

31 McNab's Island. THIS IS NOT A NOSTALGIC BACKWARD GLANCE, but a background to the question, "What is to become of McNab's Island?"
Notes made Friday, Sept 8, 1966

The Bird Society has done its bit. They've staggered through brambles and bushes and pin pointed the heron colony, undaunted by very wet rain of a peculiarly penetrating quality, or by dusty dry tracks with not a bottle of C.k. C.l. in sight (nor a steaming tea kettle.)

The boatman - waiting to ply his ferry; obliging, reassuring. A reliable weather prophet. Does he use his corns, ears? Or does he listen to Rube Hornstein's weather Forecast, CBC?

The cat tails - where wild flowers bloom, cuckoos flit in the thickets; song sparrows nest and bees hum on slow Summer days. Here are forget me nots; Touch me nots; prickly burr reed; Michaelmas Daisies; Knotweed and Indian Paintbrush.

No chink of money for there are no pop bottle stands, loud with enamel advertisements, no developers and no opportunities.

In the lea of the hill, near a ~~frot~~ ^{foot}, lies a Grave Yard. The McNab last acre.

Left to right. Lewis Gibbens youngest son of
James and Harriot McNab
Who died 24th August, 1845
Aged 8 years and six months.

All set in a concrete base. (What heartache followed the coffin of such a young child?)

In such a small and neat graveyard, one feels nothing but quietude, awe and maybe satisfaction that such toil as tilled the island had found ~~some~~ a gentle resting place.

A few trees gave shade and broke the regularity of the gravestones.

A newspaper clipping reads "TO BE BURIED IN OLD FAMILY PLOT.

Z "Interesting historical lore concerning the early settlers on McNab's Island at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, was recalled yesterday with the arrival of the Maritime Express bearing the remains of the late MISS ELLEN MCNAB, the last of her branch of the MacNab family, and who will be buried in the family plot on the island next Tuesday through special permission. Accompanying the body yesterday were two nieces of the deceased lady, the Misses A. S. N. Bullock and Mary Bullock. The former will be stationed here during the Winter port season, in charge of women's immigration. The late Miss McNab was in her 95th year, when she died recently. The special permission by which she will be buried on MacNab's Island was ~~later~~ granted by His late Majesty, King Edward VII. When the island was ~~later~~ taken over by the militia as a fortification all burials in the cemetery ceased. An ancestor of Miss MacNab obtained the island from Lord Cornwallis, founder of Halifax, by a grant, it being known formerly as Cornwallis Island. Miss MacNab's funeral will be held from her old home, 92 Birmingham Street on Tuesday, to All Saints Cathedral."

ERECTED
IN MEMORY OF
The Hon^{ble} Peter McNAB (Jr.)
Died 1st June 1847
Aged 80 Years

J. Wood Jr.

The stone was set in a concrete base, probably at a much later date. The gravestone had horizontal mason's chisel strokes at the rear.

This Stone
is erected
to the memory of
Mrs. Joanna McNAB
Wife of Peter McNab Esqr.,
who departed this life
20th May 1827 Aged 61 yeras
and
John Henry
son of
Peter and Joanna McNab
who departed this life
June 1817 Aged 18 years

The gravestone was set in concrete, and the mason's chisel marks were cut in herring-bone pattern at the rear.

At the North East corner, unknown men were buried, anonymous beneath silent (mute) white crosses.

The days of champagne picnics are not ended - some of that old school style still survives, pledged to do as their forbears did and draw happy, popping corks beneath Summer skies. Champers does wonders for traditional (?) lobster, Camembert cheese and buttered asparagus. Helps it down.

On the island, blackberries as big as a man's thumb nail, full raspberries with all the flavor of unforced, natural fruit, ^{Here} minor ^{-minded} county councillors

do not have the power to spread insecticides and "weed" killers on this isolated island. Such habits are common among curious, misguided councillors in Nova Scotia's county authorities - men who wouldn't know a wild flower, nor would consider the people who love the flowers' beauty.

The Perrin House, with a southerly aspect, In the ruin of an immense old house, a heavy safe rusted close by the heaped red bricks which once carried chimney pots atop their column.

The worldly wealth contained in the safe has long since gone, but round about is the lovely wilderness of a once tailored garden - shaded with lofty copper beech, a real Hawthorn hedge, no longer blunted and tight, but soaring freely to the sky. Virginia creeper, red as flowers, flowering berberis, black currant and gooseberry bushes, and below the garden bank, a lovely avenue of hard wood elm. A mighty horse chestnut tree and delicate Row^an leant shade about the ruin on hot Summer days.

Perrin was from "The Old Country," according to Mr. Farrant. To see his garden, still lovely, though untended, is to know ~~it~~ *he was*.

McNab's used to support sheep farming. Neglect, the garrison there, and soldiery with its dogs ravaged the flocks.

Mr. and Mrs. Farrant did mixed farming. A team of horses to plough and draw the reaping machine; pigs, for home cured bacon, hens which supplied eggs for the garrison, and a cow or two for milk, and butter.

Mrs. Farrant arrived in 1922. Her husband, who had been a prisoner of war of the Germans and in solitary confinement for six months, had been promised that fires would be lit and the house ready to receive him and his family when they arrived.

Mrs. Perrin arrived in mid-Winter. ~~The~~ She had a babe in arms when she came. She toiled up the hill to the farm house and the snow was drifted so high, the door was ~~xxxxxx~~ half buried.

No-one had lit fires, and to enter the house, she had to dig her own way in.

All her married life she has been given a cup of tea in bed. Her husband Arthur will not let her down into the kitchen until he has fired the stove, made the tea and taken a cup upstairs to her.

It probably accounts for the harmony of their lives.

Who could come downstairs bad tempered having been given tea in bed?

15th September, 1966.

I learned by phone today from Phyllis Blakeney, N.S. Archives, that Peter MacNab is buried in St. Paul's Cemetery.

"Died 3rd November, 1799. Aged 64."

And, that Henry, son of Peter and Susanna MacNab, died 3th June 1796

MacNab's Island

Dartmouth Patriot, May 4, 1901.

"MacNab's forms two entrances to Halifax Harbour. Three miles long and half a mile wide.

Gravel beach

Its southern extremity is Thrum Cap Shoal, far out to sea.

Meagher's Beach was named "Dead Man's Beach" in a map of 1750.

Henry, James and William Cornwallis received the island in grant July 20, 1752. It was already named Cornwallis Island in 1749.

A census of people in July 1752 says:

Head of family	Males above 16.
Captain Joseph Rouse	4
Captain Mauger	7
Captain Cook	5
Mr. Bradshaw	16 ...

In July 1762 it was decided to erect a battery and redoubt on the island with 10 battery pieces and 500 men engaged in construction.

That month, in 1762, 200 men of the Provincial Regiment began clearing brush and underwood at the redoubt site. It was hoped to spare a further 150 men from Point Pleasant to hasten the operation as "that ground, which is greatly encumbered with roots and logs of decayed trees as well as underwood."

It was decided to make Thrum Cap a signal station. (Probably Ives Point battery)

Indians lived on the North East point of the island. In 1901 it was written: "Here they lived up to about 60 or 70 years ago."

Mention of a house of entertainment on the island in 1798, kept by Mary Roubalet. It was used for tea parties in the Summer. Named "The Mansion House."

About 1773 the island was advertised for sale. It passed into the hands of Peter MacNab, known as Governor MacNab. Believed his father was coxswain to Governor Cornwallis. Peter was a lieutenant in the navy and was present at the siege of Louisbourg.

JUNE 7 1770 Peter McNab unanimously elected to membership of the North British Society. (When he was 35 years old.)

In 1793, an assessment list included
Peter McNab Jr. farmer, was the owner of 2 horses, 12 cows, 200 sheep. (His brother) James MacNab, farmer, 1 horse and 4 cows.
Thomas Fraser, fought at Culldoen, farmer, 3 cows.

Hawthorne, Jr., farmer, 4 cows.

Henry Kuhn, farmer, 1 horse, 4 cows.

Population about 50 .

The writer said Peter McNab, Sr., was a native of Inverness, Scotland, and he came to Halifax in 1754 and was an enterprising businessman. He had ~~xxx~~ leased a part of Cornwallis Island, now McNab's Island, and employed a number of men fishing, and he sent trading vessels to Boston and Philadelphia. He probably grew produce for the government. Governor McNab had a business at the corner of Granville Street and Duke Street.

Peter McNab was a Grand Juror in 1781.

His two sons were James and Peter - see the assessment list immediately previous.

One of Peter McNab's Senior's tenants was Thomas Fraser, who fought at Culloden in 1746, and he was 103 when he died.

Harrigan's Point was formerly Hawthorne Point, after the tenant, related by marriage to the early Bissett's of Cole Harbour.

HMS LaTribune was wrecked on Thrum Cap, Nov 23, 1797. 44 guns. ~~and~~
An obstinate Captain refused permission for people aboard the ship to leave.

People from McNab's Island had gone aboard to help. They too were refused the right to leave the ship, and Alex Hawthorne was one of those who died when she broke up in a rising gale.

At the end of the 18th Century, ratepayers on McNab's Island were:

James Anderson	✓ James McNab
John Wright	✓ Peter McNab Jr.
John Modest	John McNab
John Cook	James Peters
William Cooper	John MacPherson
Roger Swinney	Donald McIntyre
John Watts	Beriah Rice
Henry Khun Jr.	George Ray
John Quinland	Andrew Johnson
Henry Khun Sr.	
- Williams	
John Munday	

Joshua Mauger, born at Lymington, Hants Co., England.

He was a merchant and distiller

When Louisburg was restored to France in 1749, he moved to Halifax with a stock of goods.

He distilled rum for the garrison and sold it one assumes profitably. It was sold at Louisbourg for 9 pence a gallon (according to Gentleman's Magazine) He built a wharf at the foot of Jacob Street. A list of families for Halifax in July 1752 shows him as having:

- 14 males above 16 in his household
- 3 females above 16 in his household
- 2 males under 16
- 1 female under 16 That is 20 people.

The same year he advertised a number for sale, "evidently having more than he required" writes a chronicler - H. W. Hewitt in 1901.)

He was agent-victualler to the navy in 1751.

He was granted Mauger's Beach in 1752 and sold Negro slaves.

He owned shops at Pisiquid, Minas and elsewhere, from where he sold goods and liquor to the French and Indians. A profitable business.

In 1762, he was Nova Scotia agent and he could appear at the House of Commons in London.

He went to Great Britain and represented Poole, Dorset.

He is written of as dead in 1792.

He resigned the Nova Scotia agency in 1768.

It Was News Then (1770)

IN old London in the early eighteenth century lived a shrewd merchant by the name of Mauger. When his son was still comparatively young, he introduced him to mercantile ways by despatching him on a venture to the island of Jamaica. The young man acquitted himself well, went on to trade with other West Indian islands, and soon had quite an extensive business.

For a time he made Louisburg his centre, from that port despatching his trading vessels to the West Indies, to Atlantic colonies, and to the Mediterranean. But, when Louisburg was returned to the French and Halifax was established, Mauger transferred his activities to the new centre. He obtained a grant of a large part of what is now McNab's Island, made enormous profits out of his adventures and practices.

Eventually he sold out all his businesses and returned to London where he lived in princely style. He secured a seat in Parliament for Bristol, married his only daughter to the heir of the Duc de Bouillon. For many years he acted in London as agent for Nova Scotia.

The name of this man is perpetuated to this day in that of Mauger's Beach in Halifax Harbor and of Maugerville in New Brunswick.

Mauger lived to see his daughter and her titled husband recklessly squander the money he had amassed in the New World. But he died in 1770, some years before the beginning of the French Revolution. Thus he was spared the knowledge that his daughter and her gay husband were among the first victims of the guillotine.

Mauger died in 1770, some years before the French Revolution, and he was thus spared the knowledge that among the first heads to roll were those of his daughter and her French aristocrat husband.

The beach at McNab's Island still bears his name.

The correct pronunciation is Major's beach. Although it is now spelled Meagher's. As in Eileen Maegher.

In 1828, a lighthouse was put on top of the tower battery at the beach.

McNab's brother-in-law - Cullerton - lived on the grounds near the present rifle range. Sailors and Soldiers camped years later on the ground which he cleared.

Lieutenant Hugonin and Captain Lyttleton were (great?) sons-in-law of Governor McNab.

Lyttleton sold the southern half of the island to the Imperial Government.

Hugonin owned a strip of land through the centre and to this day, it shows the greatest traces of not only agriculture, but gardening and an avenue of trees.

Dr. Slayter was buried on the island after courageously offering to tend epidemic victims of cholera in an overloaded immigrant ship: S.S. England out of Liverpool, in 1866.

250 people died and they were buried near Ives' Point Battery, on the side of the hill and Harrigans's Point at and Little Thrum Cap.

History has it that Peter McNab, Sr. (Governor) built his home at the head of a cove by a willow tree. It was a long, low stone structure with Chippendale pieces among his furniture.

Doors and bannisters of mahogany. It was his country home until 1792, when he handed it over to Peter the 2nd, who lived there to his death in 1847, and the house and a large part of the island went to his son James, who lent the house to his daughter Joan and her husband, Captain Lyttleton.

One Christmas Day, early in the 1860's, the Lyttleton's went to dine in Halifax. The house burned down in their absence.

The part of the island inherited by the Hon James McNab, was purchased by his 3 sons-in-law years afterwards, when Lieutenant Hugonin returned to England, to live, he sold the house and most of the property to Mr. Perrin.

Peter Jr. was sent back to Scotland for schooling for the ministry, in Perth. He stayed at times with the last Laird of McNab, subject of Raeburn's famous painting.

Peter went to college in England and decided the cloth was not for him, returned to his island home in Halifax Harbour and had his children educated at home, by Frances (IS) MacNab, extremely well educated, finished in Paris, a linguist, a musician.

There is no church on the island and never was.

There is a graveyard.

JOANNA nee CULLETON, Peter ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{the 2nd's} wife, her brother and sister-in-law, *are buried there*

Joanna was tall and very fair.

Also Sarah HUNTER, (the great, great, great grand ^{daughter} ~~niece~~ of Peter ~~the 2nd's~~ ^{the 1st}), by his sister.

She is described as tall and thin, with most brilliant eyes, possessing extraordinary fire and vigour, with always a sweet smell of lavender about her.

She went to England with her soldier husband, taking her feather bed with her, and leaving behind her daughter to grow up in her absence.

She had always prophesied her daughter would be beautiful.

On her return, she found her daughter to be buxon, red haired, and freckled.

Neither disguised their feelings, and the daughter, Sarah, stayed with her uncle (Peter?)

The palmy days of McNab's Island, when more than half the island was used for sheep grazing.

1766-1827 Joanna was Roman Catholic. Peter, her husband, was Presbyterian. She was known as "the saint," with great tact and charm.

She and Peter brought together under their roof, parsons and priests, all sorts and conditions of men, sailors and soldiers and among them, "The Old Queen's father, the Duke of Kent,"

When Joanna was dying, she repeated the well-known Scottish hymn, "The Hour of My Departure's Come."

The McNab house contained old blue and white china in Oriental design, and a family punch bowl and a piece of Chippendale furniture which survived the fire.

"No-one who had known of it - the house - spoke of it without a word of regret for its loss.

Peter McNab, Jr., brought several shepherds back from Scotland.

MacDonald, a Rosshire man, was remembered as being within hearing distance of Sarah Hunter and her cousin, when they went through ice one winter in the little cove.

"Only the geese cackling" decided MacDonald, and went on his way rejoicing.

Luckily their cries reached the ears of Peter, who knew a woman from a goose"

In the War of 1812, Peter Jr. and his family watched the "Shannon" tow the Chesapeake" into Halifax Harbour.

Pirates Gibbets were at Mauger's Beach.

"Early last century (early 19th C) nerves were robust, for it was observed as something quite peculiar to Joanna, that she objected to the wild strawberries gathered near the spot where"those dreadful - swung and rattled in the breeze."

HOW LEGENDS BEGIN During the cholera years, in Ireland, thousands of the wretched starving peasants emigrated to Canada, bringing the disease with them. On one occasion, the Quarantine station in Halifax Harbour became so crowded that leave was asked for a place of refuge on McNab's Island, and the poor people were brought to Harrigan's Cove simply to die...Whole families were swept away... They were landed from ship after ship. Tents were put up...No lapse of years can make it safe or possible to touch a cholera grave, and on that beautiful spot must always remain this witness of the awful suffering in Ireland."

This, I believe, refers to the epidemic aboard the SS England, out of Liverpool, to New York.

* * * * *

Peter the Second had the control of beaches to the low water mark.

A reference in the histories says Sir John Fisher was fined for keeping pigs at Admiralty House.

From

A Letter "e"
In The
Archives.

The right of transport on government boats was arranged with the Imperial Government, for as long as the island belonged to any McNab, and by special arrangement at cousin Ell's request, she may be buried in the ancestral graveyard in Fort McNab.

Written by
ACT MC to

"Chelara"
July 25th, 1908 from Minnewaska

Continuation of the letter from A.C. & M.C., at Minnewaska, July 25, 1908, to "Chelsea."

"Lobster spearing on beaches ... The island is very interesting botanically. A rare violet is found there...The creeping snowberry, sun dāw, etc.

One of the Lyttleton's, William Musgrave Lyttleton became a doctor and lived at Adelong Riverina, N.S.W. Australia. Some went to New Zealand.

Ellen was Peter Jr.'s daughter.

~~It~~ A letter written Nov 9, 1905, to Frederick Perrin, Esq., ^{was} signed with the comment, "My wife and Chelsea are both very well It is, I think, from Allan Cassels, lawyer,
15, Toronto Street,
Toronto, ONT.

"The informative history of McNab's island sent to "Dearest Chelsea" in July 1908 was probably from her mother, M.C. wife of A.C. (Allan Cassells.)

Right to passage in the government boats was guaranteed in an indenture dated 16 April, 1904, between Allan Cassells and Colonel W. D. Louner, Commanding Royal Engineers in Canada.

On 23 Nov 1905 Frederick Perrin wrote, "Wolnough's house was burnt down Sunday week to the ground, giving now a beautiful view from the McNab Cottage. I have had 13 radiators put in my house to avoid going South this winter...."

On 18th September, 1966, Mrs. Ernest Arthur Farrant told me that all her married life she has had a cup of tea brought to her in bed. This perhaps accounts for their obviously happy and gentle state. A veritable Darby and Joan.

On this day, I dismissed myself from the bird watchers (with whom I went to the island) and went up the hill with a leg of lamb for the old couple.

I kept it in the freezer of my fridge overnight so it travelled well without spoiling on the ferry of Mr. Purcell, of Point Pleasant Park.

Mr. Farrant was up and in the kitchen when I called, making tea. I was bursting to have a cup, but oddly enough he didn't think of offering one to me.

He was delighted with the joint of meat.

I wouldn't tell him what was in the parcel, but gave him a clue that I was sorry I had no mint sauce.

He guessed it was meat and he told me how auctions were held in London years ago in Smithfield Market.

Later in the day, after lunch, I met them both.

They were going to board up windows at the Lynch cottage.

Young vandals with nothing better to do with their energy, had broken out several window panes, Seven of them.

The old couple were going with a wheel barrow, a saw and lengths of timber to board up the damage.

Using their precious energy of old age.

He is crippled with arthritis and pushes the barrow, while she takes the weight, hauling on a rope ahead.

They use the same means to convey their groceries to the house, as she must go ashore to Halifax twice a week to get supplies.

There being no electricity, they have no fridge and must buy frequently.

He cannot carry, because of his legs, she cannot do it either because she is now old and frail.

So the navy vehicle deposits ~~xxxx~~ ^{her and the shopping} at the foot of the hill, where old Mr. Farrant waits with his wheelbarrow. Then they push and haul it up to the house on the hill.