Properties. Although several organizations, such as Parks Canada, were supportive of Lou's objective, it was he, acting as a private citizen, who led the way in convincing government to preserve the buildings.

His initiative in this regard did not go unnoticed and in 1996, then Governor General Roméo LeBlanc invested Lou in the Order of Canada. The citation described him as: "the driving force behind the Historic Properties initiative to restore the Halifax waterfront"

Lou had a great respect for historians Thomas B. Akins, Beamish Murdoch, and Harry Piers. If they were alive in the modern era, Akins, Murdoch, and Piers would have been at Lou's side defending Halifax's heritage buildings. It would seem appropriate to add the name of Louis W. Collins to their company.

President's Report *by Phil Pacey*

I am writing this close on Remembrance Day. When we think about Canada's military history, we realise we have many buildings in Nova Scotia that help us tell these stories. RA Park has the oldest functioning officers' mess in Canada. The Dockyard Houses, Admiralty House, the Wellington Barracks and the Citadel have almost two centuries of serving the forces. In armouries large and small, around the province, troops assembled for overseas service.

We also think about the inspiration we draw from heritage buildings. During the blitz, Winston Churchill ordered fire-fighters to protect St. Paul's Cathedral at all costs, for he knew how disheartened Londoners would be if that landmark were destroyed. The historic cores of many cities were destroyed by bombing but, after the war, in several cases citizens decided to rebuild in the original form.

We are now less than six months from the fiftieth anniversary of the Trust in April. This is a time to celebrate the efforts of all those who have served the cause of heritage preservation in Nova Scotia.

When we look at the wonderful collection of heritage buildings in Nova Scotia, we can thank the designers and builders, those who have cared for the buildings over the generations, those who have told their stories, sung their praises, and worked to get good legislation.

We have a wonderful legacy to celebrate, and many people to thank and remember. We owe them a lot. One of the buildings that Trust members fought hard to save a generation ago was demolished on November 3. The Peter Martin Building, 1870 Upper Water Street in Halifax, was built about 1840. It was a grog shop, a grocery, a confectionery and a restaurant, and most recently the dining room of Sweet Basil's. Members of the Trust successfully fought to stop an urban expressway from erasing it in the 1960s and 1970s. It was registered as a heritage property in 1981 but, in March of this year, the new owners, Armour Group, applied to the Supreme Court and had the registration quashed because of clerical issues in the registration process.

Armour planned to demolish the building for the garage entrance of a proposed nine-storey development, as described in the previous issue. Forty-five people spoke in opposition to the development at a public hearing. The development was turned down by HRM Council. We will continue to follow this issue and hope to save the other four buildings on the site.

As Christmas approaches, it is a happy thought to know that St. Mary's Glebe, one of the most prominent buildings on Barrington Street, has become the new home of the recently-appointed Archbishop, Anthony Mancini.

Best wishes to all for the holiday season!



Robert Laurentijs presented his history of ice cutting and ice houses at Dartmouth's heritage house tour.

(Hal Oare)

Celebrating Dartmouth's Heritage Again *by Hal Oare*

The sky was blue! The houses were terrific! The owners were amiable! The history was obvious! Such was the second annual Dartmouth Heritage House Tour held on October 4 and 5, 2008. Conducted by the Heritage House Tour Committee in support of the Dartmouth Heritage Museum Society,

the tour was a great success. Overall attendance over the two-day event was almost double that of the 2007 tour. Attendees were drawn from throughout the HRM as well as other parts of the province and as far away as Alberta and New Hampshire.

In addition to the six historic buildings on display, the public was treated to admission to "Evergreen House", the temporary home of the Dartmouth Heritage Museum, overlooking Halifax harbour. Originally built for Judge Alexander James in 1867, the home reflects the mid-Victorian, Italianate style popular at the time. The house was occupied until 1978 by the renowned folklorist Dr. Helen Creighton. Also operated by the Dartmouth Heritage Museum Society and open to the public was "Quaker House" on Ochterloney Street, the last vestige of the Nantucket Whalers who settled in Dartmouth from 1785 to 1790.

As a group, the eight properties span the years from 1785 through 1920. Several locations were enhanced by the presence of volunteers in period costumes, which gave further insight into how our forefathers dressed and carried on their daily lives over two centuries ago. Very interesting and detailed information on the background and renovations of their homes was provided by the owners. Pride of ownership was evident in all of the homes

and the warm welcome provided to over 500 attendees was heartening.

The four private homes and two businesses open for viewing reflect five different architectural styles. The newest home on the tour dates from



Quaker House Garden with gardeners

(Lisa O'Neill)

1920 (280 Portland Street). Built in the Arts and Crafts or Craftsman style, the home exuded nostalgia and you instantly felt swept back to an earlier time. Extensive woodwork, synonymous with the style, created a very pleasing ambience.

Built in 1914, 94 Crichton Avenue is a classic exam-

ple of the Georgian style, designed by local architect R.A. Johnson, and built with concrete walls and floors. The current owners are doing an excellent job of restoring the home, previously owned by Bridgeway Academy, to single-family use.

50 Queen Street was erected in 1895 in the Renaissance Revival style, for the Union Protection Company, a volunteer fire service. It boasts a very attractive paint scheme. The second floor and loft space houses a state-of-the-art new-media business.

Both 149 Prince Albert Road (1870) and 38 King Street (1872) are examples of the Second Empire style. Both locations are identifiable by their Mansard roofs and gables. The owners of the Chittick house on Prince Albert Road have done an amazing job of renovating their home without losing its original character. Chitticks ran one of Dartmouth's ice businesses from the house. Young Robert Laurentijs, whose history project about the ice houses won recognition from Heritage Trust last spring, was stationed, in costume, on Saturday in the Chittick house. Visitors were eloquent in praise of his work.

Morven Cottage (46 Dahlia St.) was built in 1888 in the Neo-Classical/Maritime Vernacular style. The owners have preserved much of the home's

character while maintaining a “lived-in” feeling. It is said that Joseph Howe’s widow, whose granddaughters were being raised in the house, died there in 1890.

By all benchmarks, the 2008 tour was a huge success and provided a very pleasant diversion over two truly ideal fall days.

Books for Christmas Giving

The Shipping History of Westmorland County, NB. Charles Armour with additions by Allan D. Smith. Tantramar Heritage Trust. 25 illustrations, 138 pp. \$28.00

Peaceful Revolution: 250 years of democracy in NS. John Boileau. Nimbus. 75 images, 240 pp. \$24.95

Peggy’s Cove. The Amazing History of a Coastal Village. Lesley Choyce. Pottersfield. 132 pp. \$15.95

Nova Scotia Shaped by the Sea. A Living History (revised). Lesley Choyce. Pottersfield. 324 pp. \$24.95

The Mapmaker’s Legacy 19th Century Nova Scotia through maps. Joan Dawson. Nimbus. Maps, 152 pp. \$29.95

Protect Befriend Respect. Nova Scotia’s Mental Health Movement 1908-2008. Judith Fingard & John Rutherford. Fernwood Publishing. 157pp. \$18.00

Canada’s Atlantic Gateway. An Illustrated History of the Port of Halifax. James Frost. Nimbus. 175 images, 224 pp. \$29.95

Endgame 1758. The Promise, the Glory and the Despair of Louisbourg’s Last Decade. A.J.B. Johnston. Cape Breton University Press. 365 pp. \$26.95

Loyalists and Layabouts. The Rapid Rise and Faster Fall of Shelburne, Nova Scotia 1783-1792. Stephen Kimber. Anchor. 335 pp. Clothbd \$34.95

Building New Brunswick. An Architectural His-

tory. John Leroux. Gooselane. 320 pp. \$50.00

Inside Island Heritage Homes. Two hundred years of domestic architecture on Prince Edward Island. James W. Macnutt. Formac. 150 images, 128 pp. \$34.95

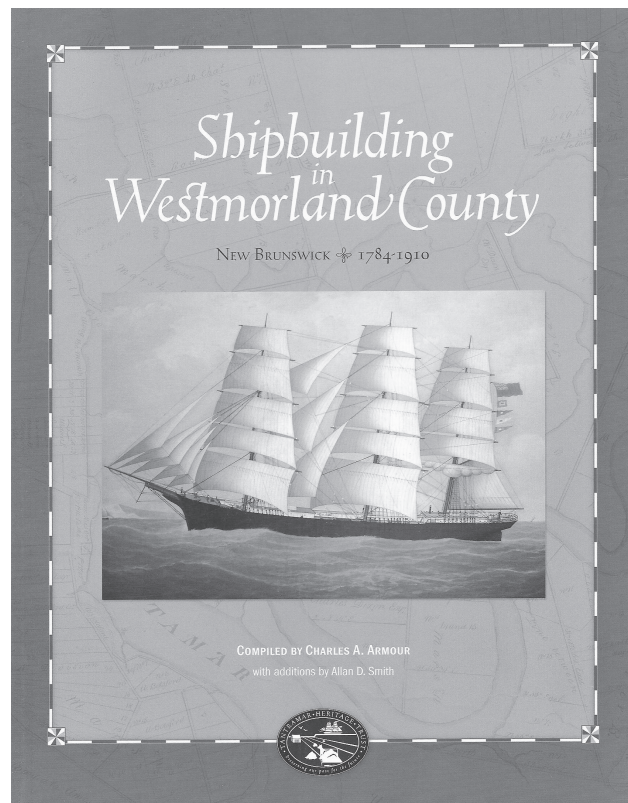
The Archibald Family of Nova Scotia: No Reward Without Effort. Allan Marble. Friesens Pub., 260 images, 1056 pp. Clothbd \$80.00

Halifax at War. Searchlights, Squadrons and Submarines 1939-1945. Wm D. Naftel. Formac. 288 pp. \$24.95

Dance to the Piper. The Highland Bagpipe in Nova Scotia. Barry W. Shears. Cape Breton University Press. 170 images, 220 pp. \$22.95

Historic Bridgewater. Tom Sheppard. Nimbus. 170 photos, 208 pp. \$22.95

The Ultimate African Heritage Quiz Book. Craig M. Smith. Nimbus. \$10.95



The Painted Rooms Project

by Leeann Roy

This year the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia introduced **The Painted Rooms Project**, a pro-active initiative that aims to preserve and protect historically painted interiors throughout the province. The project began in the spring of 2007, when the board of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia voted to form a committee through which it would carry out various activities in regard to historical decoratively painted surfaces. The project was to be led by Heritage Trust board members Andrew Powter and Wallace Brannen with the assistance of former Heritage Trust president and painted rooms *connoisseur* Joyce McCulloch and experienced art conservator Michelle Gallinger. It should be noted that in 2004, Ms. Gallinger was hired by the Heritage Trust to aid in the restoration of a historically painted interior in Halifax. Her work was documented in a DVD produced by the Heritage Trust entitled *Rooms with a View: The conservation of the unique painted wall in Nova Scotia*.

The Painted Rooms Project was conceived to facilitate the documentation and preservation of historic painted interiors and to create public awareness of painted rooms as a part of Nova Scotia's rich cultural heritage. The initiative will also strive to generate awareness, among home owners with painted rooms, of the value of these works of art and to increase the knowledge of their maintenance, protection and conservation requirements. In addition, the site-specific research and documentation of painted interiors will serve to create an archival inventory of painted rooms which will contribute to efforts to amend provincial legislation to allow heritage designation and grant aid for interiors.

The Painted Rooms Project is rooted in an initiative that began some thirty-two years ago by the efforts of a group, *The Friends of the Painted Room Society*. In 1976, two very active Heritage Trust members and enthusiasts, Mrs. Joyce McCulloch and Mrs. Cora Greenaway, formed the society in order to lobby for the return of the painted room from Karsdale, NS, better known as the Croscup Room. That year, the National Gallery had purchased the painted room in order to facilitate its much needed restoration. As a result, the room was carefully dismantled and shipped to Ottawa. Un-

fortunately, once its restoration was complete, the National Gallery refused to return the room to its rightful home, and instead placed the room in its permanent loans collection for safe-keeping. Outraged, The Friends of the Painted Room Society wrote petitions and amassed funds to attempt to secure the return of the room to Nova Scotia but the National Gallery would not yield. Consequently, the group was forced to redirect its efforts. A relevant path of action was agreed upon: The Friends of the Painted Room Society would concentrate on finding and documenting other historical painted interiors throughout Nova Scotia with the goal of protecting these provincial treasures from such displacement. During the summer and fall of 1978-79, Mrs. McCulloch and Mrs. Greenaway successfully located and recorded nineteen historical painted interiors.

This summer I was hired by the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia through the Young Canada Works program. I am a recent graduate of NSCAD University where I studied both Fine Art and Art History. I was engaged to locate, research, and document historic painted interiors throughout the province. Over a two-month period I was able to locate more than a dozen painted interiors. Throughout the month of August I visited nine private residences and one church. Homes in Halifax, Milton, Lunenburg, Brookfield, Newport Landing (Avondale), Canning, Sherbrooke, Antigonish, Malignant Cove, and Shelburne County, NS, have been viewed and properly documented. All information gathered, and photographs have been stored in a new database tailored specifically for the project by student Glen Kilian from the NSCC's Centre of Geographic Sciences. This database has provided the Trust with a secure and archival inventory site in which pertinent data can be stored and recorded in an organised and cohesive manner.

Throughout my travels I encountered a variety of decoratively-painted surfaces such as stencilled wall borders, free-hand landscapes, painted ceilings, marbled mantels, painted fireboards and wood grained doors and baseboards. These uniquely dressed surfaces varied in style, composition and age. Some of the artwork represented was quite intricate and all encompassing while other painted surfaces were typified by more simple and straightforward motifs. Most of the artwork

viewed was created between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. Interestingly enough, one home I visited was adorned with newly painted surfaces depicted in a historically accurate fashion. This demonstrates that the Nova Scotia tradition of decorative interior painting is still in practice to this very day. Some of the painted surfaces I came across were well preserved with only minimal visual signs of damage, while other surfaces demonstrated a great need for restorative action. Among the private residences visited, half had yet to be recorded, an interesting fact that supports the idea that there are potentially many more undiscovered homes in Nova Scotia housing historically painted interiors. I believe that my efforts this summer will provide the groundwork for further research and documentation on behalf of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia.

Presently, future endeavours are being discussed by the members of the Painted Rooms Committee. Potential plans include further documentation of historic painted interiors using photogrammetry, a photographic practice where geometric properties and distances between objects can be accurately determined from images. The Heritage Trust would also like to host a series of workshops designed to inform and educate home owners on various preservation and maintenance issues regarding their historic painted surfaces. In addition, the Painted Rooms Committee members will be continually updating the project database. Anyone with information regarding a historic painted interior in Nova Scotia, public or private, is encouraged to contact the Heritage Trust office in Halifax at (902) 423-4807 or write to heritage.trust@ns.sympatico.ca

To conclude, I'd like to thank the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia for providing me with the opportunity to take part in such a valuable and constructive effort. My eyes have been opened to the rich artistic practice of interior decorative painting, a tradition which has provided us with timeless visual documents of the cultural and social history of this maritime province.



World Heritage Tourism Researchers Meet in Halifax *by Dr. Wanda George*

Protecting our heritage is vital to ensure a legacy for future generations. In 1972, world leaders recognized that "cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction not only by the traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation with even more formidable phenomena of damage or destruction, along with other considerations" (UNESCO, 1972). The World Heritage Centre has since listed more than 870 properties from around the world deemed to have outstanding value to humanity (UNESCO, 2008) and worthy of special protection. Along with this has been a burgeoning global tourism market with interest, access and means to travel to visit these heritage sites and properties, placing extreme pressure on many of them. When World Heritage landscapes, both cultural and natural, become tourism destinations, complex management challenges cut across social, cultural, financial, environmental, and political domains; these challenges also extend to our intangible heritage assets. There seem to be no common understandings about concepts of heritage and ownership and universal responsibility.

A team of Canadian and international social sci-



Visiting St. John's Anglican Church, Old Town Lunenburg

entists, led by Dr. Wanda George, Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), met in Halifax this summer for a five-day workshop to discuss growing concerns and issues associated with the designation of UNESCO World Heritage status and complex relationships and interconnections between cultural heritage planning and management of *continued on p. 14*

Annual Dinner wraps up 2008



for Trust members & guests



Janet Morris, representing the Awards Committee, and Jane Nicholson, double Built Heritage Award winner. Look for a description of Mrs. Nicholson Inc.'s projects in the next *Griffin*.



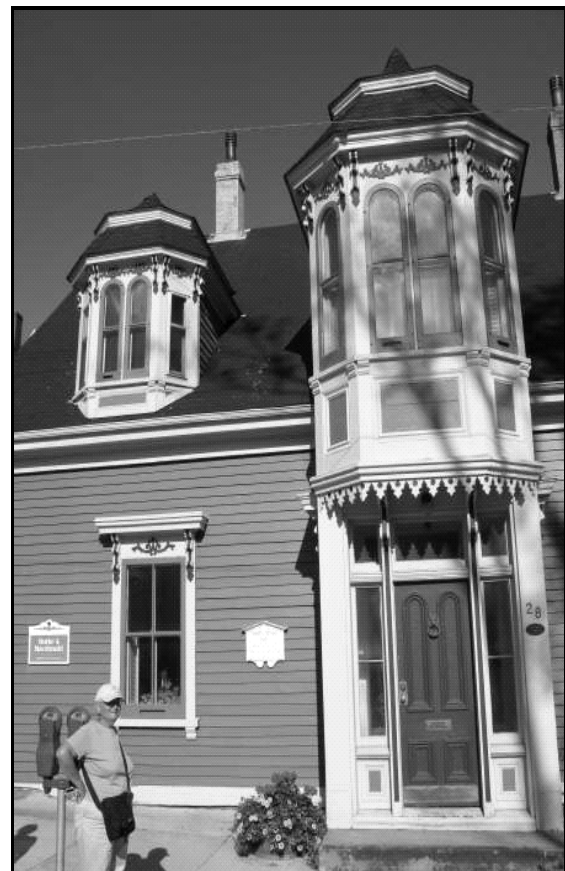
world heritage sites as global tourism destinations. Funded by MSVU, the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, and Pacrim Hospitality Inc., the workshop was the beginning phase in a first-of-a-kind collaborative international research initiative intended to significantly advance global understanding of research issues considered critical to the future of world heritage sites and future generations.

Twelve researchers from Belgium, Lebanon, Hong Kong, USA and across Canada took part in the Halifax Initiative. Several immediate outcomes were achieved: an integrated document comprising a collection of position or issue papers prepared by delegates specifically for the session, a related Internet website, a new electronic Scholar's Forum where these researchers can continue to meet and interact online, and a solid commitment to undertake several collaborative proposals that, if successful, will significantly advance the group's larger research objectives. The Scholar's Forum, hosted at MSVU, will also be accessible to students, providing them with another unique and innovative learning opportunity. In January 2009, MSVU will pilot a special topics course that specifically focuses on World Heritage sites, tourism and sustainability.

While in Nova Scotia, the research group travelled to Lunenburg and was cordially greeted by Mayor Lawrence Mawhinney, followed by a site tour of Old Town Lunenburg, the province's first designated UNESCO World Heritage site. For more information about the Halifax Initiative, you can visit: <http://faculty.msvu.ca/whctr/index.html> or contact wanda.george@msvu.ca.



Back Row (left - right): Georges Zouain (Lebanon), Myriam Jansen-Verbeke (Belgium), Wanda George (Nova Scotia), Alexandra Arellano (Ontario), Cameron Walker (USA), Susan Markham-Starr (Nova Scotia), Robert McKercher (Hong Kong). Front Row (left - right): Mallika Das (Nova Scotia), Christine Van Winkle (Manitoba), Elizabeth Halpenny (Alberta). Missing from photo: Holly Donahue (Ontario) and Harvey Lemelin (Ontario).



Images of Bedford's Past

The September lecture by Tony Edwards was based on his book, *Historic Bedford*, which is part of the Nimbus series, "Images of the Past". Beginning with a venerable member of an early Bedford bus fleet, we were entertained with many fascinating pictures of what was once the small settlement of Bedford, taken from the photo collection of the Bedford Heritage Society.

The Bedford Highway served as the main street of the community, and its traffic, and the trains on the adjacent railway track, formed the subject of a number of the images. Many of the pictures came from old postcards, and represented facets of the early industrial and architectural history of the community. But the aboriginal inhabitants of the area also left their mark, and we saw pictures of some of the Mi'kmaw petroglyphs which were preserved in the area.

The name Sackville was originally attached to the Bedford area, since its earliest European structures were the buildings that comprised Fort Sackville. This military defence for Halifax was established in 1749 soon after the British arrived, and was abandoned as a British base in 1906. Other elements of the history of the area involved the Basin itself, and the variety of vessels that had anchored there in both war and peace time.

The industrial buildings formerly established in Bedford included a grain elevator that once stood on the present Sobeys site, Moirs electric generator powered by the Nine Mile River, the Moirs lumber mill supplying wood for its box factory, and the Moirs plant that converted cocoa beans into chocolate. A shipyard, Hart's Lumber Mill, a fish hatchery, and an electric power generator on the Sackville River were other local industries.

The lecture included pictures of several early buses, and of cars dating back to 1910 when a Bedford resident acquired an early model Rambler. Bedford had several hotels in the early 1900s, including the Bellevue, which was the popular assembly point for Santa Claus parades. Among its churches were the Presbyterian Church, designed by Andrew Dewar, and the Anglican Church by Critchlow Harris. Other buildings of interest were a house where Arthur Lismer stayed in 1916, and a nearby house designed by Andrew Cobb. An early school was also featured, with two rooms, the "big" and "little" rooms, which were in fact the same size

but housed the older and younger children respectively. And the "Sunnyside" hot-dog stand gave its name to the distinctive area of Bedford that we know today.

The last part of the lecture included photographs



Photo courtesy of the Fort Sackville Foundation

of many distinguished erstwhile residents of Bedford, including Mary Black, known for her handcrafts; the writer Evelyn Richardson; Admiral Harry DeWolfe; Garnet Haystead, an Olympic marksman; Stephen Leacock's father, who went under the name of Captain Lewis; Frederick Arbuckle, a teacher at King's College School and former teacher of Winston Churchill; and the painter Arthur Lismer, who served for a time as Principal of the College of Art.

The lecture ended with a dramatic picture of Eagles Rock at the head of the Basin, and a photograph of an eagle by W. R. MacAskill. *JD*

A New Use for Truro's Normal College by Janice R. Zann

For several years, Truro Town Council has been considering proposals for suitable use of the vacant 1877 Henry Busch-designed, Second Empire, Nova Scotia Normal College. Suggestions put forth included office space, library, hotel, etc. These have all been rejected, and there has even been a suggestion by a prominent developer for demolition.

Proposals for re-use have languished of late, but a new proposal has recently emerged that excites all.

At the September Meeting of Town Council, actor Lenore Zann presented a proposal for the conversion of the building into a School for the Performing Arts. Thus, an education and learning function would return to the building — not teacher training, as was its original purpose, but Drama, Dance, Music, and other performing arts. Students would complete two years of training in their specific field, before completing the final year or years through an agreement with Dalhousie University. This would gain them a B.A. in Performance. Town Council greeted this proposal with enthusiasm, as have citizens of Truro and surrounding areas.

In this way, Truro's architectural jewel would shine once again, and an influx of young undergraduates would prove of undoubted value, financial and in spirit, to the town. With its 27,000 sq. feet of hardwood floors, huge windows providing excellent natural light, a large and beautiful auditorium suitable for a ballet studio or theatre training, and many classrooms, it is the ideal facility for such a School. It is also perfectly located in the Downtown Civic Precinct.

The Mayor, Bill Mills, who is also Chair of the Normal College Restoration Committee, received the proposal with great enthusiasm, as did members of his committee. Very positive endorsements for the project have come as a result of Lenore's meeting with the local MLA, Jamie Muir; Minister of Education, Karen Casey; Deputy Minister of Education, Dennis Cochrane; Community College Principal, Kevin Quinlan; Dalhousie University representatives; Downtown Truro Partnership; and CORDA (Colchester Regional Development Agency) along with many other organizations and individuals.

The town wants this project to go ahead but, needless to say, the necessary funds (estimated between 3 and 4 million dollars) will have to be raised. With sufficient funding in hand to complete the restoration of the roof, Council is unwilling, as yet, to begin the undertaking until it is certain that more funding is available, possibly by the spring. What an exciting opportunity to show how Nova Scotia truly values its built heritage!

Inquiries and donations can be made to: Mayor Bill Mills, Chair, Normal College Restoration Committee, P.O. Box 427, Truro, NS B2N 5C5

Walking Tours of Downtown Halifax

During the months of July through October, the Trust offered free historical and architectural walking tours of downtown Halifax as part of our outreach program. The tours, offered twice a week, were very well received by both tourists and local Haligonians. During these walks the guides, Leah Terry and Janet Morris, met interesting people from near and far.

Some of the tours included a sampling of the interior of Province House; since the Legislature seldom sits in the summer and early fall, we had good access. A straying tourist asked about what was behind a series of wooden doors just outside the legislative chamber. Assuming they were lockers, we opened a few of the doors for a look, only to find they are telephone booths! Such an anomaly in the historical building, and yet a fast disappearing artefact, akin to the little red phone booths in Britain. The tourists generally loved the gracious proportions of the interior of Province House, and it demonstrates the need to promote more access to the interiors of our historic buildings. The proprietors and staff of the Carleton House often invited our group to view the interior, where the life and times of William Bulkeley could be discussed in his cheerful former home.

Most of the tours were attended by well informed people who often supplemented the tours with stories from their experiences. While some attendees were from Halifax, others were from far away - a gentleman from Adelaide, Australia was travelling the world to explore his roots and British history generally, and a woman from Malaysia was travelling across Canada by herself. One tour attendee had had lunch with Janet's aunt in Ontario the previous month.

All in all, the tours were a great success and we plan to offer them again starting next May.

In the meantime, the Trust has been asked to give a number of historical talks in schools throughout HRM. We are excited about getting a younger generation interested in the heritage of Nova Scotia. *LT*



Government House Today:

November 2008

by Marie Elwood, Chief Curator Emeritus, Nova Scotia Museum

The exterior of Government House remains little changed since its construction in the early 19th century. It was built of local sandstone from the quarry at Wallace, on Nova Scotia's North Shore. The house consists of a central unit, three storeys high, flanked by two-storey wings. It was built over 200 years ago from designs taken from a pattern book, *A Series of Original Designs for Country Seats*, published in London in 1795 by George Richardson, who worked in the London architectural office of the brothers Adam.

It was purpose-built to be the residence of the Governor of the Colony, with the added dimension of State Rooms. The foundation stone was laid in September 1800 and it was ready for occupancy in 1805. It is the oldest Government House in Canada, being over 200 years old. Now it is much in need of repair, and extensive work is being done to the interior.

People often ask who owns Government House. It and its contents belong to the Provincial Department of Public Works (now known as the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation). The entire contents of the building (which I catalogued in 2000 while they were *in situ*) have been removed and are in storage, so now as you enter the building you are in the empty shell of the unfurnished House. It has been stripped to the original stone, brick and wood construction. You can see the original methods of construction in these newly-revealed interiors. The kitchen is still in the basement; it has now some exposed brick, including two original bake-ovens.

Some objects, such as a glove, a slipper and an invitation card of the 1850s were found in the laths of the wall. An Artifact Room, containing such objects found on site, is proposed for a space in the basement. A new cloakroom and washroom are also going to be installed in the basement, which will be reached by a new elevator.

On the Main Floor, a feature of the Morning Room is its Chinese wall-paper, painted by Chinese artists on a silvery background. It was installed in the 1920s and is protected by wood

panels at present. The chandeliers of ca. 1920 have been removed and crated.

The curved stairwell at present shows only its lath-covered wall.

On the second floor, the Royal Room, as it was called, will revert from being a bedroom to its original function as a reception room, known as a Saloon (not "salon"); it was so described by Richard Uniacke, when he made a listing of the rooms and contents in 1811. The Saloon still contains the white marble mantelpiece designed for the House by the London firm of Westmacott, and installed in 1805.

On the south side of the House is the Wentworth Suite (named for Sir John Wentworth, the first Governor to occupy the House, in 1805).

The Lieutenant Governor's private quarters are on the North side of the House, and contain a sitting room, bedroom, washroom, kitchen and closet.



Chinese wall-paper

The third floor contains bedrooms, a washroom and attic space, and is little changed. A wooden stair leads up to the attic-space, and what originally was a sick-room for the staff, which is no longer used.

Such is the present appearance of the interior of this house. I have suggested that small groups of students from the nearby School of Architecture avail themselves of this unusual opportunity to see the construction methods and revealed structure of 200 years ago in this Georgian House before it returns to its finished and furnished state. The House is expected to be opened in 2009, and it will well repay the expertise spent on it.

John Frederic Herbin and the Memorial Church at Grand-Pré

by Sally Ross

Acadians were deported from several places in Nova Scotia, including Annapolis Royal, Windsor, Truro, and the Amherst area, but Grand-Pré has become the symbol of the Deportation. We owe this fact to several individuals.

Ironically, we first have to pay tribute to Lieutenant-Colonel John Winslow, the officer from Massachusetts who was in charge of the operations at Grand-Pré in the fall of 1755. Winslow kept a detailed journal that was published in the 1880s. Although lesser known, Jeremiah Bancroft, one of Winslow's officers, also kept a daily journal describing the deportation at Grand-Pré. There are no documents of this kind for any other Acadian area.

We then have to pay tribute to the politician and writer, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, who relied heavily on Winslow's journal for his chapter on the dispersal of the Acadians in his well-known *History of Nova Scotia*, published in 1827. Of course we have to thank Henry Wadsworth Longfellow for writing the poem *Evangeline* which became an instant best seller in 1847 and bestowed on Grand-Pré an extraordinary emotional legacy. Longfellow borrowed a copy of Haliburton's *History of Nova Scotia* from the library at Harvard University in March 1841. So it is not by chance that he chose to set *Evangeline* in Grand-Pré, as opposed to any of the other Acadian villages where deportations took place.

While Winslow, Haliburton and Longfellow contributed to the notoriety of Grand-Pré, it was John Frederic Herbin who actually preserved the land where the original Acadian church once stood. Without his foresight and his concrete actions, there would be no Grand-Pré National Historic Site today.

John Frederic Herbin (1860-1923) was the son of Marie-Marguerite Robichaud from Meteghan and Jean Herbin, a French Huguenot born in Cambrai, France. Both father and son worked as watchmakers in Halifax and Windsor. John Frederic Herbin eventually moved to Wolfville where in 1885 he established Herbin Jewellers, which still exists today. Herbin graduated from Acadia in 1890 and later served as town councillor and mayor of Wolfville. Influenced by Longfellow and con-

vinced that his mother's people had been wronged, he began doing research on the history of the Acadians. He published several books on local history including a detailed *History of Grand-Pré*.

In 1907, John Frederic Herbin bought 14 acres of land in Grand-Pré and began his efforts to establish a memorial park to honour the Acadians, Longfellow and Evangeline. He proposed a variety of projects that included rebuilding the original Acadian church and restoring the "old burying ground." In June 1906, Herbin wrote a letter to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada, inviting him to become a patron of the proposed memorial park. Ironically, Laurier was advised by Sir Frederick William Borden, the Liberal M.P. for Kings County, to withhold his patronage until he could determine to what extent Herbin's venture was merely directed at attracting American tourists!

Herbin also attempted unsuccessfully to obtain support from the Acadians. In 1909 he erected a stone cross (now called the Herbin Cross) to mark the location of the old Acadian cemetery. Unable to raise the necessary funds for a memorial park and concerned about the potential desecration of the site, Herbin sold the land to the Dominion Atlantic Railway in 1917. However, one of the stipulations of the sale was that part of the property be deeded to the Acadians for the construction of a memorial to their past.

On August 16, 1922, the Memorial Church was officially opened. The Dominion Atlantic Railway had arranged for a special train to bring Acadians to the site for the blessing of the cornerstone. The church had been built by Acadian stone masons with funds raised in Acadian parishes in Canada and the United States. Before he died, John Frederic Herbin was thus able to see one of his dreams come true.

The Acadians honoured Herbin in 1925 with a bronze plaque on the stone cross he had erected to mark Saint-Charles-des-Mines cemetery.



Mahone Bay Settlers Museum

by Deborah Trask

The lovely Town of Mahone Bay (population less than 1000), once a thriving industrial centre, is now a community of quirky shops and restaurants and a stopping place for visitors to the area. Starting in the 1970s, Mahone Bay consciously welcomed people to move here, less than an hour's commute to Halifax, where it was possible to live affordably in a compact community, even in retirement. The old houses of the town may not be as affordable as then, but the community prides itself on its built heritage. The view of three churches, from the head of the bay at Kedy's Landing (a provincial heritage property), is still one of the most photographed scenes in Canada.

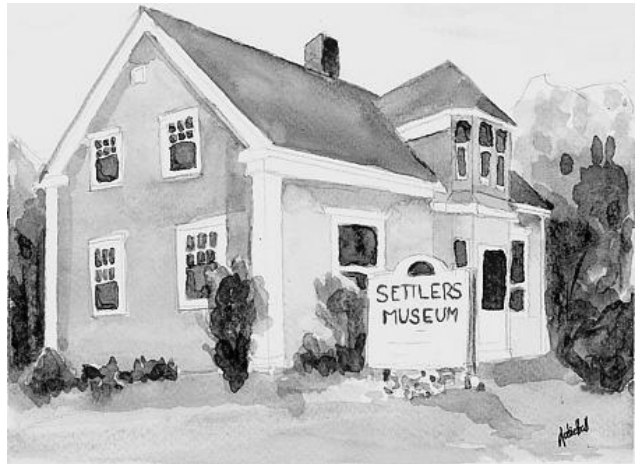
In 1979 a group of interested citizens wished to organize a celebration for the 225th anniversary of the arrival of the first European settlers in the Mahone Bay area in 1754. Thus began the Mahone Bay Founders Society, dedicated to preserving the history of the town and area of Mahone Bay. In the following years the Society operated a temporary museum in the Pioneer Hall of the Trinity United Church.

When the Nova Scotia Museum collections staff came to Mahone Bay in 1986 to sort through the contents of the Inglis/Quinlan house (now Suttles & Seawinds), the Founders Society assisted them in cleaning and selecting significant items, including much of Percy Inglis' collection of china. Members of the Society actively helped with the cataloguing, packing and moving of the items, and with an exhibit in the Town Hall during the public auction of remaining household furnishings.

In 1988 the Founders Society purchased, renovated and developed the Begin house (ca. 1850), a municipally-registered heritage property on Main St. to become the Mahone Bay Settlers Museum. The Begin house is a typical Lunenburg "bump" storey and a half domestic structure, located in the middle of the shopping area, across from the Amos Pewter shop and economuseum. The Nova Scotia Museum's Inglis/Quinlan collection of ceramics and antiques, as well as other collections, are now housed in the Settlers Museum, along with a permanent exhibit on the settlement of the district. Other displays are changed annually to feature aspects of the area and its history. Some genealogical

information and commercial records are included in a tiny archives.

This winter, the Founders Society is excited to be partnering with the Town of Mahone Bay to improve and make more accessible the information on municipally registered heritage properties. Although the Settlers Museum is only open to the public from June to September, staff are in regu-



larly through the closed season. Check our website for updates and contact info!

www.settlersmuseum.ns.ca

Heritage Trust Reaches out to the Community

Philip Pacey and various members of the Board have conveyed the Trust's concern with, and suggestions for, the protection of our built heritage, in meetings with:

- Armour Group
- Nova Scotia Business Inc.
- The Urban Development Institute
- Fusion Halifax
- The Greater Halifax Partnership
- The Downtown Halifax Business Commission
- Editorial Board of the *Chronicle Herald*
- Urban Design Task Force
- Provincial Cabinet ministers
- *The Coast*



“A Blast of a Presentation”-The Second Halifax Explosion

The October lecture featured Heritage Trust member (and our treasurer) Fred Hutchinson speaking about the second and lesser-known Halifax explosion, that of July 18, 1945. On this date munitions stored at the Bedford Magazine blew up, causing considerable damage both to the site and to areas of Halifax and Dartmouth.

The first Halifax explosion of December 1917 had been the largest pre-atomic man-made explosion in history, with widespread damage, great loss of human life and many serious injuries. The second, although a minor incident by comparison, was particularly frightening to survivors of the earlier disaster and those who were aware of the devastation it had caused.

After VE Day at the end of the war in Europe, ships brought huge quantities of unused munitions for storage at the ammunition depot beside the Bedford Basin. The quantity of explosive material was far greater than that carried by the Mont Blanc on its fatal voyage, but instead of being concentrated on one vessel, the depth charges, aerial bombs, and “squids” were spread over the 1,200 acres of the depot, and piled on wharves, barges and roadsides.

At 6:35pm on July 18, fire broke out on the depot’s south jetty, probably as a result of a discarded cigarette. It was after working hours, so there were few people on site, but one employee, Henry L. Craig of Windsor, Ontario, reported the fire and attempted unsuccessfully to extinguish it. He was to be the only casualty. Fire trucks were summoned and residents of the nearby cottages were evacuated. Thousands of residents of both Halifax and Dartmouth, on hearing the initial explosion and seeing the mushroom cloud that rose into the sky, and remembering the devastation caused by the previous explosion, fled their homes. There were only two available routes out of the area, as the Bedford Highway could not be used, so people could only leave by St. Margarets Bay Road or by Highway 7. Many others camped out on the Common, in parks and in any open spaces. After the initial blast, other explosions continued all night and during the following day as the fire spread.

Considerable structural damage was sustained to buildings in areas south of the explosion, both in Halifax and Dartmouth. The shock waves

travelled at sea level and the community of Bedford was protected by the hill to the north of the depot. The Magazine area itself was devastated, with huge craters and heaps of debris, and the surrounding vegetation flattened. Among the major buildings damaged were Mt. St. Vincent, All Saints Cathedral, the Moirs Plant, the Home of the Guardian Angel and the Halifax Club. Huge damage claims amounting in all to nearly \$3,000,000 were paid out by the Government.

Subsequently, large quantities of surplus munitions were dumped at sea, while some were salvaged and stored more safely. In the wake of the explosion, ammunition has continued to wash up on the shore from time to time.

The site is still DND property, covering the area between the shore and the Magazine Hill. Storage these days is much more secure, in steel and concrete containers, either covered by earth or surrounded by berms the height of the bunkers. Fire precautions are much improved: until 1999, the Magazine was served by one eight-inch water line over Magazine Hill, but now two alternative sources of water are available, from Bedford and from the Industrial Park, and the depot maintains its own fire department. Unexploded ordnance is still sometimes found in the area, resulting in the shutting down of traffic on the Magazine Hill.

Fred illustrated his fascinating lecture with maps and photographs, and concluded with an impressive video made from a home movie shot “on location” on the night of the explosion. It was taken from on board a boat in the Bedford Basin, and showed scenes of smoke and flames shooting up in the air as the explosions continued into the night. The explosion formed only part of the video, which also included shots of Halifax under a massive snowfall that reminded us of how winters in Halifax used to be.

The evening concluded with a lively discussion and reminiscences from members of the audience of their own experiences in that second Halifax explosion. *JD*



James Humphreys House, Shelburne, for sale *by Lee Serieys*

Timing, it is said, is everything and it was surely the case when, in 1975 Claire Stenning and Bill (Willard) Ferguson discovered Shelburne and the Humphreys house at the corner of Water and George (formerly St. George) streets. Research by the late Al Keith suggests this is a particularly significant intersection, as each corner features a pre-1800 wooden structure, a rare if not unique circumstance in North America. It was not, however, this aspect that my mother and her partner bought. It was the classic Georgian structure, sound of bones with much of its original line, including bits and pieces of hardware, still untouched. The house at that time had been divided into two units. It was awash with changes ... partitions everywhere, and the fireplaces all closed off, including the major granite one in the keeping room, which had been completely walled over. They were both very excited at the prospect of returning it to a more original state. Unfortunately, while the bulk of this was done, my mother became ill and died in 1978 before completing their objective. It was returned to a two-unit property until 1994 when I was able to move there and return it again to a single unit, albeit not to complete the restoration, as my budget did not allow for more than maintenance and the necessary upgrades to wiring, heating and roofing according to new codes as they arose.

I was charmed once when looking at a second-hand clothing store that promoted its clothing as "experienced", and I chose to steal that concept to describe this house. It is very experienced and I feel a sense of worldly and generous wisdom about it.

The original land grant was to a Charles Mason in 1783 but it was deeded to James Humphreys in 1784. "James, son of James Humphreys, studied medicine at Philadelphia College before becoming the publisher of the newspaper *Pennsylvania Ledger* in 1775. He was a Loyalist who went to Shelburne, Nova Scotia from New York via England about 1786. He printed *The Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser* in Shelburne. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia for Shelburne County 1793-1796. In 1797 he returned to Philadelphia, where he opened a printing shop. He died in February, 1810. "¹

In 1791-92 John Clarkson, an anti-slave activist in England, had been charged with a mission, through the British Parliament, to help out those freed blacks in Nova Scotia who wished to re-locate to Sierra Leone following their disappointment in unkept promises to them when they came to the Province in 1783. For those who had belongings they wished to sell or children and family still indentured, Mr. Humphreys was to be entrusted as agent. Mr. Clarkson says in his letters, "I think they cannot appoint a more proper person than Mr. Humphreys."²

So, the house was built by a man of both substance and integrity. One can see this in its construction: strong, clean lines and granite block foundation. The high and dry basement needs no vertical posts: a north-south 12" x 17" beam supports the 10" x 14" east-west beams, which, in turn, support the 4" x 12" floor joists. Stone stairwells lead up through hatches on the north side to the



main floor. The house was constructed with vertical logs, a measure, perhaps, against the possibility that the New Americans might attack. The proximity to the harbour and possible cannon shelling may have been a consideration in choosing this construction ...or just sound practicality.

The original granite foundations of the forward chimneys still stand in the basement although at some point the granite was replaced with brick from the first floor to above the roof, possibly in the mid-1800s when the house was in the possession of Mr. Muir, a master shipbuilder and partner

in the Muir-Cox Shipyard (now a museum within sight of Humphreys House). The rear granite chimney still stands, from basement to above the roof, and includes its original hardware (crane) in the keeping room. This chimney also supports a small fireplace in what we deem to be the servants' quarters above the keeping room. Eight of the original doors remain in place with their HL hinges and brass box-lock hardware.

The main floor rooms are quite large for the period, but well-proportioned, as one would expect in a Georgian house. The room sizes were perhaps a testament to Mr. Humphreys' substance and standing. The central entry hall is broad with a good view to a wide staircase. The bannister boasts fine straight spindles and a simple yet elegant rail. The main level floors have all been overlaid with lower-grade, narrow softwood boards. Most of the floors have been painted. All the windows are six-over-six with the exception of one in the keeping room which is eight-over-eight. The fireplaces in the front rooms are in working order.

The climb to the second floor is easy with a generous landing halfway up as it makes its turn. (I love the swoop of the bannister here, simple yet elegant - if it were fur-

niture I would call it Sheraton.) There is a colonial ballroom on the second floor, a spacious room with five windows, of which three face west, for full sun most of the day. It is not difficult to imagine oneself being surrounded by friends for an evening of music and chatter around the punch bowl here. And to consider the politics of the day. There are

rumours of a duel fought, arising out of the debate over the re-naming of the town from Port Roseway to Shelburne. Most of the floors on this level are original and painted many times over. A second large bedroom and a large full bathroom complete the second level of the main house. At the rear, over the keeping room, is a large room I call the "barracks"; its size is diminished somewhat by its



Original kitchen fireplace with crane

sloping roof. In those early days many British soldiers took lodgings and I think this may have been such accommodation. It holds a small fireplace opening into the keeping room chimney; six-over-six windows on either side of the large granite chimney complete this room.

The third floor attic is high and wide and approached by an amazingly broad stairwell. Mr. Humphreys operated his printing press from the house and there is one of the original doors at this level with what appears to be original glass. I suppose there must have been a "block and tackle" posting on this north end of the house to facilitate lifting supplies to storage, although it is there no longer. Originally, too, there were two six-over-six windows on the opposite south-facing wall but they were blown in during the hurricane that wiped out many of Shelburne's jetties in the 1950s, and the wall was closed in at that time. I put a palladian window there in 1996. While this is not "original", palladian windows were not uncommon for the period. One can look out this window toward the lighthouse, although in summer this view is slightly obstructed by trees. In fall when the trees turn yellow, the light reflected into half of the attic

gives the whole space a golden hue. The floors in the attic are mostly original, although clearly "working" floors; they are unpainted and show evidence of being numbered with roman numerals.

Even the well is substantial, and apparently "well engineered" (no pun intended), or so I am told. Unlike many of the wells in town it was not used "in common". Perhaps this was

laid in for the original grantee, the farmer, Charles Mason. There are still some remnants of the many, many adjustments to its original layout made over the 225 years of its life. There is a stairway at the rear that was re-configured at some point, and the original back entry now leads to a small, somewhat neglected, addition. Two original dutch doors were recently sold to another Shelburne resident, able to

do more thorough restoration of her own period house. What we believe to have been a birthing room has been made into a second bathroom and another bedroom into a main bathroom. Finally there was another small addition to the south side of the house that opens off a first floor room.

Over the years the house has gone from being a private home with a commercial enterprise, to a private home for three or four succeeding families, to a house divided into two units for rental, and back to a private home with a commercial enterprise. Full circle. During my time I operated an art gallery there. Many former tenants revisiting Shelburne on holiday (former military people attached to the base), would come in and recount stories of their times living there. Some would ask me if I had ever had any "unusual" experiences. "You mean, like a ghost?" I would ask. Somewhat bashfully they would say, "Yes." Now I am a little reluctant to speak of ghosts or spirits or such phenomena as I don't wish to be disrespectful, or "telling tales out of school." Certainly a number of people seem to have had some unexplained things happen (and everyone seems relieved that they have not been alone in these experiences). Nothing at all malevolent - just attention-getters. Mostly it is sounds, the sound of footsteps on the back stairs, a chair being dragged across the floor. Sometimes it has been more active: a door being locked and unlocked, a chair actually moved across the room. I make my own fictions perhaps, but my sense is that this is a male presence and "he" doesn't seem particularly troubled ... in fact he almost seems quite content so long as he is acknowledged and remembered on occasion. I think he may have been one of those British soldiers, since most of the unexplained things seem to happen in the area of the house where I believe some of them were lodged, and some of the reports include the sounds of boots being taken off and dropped. I don't think "he" is at all troubled except sometimes by the loneliness of being trapped between worlds, when he will resort to doing something just a little bit playful.

¹ *Clarkson's Mission to America 1791-1792*, edited with an introduction, notes and index by Charles Bruce Fergusson, Archivist of Nova Scotia. PANS Publication No. 11, 1971, p. 194.

² Fergusson, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.



Maid's quarters with original fireplace

The Humphreys House is looking for a new steward.

Asking price: **\$224,000.**

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Irwin Consulting Energy Services

March 19, 2009

Historic Courthouses of Nova Scotia

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Prof. of Law, History & Canadian Studies,
VP, Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society

Programs Sponsored by other Societies

Acadia Lifelong Learning Centre:

May 20-June 10, Wednes.
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allinfo@acadiu.ca
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Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic

Dec: Harbour Holiday Lights. The Museum vessels *Theresa E. Connor* & *Cape Sable* will be decorated for the holidays with white lights in the rigging.

Fultz House Museum

Dec. 5: Old Fashioned Christmas Dinner. Limited seating, ticket sales only. 865-3794.
fultz.house@ns.sympatico.ca

Fundy Geological Museum

Dec. 4, 7pm: O Christmas Tree Open House: evening of song & refreshments.

Halifax Club

Dec. 2-22 (13 days): Victorian Christmas Luncheon, \$19.95
Dec. 3-22 (9 days): Victorian Christmas Dinner, \$35.95 + tax
reservations@halifaxclub.ns.ca

O'Dell Museum

Dec 7-9: 1870s Victorian Christmas, hot mulled cider, home made cookies, not to be missed!

Industrial Heritage of Nova Scotia

Meets at 7:30, first Monday of month, Maritime Museum of Atlantic
Jan. 5: Casting a Legend: A History of the Lunenburg Foundry, Marike Finlay - deMonchy
Feb. 2: Miracle in Baddeck: The Silver Dart, Brian Cuthbertson
March 2: Reach for the Sky: The Aerial Experiment Association, Judith Tulloch,
jcandow@hotmail.com

Maritime Museum of the Atlantic

Dec. 9: Holiday Exhibit: LEGO Halifax Harbour. Huge interactive model train & town features many recognizable Halifax Waterfront Landmarks.

Musée Acadien & Research Centre

Dec. 14, 1:30pm: Christmas Home Tour & Yuletide Tea. \$15, 762-3380.
Dec. 21, 7pm: Christmas Carol Sing Along by local talents, \$5 Centre de Pombcoup, West Pubnico, 762-3380,
musee.acadien@ns.sympatico.ca

New Ross/Ross Farm

Dec. 5, 7pm: Treelighting, fireworks (Hwy 12 at Forties Rd.)
Dec. 6-7, 9:30-4:30: Christmas in the Country (Ross Farm)
Dec. 7, 6:30: Festival Finale Concert (Anglican Christ Church), by donation
www.newross.ca 689-2663
dawn-elliott@ns.sympatico.ca

NS Archaeology Society

Meets at 7:30, fourth Tuesday of month, NS Museum, Auditorium
Jan. 27: TBA, Dr. Matthew Betts, Canadian Museum of Civilization
Feb. 24: TBA, Rob Ferguson
March 24: The Hawthorne Farm Site: Archaeological Mitigation of an Early Nineteenth Century Rural Site [Gays River], Darryl Kelman, CRM Group

Osprey Arts Centre, Shelburne

Dec. 6, 8pm: Christmas Variety Show, \$8 adult, \$16 family
Dec. 7, 2pm: Carol Sing (food bank donation)

Royal NS Historical Society

Meets at 7:30, third Wednesday of month, NSARM
Jan 21: Dan Conlin, The Golden Age of Piracy in Nova Scotia: Three Case Studies, 1720-1724
Feb 18: Jonathan Fowler, Acadien cultural diversity prior to 1775: patterns and significances
March 18: H. Amani Whitfield, Slaves in Maritime Canada to 1783

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Guided tour starts at 3:00 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.
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Learn from our guide how the trimmings were made and hear how our community celebrated the season over a hundred years ago!

November 21 - December 18, 2008