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## Churches By The Sea

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(Photo by Bob Brooks)

Seal Island Memorial Church

ON Seal Island, which is the largest and most southerly of the Tusket group extending out into the sea from the southern tip of Nova Scotia, stands the picturesque Seal Island Memorial Church. It was founded by Caroline Crowell, wife of John Crowell, then lightkeeper, who was one of the direct descendants of the Crowell family who started the lighthouse, and the life-saving and humane station on the island; the latter to take care of the shipwrecked seamen who should happen to be lucky enough to land.

In order to raise funds to build the church, Mrs. Crowell organized a sewing circle group, comprised mostly of fishermen's wives, which met weekly at different homes to sew and make things for sale. Then, also, she would promote tea sales and suppers, which were held in the largest of the boat-houses. The men constructed long wooden tables, and the women cooked and baked for a week beforehand, to provide the provisions for the crowds that attended. At that time there were around five hundred people attending those tea sales—made up of the fishermen and their families who lived on the island during the lobster fishing season, and those who lived and fished in their small schooners and anchored in the sheltered coves of the island at night.

Those were the "good old days" of Seal Island when the people boasted of a well-attended school with a resident teacher, jolly community get-togethers, and even travelling shows, with now and then the "silent movies" which were shown by the

itinerant showman, using one of the old boat houses as a theatre.

Thus it was that in those days, about fifty years ago, sufficient money was collected, mainly through the untiring efforts of Caroline Crowell, to build the Seal Island church, which now stands as a fitting memorial to such a Christian woman. The people were never able to secure a permanent minister, most of them not being permanent residents themselves, but every spring during the fishing season, a minister, and sometimes two, taking turn and turn about, would come over and hold services every evening for a week or more. Needless to say the church was packed on those occasions, and the music of the beautiful old hymns re-echoed out over the waters of the East Cove.

This practise has been kept up to the present day. The ministers visit the island once in a while to hold services, and fraternize with the people. The church is used and maintained by the fishermen and their families who come from Clark's Harbor and vicinity and live on the island about half the year. These people are the direct descendants of those earlier fishermen who used to live here, and follow in their footsteps, wresting a living from the sea.

The daughter of Caroline and John Crowell, Mrs. Winnie Hamilton, is now caretaker of the church. She was born and brought up here, has lived on the island most of her life, and says she wouldn't live anywhere else. She owns the island with its hundreds of sheep, except for a small strip leased to the government, and no doubt will follow in her mother's footsteps, being hostess to the many visitors who come to the island each summer.