

Rev. Leon Wright

Malbone Bay, Nova Scotia

August 23, 1965

Dr. Thomas Raddall, Author
Liverpool, N.S.

Dear Dr. Raddall:

In the Atlantic Advocate, August 1965 ~~there~~ there is a picture of you searching for Indian arrowheads at Lake Rossignol. This is along the main water route used by Indians crossing Nova Scotia before highways intersected the province. Having a particular interest in exploring their routes of travel, and also the original roads laid out by the first European settlers of Nova Scotia I am taking a liberty in sending along a few items.

The Indian water route coming from the Bay of Fundy, and Annapolis Basin comes up the Allain (Lequille) River and through the Carmichael Meadows. This was the site of an early European settlement, now back to deep forest. Recently Mrs. Wright and I visited the spot getting slides of the old walls, cellars, and bridge abutments ruins.

One mile farther up the river we enter the Grand Lakes. On the narrows between these two lakes some years ago I built a summer vacation Cabin. Exploring the location I found that I was upon a camping ground, used far enough back that the remains of ^{size} one lone huge pine had once stood there on more than an acre of land. Evidently a common tenting spot as a first night halt along the route. On a hill nearby overlooking the cove within the narrows was what seemed to be a burying ground. I found a special marker stone, and what seems to be marks cut into a huge rock. Across the lake where good hunting was evident, I found a most perfect stone arrowhead now in my keeping.

Leaving the lake head by searching I believe I located through the forest a deep worn path which would be the carry around the unusually high falls there. Having brushed out this trail afresh, a few years later a man with his horse, logging, made it a sled road. The canoe route continues on to Springhill where the main route led down the Mersey. An alternative route led more westerly through lakes McLellan, Whalen, Spar, Flanders, down the Frozen Ocean stream into Kedgemakujik and the Mersey.

Other routes I have enjoyed fereting out include the Lawrencetown-Liverpool, the Annapolis-Shelburne, the Margaretville-Lunenburg, and the Annapolis-Halifax (Lord Dalhousie) ancient highways. The Province abounds with historical sites which are easy of access. I have gathered considerable history regarding early hamlets, and routes in most all mainland Counties, affording rich pleasures. Your writings are also a delightful experience in reading. New Hampshire born, Nova Scotia reared has related me to much of the history you are bringing to light.

Gratefully yours,

Leon Wright

August 25, 1965

Rev. Leon Wright,
Mahone Bay, N.S.

Dear Mr. Wright:

Thank you for your very interesting letter. I have never been over the old portage between the Mersey and Lequille rivers, as you have, but I knew about it. (De Meulles was the first white man to use it, in 1686) and from information I collected from local Indians I described it briefly in a novel called "His Majesty's Yankees", pages 333 - 334.

The great Indian camp site by the present shore of Lake Rossignol originally was in a glen called Indian Gardens, where the Mersey River flowed out of its chain of lakes and began the rush to the sea. The dam erected by the N.S. Power Commission in 1928 flooded the glen and made one big lake out of the former First, Second, Rossignol and other smaller lakes. One can still find Indian relics there, especially when the water recedes in a dry summer like the present one.

I never heard of a road from Lawrencetown to Liverpool. The first cross-country road from Liverpool to the Valley was opened in 1798-1800. Major Parker and his sons and neighbors of Nictaux cut it out about half way, and men from south Queens did the rest. This resulted in the settlement of Brookfield, Caledonia, Harmony, and other places in north Queens. The present motor highway from Middleton to Bridgewater follows approximately the old Nictaux-Liverpool road as far as Albany Cross. From there the old route still exists as a third-rate road running southward from Albany Cross to North Brookfield. There it follows the present paved highway to South Brookfield and thence to Liverpool.

I first heard of the old military road between Shelburne and Annapolis about thirty years ago, when a party of timber cruisers came upon old cellars in what was then a pathless forest about the head of the Roseway River. It was a puzzle until I found historical references to the cutting of the road. Soldiers of the Shelburne and Annapolis garrisons cut it out in 1784, and the so-called "Soldiers' Rocks" still mark the place where they met near the south tip of New Moon Lake. The cellars at Wainright Lake about five miles towards Shelburne from this rough monument evidently are the remains of a half-way establishment, subsidised by the provincial government on long lone stretches of such roads at this time. Titus Smith, cruising the western Nova Scotia woods in 1801, found only a few traces of the road, which was never used much and had grown in quickly, except on the Shelburne and Annapolis ends. From Annapolis this road followed approximately the present road to Lequille, where it crossed the stream on what was long called "the General's bridge" (after General Campbell) and went to what is now Prinedale. From there on it vanished long ago, but it must have crossed over to the Roseway valley by way of the upper valley of Bear River, passing lakes Mulgrave, Jolly, Franklin, Whitesand and Moosehide. There was an old Indian portage between the headwaters of the Roseway and those of Bear River, by way of Two Fan, Sand, and Moosehide lakes, still in use by Micmacs of my acquaintance thirty-odd years ago. Probably the military surveyors followed it.

J.H.R.

Rev. Leon Wright

Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia

September 14, 1965

Dr. Thomas R. Raddall
Liverpool, N.S.

Dear Dr. Raddall:

After receiving your good letter of August 25, I have been away from home frequently, and my desk, causing me to delay sending my thanks to you for the time used by you in providing such interesting history. I enjoy much digging up these intimate sketches of the developing steps made by those who were exploring Nova Scotia as a new country.

Your knowledge is based upon authentic records which I have not consulted. My findings are mainly from the stories of those who now live beside the ancient trails, and from personally exploring them as best I can. I trust you will understand that I am not in any part seeking to contradict your good records, only offering such traditions as have come to me and hoping that they will either emphasize your findings, or be corrected by the actual records.

Some of my ancestors acquired lands in Annapolis County between the property of Lord Moncton on the east, and the old Annapolis-Shelburne highway on the west. My father purchased his home site from another ancestor (Beeler) on the west side of this old highway. Thus I grew up as a boy where the east bound of our property was the old Shelburne Road. As you say, this road crossed the Lequille river near Annapolis at General's Bridge, proceeded south, east of Beeler's Lake, east of Lake Cady (Kadie), and Baille Lake, and Mulgrave Lake. Possibly it went west of Umbrella Lake, but right here the exact route seems confused.

No!
Beginning then at the Shelburne end, the main street at Shelburne leads straight north up the Old Annapolis Road. I have an ancient map which shows this road (trail) following east of Deception Lake, west of Beech Hill, and Aspect Lake; east of Trap Lake, Round Lake, and Long Lake; west of Silver Lake, and Wainwright Lake; east of Roseway Lake, and Handsled Lake. From the topography of the land here one can only assume where the trail might have gone.

Concerning roads involving Nictaux, and Lawrencetown, the traditions suggest that the present Middleton-Bridgewater road following the west bank of the Nictaux river, does not follow the original ones. That there was the ancient road that came from Fundy Shore down over Phinney Mountain, crossing the Annapolis River slightly east of where the Nictaux river enters in. The road, or trail continues east of the Nictaux, passing Bald Hill, and it now is the Bloomington road which continues south into the wilderness over old abandoned settlements, by Birch Bark lake, ever east of the Nictaux, and on down east of the Lahave. This becomes the road intersecting at Barss Corner, and on through New Cornwall, over Blockhouse Hill, through Northwest and into Lunenburg.

No written contemporary evidence!

Traditions also declare that the Liverpool road began several miles west of the Nictaux. This road went up over Beals Hill, south of Lawrencetown, crossing the stream flowing into Trout Lake on two bridges (the old stone abutments remain today), entering the present Highway (No.10) at Albany, and there continues to Albany Cross, and along the route shown in the records you have referred to.

nonsense!

Concerning the pioneers who laid out these trails, the one from Annapolis to Shelburne has strong traditions that it was built by the French before the English occupied the country. Those roads east and west of the Nictaux have no strong suggestions in the traditions I have heard. It is in some parts assumed that they became trails laid out somewhere along by the English in the period when the Annapolis-Halifax (Dalhousie) road was also laid out. This time table is settled by the road cut by Major Parker, (later Colonel Parker) who settled on the west bank of the Nictaux. However, unless history shows that his road followed closely the present highway, clinging to the west bank of the Nictaux, and over the succession of hills now followed into North Albany, knowledge of the land might lead him to begin the several miles west at Lawrencetown where after the one ascent, the road encounters no real hills until it reaches New Albany centre, and, as they are joined today.

Please understand that I am not contesting historical records. These comparisons and this delving into ways the old folks followed is specially fascinating to me. When a boy, my father, and his relatives and neighbours were fond of re-telling tales handed down. I walked the woods, and trails and learned them well. Later for some years I was pastor at Nictaux, and wrote a history of the church and people. Being an avid woodsman I hunted, and fished over most of the streams in Annapolis County. I have hunted, and fished, and explored in all N.S. mainland Counties, except Digby, and Antigonish.

My first life-partner came from Port Mouton. Having held pastorates in Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne, Yarmouth, and Annapolis, I had opportunity to explore the areas, and gather traditions. I might add that Pastorates held in Hants, Colchester, and Halifax counties have also provided me with happy gleanings. These other areas have afforded very interesting stories of early explorers, and settlers up the Avon, in the Cobequids and its rivers, and along the old Guysborough Road. For more than forty years I pursued Boy Scouts work, having led boys over these historical places, and by many campfires have regaled them with tales that were given to me.

With humble apologies for using this much of your valuable time, my closing is again with deep thanks for the pleasure that your good books have given to me. Having been born in New Hampshire, I found "The Governor's Lady" specially interesting above some others.

Sincerely yours,

Leon Wright.