

The Old Train Station News

Newsletter #26

April 2011

This month we're featuring an article on CJFX by the late Dr. Ray MacLean, local professor, researcher and writer. Anyone interested in the history of Antigonish will be acquainted with at least one or two of Dr. MacLean's works, especially the two-volume *History of Antigonish* which has become somewhat of a Bible for local researchers and genealogists alike. *Beyond the Atlantic Roar* is a fascinating exercise in attempting to understand the roots of Scottish settlement in Nova Scotia and, thus, an indispensable source for local historians; but MacLean was interested in more than just the Scots who settled the area as can be seen in his article "Canadians from Holland – A Generation Later". *Historic Antigonish: Town and County* (which he co-authored with Dr. Laurie Stanley-Blackwell) is a clear example of his interest in the cultural diversity of his community. Tucked away in the archives for some time, this article recently surfaced at the museum.

Radio station CJFX went on the air at 6 pm, 25th March 1943, as the newest radio station in Canada. It was officially opened by Premier A. S. MacMillan; members of the provincial and federal legislatures were present along with the mayors of cities and towns served by the new station. Choral music was provided by the St. F. X. Glee Club and the Cecilian Chorus from MSB.



Robby Robertson and Clyde Nunn at CJFX in 1943.

The idea of having a local radio station had first been discussed by the St. F. X. Extension Department as early as 1930 and again by the Rural and Industrial Conference of 1936. In May of 1941 it was approved in principle by the Board of Governors of St. F. X. and a company, Atlantic Broadcasters Limited, was formed with many of the shareholders being St. F. X. alumni. Dr. Dan McCormack of St. F. X. was President of the Board of Directors and Clyde Nunn was named General Manager as he had previous commercial radio experience in Sydney. St. F. X. received a small grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and it was used to send Clyde Nunn to various centers in the United States

in order to study the use of radio in adult education. Thus, the concept of education was pivotal in the minds of those seeking to make the radio station a reality. It was planned that particular programs would be arranged for study clubs, farmers, fishermen, industrial workers and women. Another principle of operation was that general entertainment programs were to develop local talent and promote the culture of the region.

The station, as mentioned, opened on 25 March 1943; in the following month the late Rev. Joe A. MacDonald, an economics and sociology professor at St. F. X. started a weekly series called "Labor School of the Air". In 1945 a group of St. F. X. faculty produced a program called "University of the Air" whereby information was given on social and economic problems, science, nature, literature, home economics and health. Rev. George Kane, who taught English at St. F. X., started a course at the university called "Radio Workshop" whereby his students could become familiar with broadcasting techniques.

The station covered many St. F. X. functions, including sports, convocations, sing along programs and violin and piano performances by students such as John Y. Gillis of MacKinnon's Harbour and Raymond MacDonald of Mulgrave, and the parish priest at Heatherton. Some students and faculty worked as radio announcers with perhaps the best known being the late Danny Gallivan and Ann Terry MacLellan.

The initial power output was 1000 watts and the station was to be on the air sixteen hours a day. It was to carry some CBC programs as well as those locally arranged. The studios were located initially on Main Street. Its transmission plant had been designed and manufactured by RCA Victor Company Ltd. of Montreal. Gordon MacDougall, a native of North Sydney, was Chief Engineer. During his opening remarks on 25 March 1943 the manager, Clyde Nunn, paid the highest praise to Gordon MacDougall and Rev. Ernest Clarke of the St. F. X. Physics Department. They supplied the technical expertise which enabled the whole idea to become a physical reality. A brilliant man, Father Clarke personally made several necessary pieces of equipment.

In addition to the General Manager, Clyde Nunn, the staff consisted of Danny Gallivan, Ann Terry MacLellan, Ralph Ricketts, D. F. Campbell, E. J. MacDonald, John Langlois, Zita O'Hearn Cameron, Patricia Ledbetter, Rose Nearing, Irene Gatto and Nora McKenna. At first Danny Gallivan did not have a regular time slot but his sports broadcasts were so popular that one was made available. Some of the other early programs were the piano stylings of Michael MacDonald; "Terry's Tales" with Ann Terry MacLellan, a quarter hour for children; "Campus Rhythms"; popular dance music, with Patricia Ledbetter from MSB; "Your Next Door Neighbour", a Home Economics program sponsored by St. F. X. Extension and presented by Zita O'Hearn Cameron; "Accordion Selections", by Andre Dupuis of Stellarton.

In his remarks on opening night President D. J. MacDonald of St. F. X. said the station came into being primarily to enable the university's Extension Department to carry its work of Adult Education more effectively to the people.

Allan Cameron of Springfield gave piping selections on that first program and Michael MacDonald of Antigonish, a very talented musician, rendered piano stylings. Scottish violin music was played by Angus Allan Gillis of Upper Margaree, accompanied by Mrs. W. J. MacDonald of Antigonish, popular organist at St. Ninian's Cathedral. Muriel Goode of Westville provided vocal solos and orchestral selections were given by the Glace Bay Concert Trio.

It was hoped that, through the radio station, good music would be brought into the homes of the listening audience and would thus encourage more of our local artists to persevere in both composing and playing. Accordingly, time slots were later set aside to allow local players to perform; some were good and some were not so good, but the opportunity was there. One program which attracted some local performers, not all of them artists, was "Fun at Five", hosted by the General Manager, Clyde Nunn.

Previous to the opening of CJFX, perhaps the most listened to station was CFCY in Charlottetown and CJCB in Sydney. Many also tuned in to the New Carlisle and, at nighttime, to stations such as WOR in New York. The reception was not always ideal and the launching of CJFX made the listening experience a more pleasant one in this region.

Finally, on opening night, the late Dan Joe MacEachern, President of the Antigonish Highland Society, gave his remarks in Gaelic. Thus, the "Celtic Connection" was there from the beginning.

By: Dr. Ray MacLean



It is with great sadness that I report the fire that destroyed our little church in Maryvale during the wee hours of the morning of April 13 – so soon after our article on fires. Ron and I woke to fire trucks rushing by shortly after three o'clock. Not a moment later, the phone rang. Ron's brother, Lorne, who lives across the road from us, could see the church burning from his window. You can imagine our horror! Like most folks in the community, we rushed over to see what could be done but the building was already engulfed in flames. All that we could do was stand and watch as our little church on the hill burned to the ground.

The church and school are the heart and soul of small communities like ours and so this is a tragic loss. Many of us were married in that little church, our children were baptized there and our loved ones lie buried nearby. Still, the community has come together, vowing to rebuild. The rubble has been cleared away and committees have been established. All that we need now is diocesan approval to rebuild.

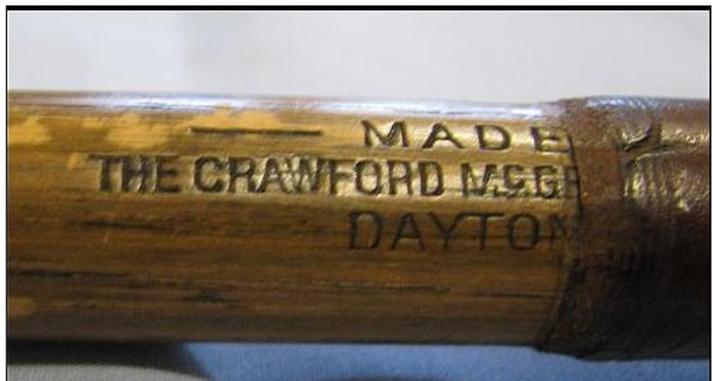
Examining the rubble, I marveled at the expertise of the builders who constructed our little chapel over 150 years ago. Post and beam in construction, the heavy supports were held in place by wooden pegs and some 11 1/2 inch round spikes. Seven inch rectangular spikes held the lesser supports in place. Little wonder that this building withstood the test of time! I was amazed at the sheer size of the beams that rested on the cement foundation that was put in place a decade or so ago. We rarely see beams measuring 12 x 12 and 12 x 8 anymore. Clearly, we have lost a huge part of our history here in Maryvale. (Any memoires or old photos of our church or community can be forwarded to me at cjmmacgillivray@eastlink.ca)

Catherine MacGillivray

Recent Acquisitions



Ron McConnell donated a beautifully crocheted tablecloth to the museum recently. Finely detailed and intricately pieced, this gorgeous tablecloth was the handiwork of his aunt, Mary MacGillivray of Lakevale and Massachusetts. The daughter of Ronald “the Vender” MacGillivray and Elizabeth DeBassio, Mary received her training at the Carney Hospital in Dorchester, Massachusetts. For some time, she worked as a private duty nurse but eventually she returned to Carney Hospital where she worked as an operating room supervisor. Crocheting helped her while away the long hours while she sat with sick and dying patients. This tablecloth, dated to somewhere between 1930 and 1940, was a gift to her sister, Elizabeth McConnell (mother of Ron McConnell). Imagine the hours spent in the creation of this lovely piece of handwork!



These golf clubs were donated by **Sandy Murphy** of Antigonish. The putter and driver were manufactured by the Crawford, McGregor and Camby Company of Dayton, Ohio. This manufacturer produced many golfing accessories including clubs, bags, balls and clothing. The clubs feature heads that are hand carved persimmon and shafts made of hickory. They date somewhere between 1897 and 1927 when wooden shafted clubs were produced.

A special thank-you to both Ron McConnell and Sandy Murphy!

Comments from our Readers

Rosalie MacEachern sent us the following note: *“Enjoyed the fire-fighting account in the newsletter. Nice to see Uncle Cam’s diary of the forest fire being recognized for what it was, not just a detailed account of a devastating event but a fine piece of writing from a man who observed and appreciated nature more than most.”*

The Museum is looking for a Volunteer

The museum is looking for someone who might be interested in joining our new exhibit committee. Responsibilities will include planning, interpretation and labeling, as well as the set-up and dismantling of displays. We’re interested in planning exhibits around activities and events within the community and province – Mi’kmaq Heritage, Women’s History Month, Anniversaries and the like – and we’re hoping to plan a series of displays for the upcoming year.

Book Launch

Terry Punch has a new book coming out – *Early Scots in Maritime Canada*. “While there is some historical information . . . most of the content consists in data gathered from early (pre- 1843) newspapers, census returns, headstones and a miscellaneous array of other documentation, e.g., assistance of the transient poor, probates, church registers.” Mr. Punch will be in Pictou on June 1st for a book launch. Interested persons will be able to purchase his new edition there for just \$30.00.

Heritage Fair



The Heritage Fair brings lots of young people down to the museum each April. Students come to work on projects related to local history or culture. For many children, this is their first opportunity to do hands-on work with museum collections.

Universal topics include local landmarks and the Spook Farm at Caledonia Mills. This spring, one student came in looking for information on the first Mayor of Antigonish – Leonard Archibald. Another student was interested in how Pinkietown got its name.

Here we see Mallory, Becky and Brent working on their Heritage Fair projects. It is absolutely imperative that we keep our young people interested in their heritage!

Recollections

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that Ambrose Bowles had donated a few stories from a collection of articles written by his late wife, Theresa. To promote our heritage here in Antigonish, we must continue to collect these old stories. We welcome any contributions.

A Visit with Sarah and Angus

Fifty years ago in Springfield people visited their neighbours almost every evening. They would come to play cards, sing songs, or chat for the evening, and sometimes they would come to listen to violin music or watch some of their friends step-dancing. One quaint place to visit was at the home of Sarah and Angus MacPherson.

Now, Angus never married. He lived with his sister, Sarah. He never called her Sarah, always "Cook." A nice, tidy home, a bit spooky as all the doors would be closed, so you stayed in the kitchen with the lamp light.

They would be anxious to get the news, and we were sure of a good cup of tea. Sarah would go to the well nearby, and bring up a can of cream that had been hanging in the well by a rope. This cream made a delicious cup of tea along with some homemade cheese and bonach.

Angus and Sarah are long gone, but the home is still occupied by one of Springfield's residents, "Rod Dave" MacDonald, that is, Rod, son of Dave.

Dr. John B. Stewart recently told Jocelyn a delightful story about neighbours of his family. A lady and her niece lived together in the same house. They had one cow but this animal was not always a great producer of cream which would then be churned into butter. When production was low, the ladies would send for the priest to have a blessing said. Divine intervention always seemed to assist the production of cream.

Collecting Wooden Tokens in County Cork, Ireland

Jocelyn received a follow-up note from Darryl and James Atchison. We featured this father and son team in our newsletter last month.

"I wanted to say thank you for all of your assistance so far in helping us to find one of the Webb's wooden tokens. Unfortunately, we have not yet found one but we have not given up hope. We did, however, find a token from Jim's One Stop also from Antigonish. We want to write an article about the tokens. Is there any chance you have a picture of Webb's and Jim's One Stop that you could scan and send to me by email. Kindest regards."

atchisondf@gmail.com

Contact Information: Antigonish Heritage Museum antheritage@parl.ns.ca or 902-863-6160

Dr. Mikael Haller Discusses the Town Point Dig



Dr. Mikael Haller, Professor of Anthropology at St. F. X., spoke to a large crowd at the museum on April 4th regarding an archeological dig that took place at Town Point last year. One of the oldest settlements in the County of Antigonish, Town Point is significant because of the Mi'kmaq and French communities that were once established there. When French traders and missionaries first arrived in Antigonish, both sides of the harbour were already occupied by the Mi'kmaq. Not long after, the English defeated the French and ownership changed hands. In 1784, Colonel Timothy Hierlihy and his men were granted the lands on both sides of the harbour in return for their service during the American Revolution. Even though the area was populated by native Mi'kmaq, the soldiers and their families laid out a town which they called Dorchester. By about 1836, this group of settlers had already picked up and moved to the more fertile present day location of the town of Antigonish.

Because Town Point was a center of development for several different groups of people over a fifty or sixty year period, this area provides an interesting case study in settlement. How did the site evolve over this short period of time? Little archaeological work has ever been attempted but major developments at Seabright are currently posing a risk of damage to the area. This dig by Dr. Haller and his students was an attempt to discover artifacts and structural remains that would shed some light on the study of early settlement along Antigonish Harbour.

Several sites were chosen for the dig. In one site they discovered a few old foundations indicating that houses were built close together in the form of a community. The largest foundation showed signs of a chimney at each end of the structure as well as a cellar entrance or a collapsed wall. Pits were dug along the foundations in hopes of discovering some artifacts. As Dr. Haller pointed out, garbage was usually dumped along the foundations of buildings. Surprisingly, they found very few artifacts – just a few bits of pottery, some brick samples and a few nails from the late 1700s and early 1800s. Some oyster shell deposits were obvious – but that's all. Dr. Haller noted that the area was logged in the 1970s and so the site may have been disturbed.

Along the coast the students and their professor had hoped to find evidence of a Mi'kmaq settlement but no artifacts were found there either. "It's puzzling why there was such a low artifact count." Historical documents indicate a high density population on both sides of the harbour but there was almost no evidence. "There has to be some trace left behind. I'm a little surprised that we didn't find anything."

Dr. Haller concluded that the dig allowed only limited investigation as it is difficult to get access to the area but he is hoping to do a larger project, a systematic survey, sometime. What about the legend of the underground tunnel to a chapel on one of the islands in the harbour? Dr. Haller doubts the possibility of that. "It would have been a great engineering feat if it were so."

Upcoming Guest Speakers

- Joe Ballard, a heritage advocate and architectural historian, is coming on May 9th to speak about "Old Real Estate Ads and What They Reveal About our Built Heritage." Time: 7:00 p.m.
- Paul Bennett, our guest speaker for June, will discuss "The Antigonish Consolidators and Their Impact on Nova Scotia Education."