

Heritage/Archives
Newsletter
May, 2010

With May nearly at an end, it is once again time for the monthly newsletter from the Heritage and Archives Department.

During the month, the Archives was kept quite busy with visitors both in person and via e-mail. Fortunately, I was able to assist with most inquiries.

The Baddeck and Area Historical Society met on Wednesday, 19th May at 4 p.m. in the Court Room. There was a very good turn out with nineteen members in attendance. A great deal of discussion took place regarding a possible archaeological dig on Kidston Island. The first European settlement in what is now the village of Baddeck began on the island in 1819. James Duffus lived and carried on a mercantile business there until his death in 1933. In 1835, William Kidston was sent out by a law firm in Halifax to settle up Duffus' estate. In October of 1836, Kidston married, the widow, Margaret Ann Duffus and by so doing took over the island and the land opposite. The Kidston's remained on the island until 1840 (circa) when they relocated their home and businesses along Water Street. It is felt that with the early and prolonged settlement on the island it would be historically important to carry out a dig. The process to obtain the necessary documents and to engage a qualified archaeologist would take time and planning and it was felt that preliminary plans should be put in motion. A meeting with the village commissioners was very positive in that they are quite enthusiastic about the prospect. The island is owned by the village and therefore, their permission would be vital to such a project.

The Historical Society is in the initial stages of planning a social event later in the summer. This event which will be an old fashioned style picnic will take place (weather permitting) on Saturday, 17th July and it will be held on Kidston Island. It is open not only to Historical Society members but to the local and travelling public as well. The plans will be finalized at the June meeting regarding the time and the logistics of getting people over there, etc. Watch out for posters in this regard.

The heritage house featured in the "Victoria Standard" in May was the MacDonald/Ross house located just across the ferry at Little Narrows. It was built in the mid-1860's which puts it over one hundred and forty years old. The original owner was Captain John MacDonald who was a ship builder, master seaman, and a successful merchant. Capt. MacDonald built ships along the shore in Little Narrows and carried on trade between Cape Breton and St. Pierre and Miquelon as well operating a large general store in the community. The stones in the foundation of the original part of the house came from St. Pierre and Miquelon on return trips as ballast in the Capt.'s MacDonald ships. Capt. MacDonald died in 1905 and is buried in the cemetery just across the water from his house. The next owner was Thomas J. Ross. He purchased the house and property in 1909. The Ross family were the ferry boat owners/operators for many, many years at

Little Narrows as well being store owners. The house has remained within members of the Ross family for the past one hundred years.

The Archives is now in the process of acquiring the textual materials from the archives which had been located on the second floor of the Old Post Office. These records are now in possession of the Baddeck Public Library Society and are being stored in the Baddeck library. Hopefully by the beginning of next month the move will have been completed.

That is the news from the Heritage and Archives for May.