

The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society
The society is a registered charity: CCRA number 88847 4194 RR 0001



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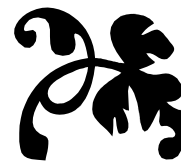
10th Annual Friends of McNabs Island Dinner and Silent Auction

Enjoy the ambiance of the Officers Mess at Royal
Artillery Park, Halifax on
Saturday, March 29, 2008

Doors open at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30



Full Service Meal
(for vegetarian plate, specify when
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Tickets on sale until March 20th - only 80 spaces available!

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**Friends of McNabs Island Society
Rucksack**

Web address: <http://www.mcnabsisland.ca>

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MEMBERSHIPS: Individual Membership or Newsletter Only is \$15 per year, Family Membership is \$20 per year, Supporting Membership is \$50 per year and Sustaining Membership is \$100 per year. We are a registered charity and accept donations.

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DEADLINES: 1 February for the Spring issue, 1 June for the Summer issue, 1 September for the Fall issue and 1 November for the Winter issue.

We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

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FORT HUGONIN DEMOLITION PLANNED

Make your voice heard!

The Department of National Defence has issued a tender notice for the DEMOLITION of structures at FORT HUGONIN on McNABS ISLAND. The Friends of McNabs Island Society strongly opposes the planned destruction of this historic resource on the island.



Hugonin Barracks Officer's Quarters circa WWI

Fort Hugonin has been vacant since National Defence closed the "listening post", which monitored ship traffic in Halifax Harbour, in 1992. The property is to be transferred as parkland to the provincial Department of Natural Resources. National Defence says that Natural Resources wants the building demolished before the land transfer can take place. The approved Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources Management Plan for McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park calls for the site to be stabilized and interpreted. Clearly every effort should be made to save this historic building.

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"Open House" on McNabs!



Lynch House Open for Visitors one day a year

This year the Friends included visits to the Conrad-Davis and Matthew Lynch houses at the north end of McNabs Island as part of their Fall Foliage Tour. Scores of people choose to rest and picnic on the lawns outside the houses as the weather was so warm and sunny. Others took advantage of the day's "Open House" to explore the interior of these homes.

Volunteers, Bill Lawlor, Denyse Contrasty, John McCallum, Katalin Ohlssen and Krista Olmstead, welcomed visitors at the door and answered questions regarding the houses, the Island and the Friends Society. Many expressed dismay that

mould and rot were spreading throughout these two historic homes, and that there were no plans for their restoration and use in the near future. Given the enthusiastic participation of a record crowd that Sunday on McNabs Island, it is indeed disappointing that there are few opportunities for the HRM public to enjoy this unique park in the middle of the Halifax Harbour. Are not parks for people?

by Denyse Contrasty

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The first floor of Hugonin Battery was built in 1899 and used as an officers' quarters. The Battery included four quick-fire guns needed to defend Halifax against the threat of attack by German torpedo boats. Between the wars, the building was used as a school for island children until a one-room school house was built. During WWII, a second storey was added to the brick structure and the site served as a de-gaussing station used to de-magnetize war ships and prevent them from being an easy target for German underwater mines. Then after WWII, Fort Hugonin served as a listening post and caretaker's residence until it closed in 1992. Barry Edwards wrote about the history of Fort Hugonin in the Fall 2006 Rucksack which is available on-line at:

<http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/RuckSack/Rucksack-V15-I1-F2006.pdf>

Surely a more reasonable approach than demolition would be to remove any hazardous waste from the site and remove the dilapidated second storey of the building. The Hugonin Battery site is part of McNabs Island's military heritage and should be preserved for interpretation. I would encourage readers to contact their local Member of Parliament and Member of the Legislative Assembly as well as the Minister of Natural Resources, Hon. David Morse and the Minister of National Defence, Hon. Peter MacKay about the planned demolition of Fort Hugonin. Minister Morse can be reached at: (902) 424-4037 or MIN_DNR@gov.ns.ca and Minister MacKay can be reached at: 902-752-0226 or mackap1@parl.gc.ca
Catherine McCarthy, Friends of McNabs Island Society
434-2254 home
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Fall Foliage Tour Wrap-up

Sunday, October 14, 2007 was a grand day. For more than a decade the Sunday following Thanksgiving is the day that the Friends of McNabs Island hold the Fall Foliage Tours on the island. The fall colours are their finest and the weather is usually favourable. This past tour day was a beautiful day for discovering McNabs Island. Nearly 150 people meandered around the island either on their own, or following tour guides, Mike Crowell and Royce Walker. Mike took interested visitors on a nature tour along the beach and through the woods, eventually ending up at the north end of the island so that visitors could tour the island's history Matthew Lynch and Davis-Conrad houses. Royce



Royce Walker giving his tour



Ross & Libby Kaley from Australia

concentrated on the island's history and carried along his familiar photo album which showed the island in its hayday. This year, Faye (Cleveland) Power accompanied Royce along the history trail, bringing a personal touch to the island's history with her many stories of growing up in the lighthouse on the island. Visitors that day came from as far away as Australia to enjoy our favourite island.

This is the ONLY time during the year that the historic houses are open to the public. The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources grants special access on this one day only to the Friends of McNabs upon proof of our society's liability insurance. These government-owned houses have been vacant for more than TWENTY YEARS! They are in a sorry state of repair. Shingles are missing, and storm windows are broken. It is extremely distressing to see these once beautiful homes in such poor condition. They offer such possibility, but each year that possibility is slipping

away. Several years ago Natural Resources decided that they couldn't afford to heat the houses to the minimum, as required in other provincially-owned museums. Now there are visible signs of mould everywhere. The wainscott panelling in the Conrad house is covered in grey mould and the musty smell of the Lynch house is too strong for allergy sufferers.

The Friends of McNabs Island would like to know what plans Natural Resources has for these historic houses. The government-approved Management Plan for McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park calls for the Conrad and Matthew Lynch houses to be used for an outdoor education centre. This would be a good use for the houses, but the longer they remain vacant and neglected, the less likely they can be used for anything.

by Cathy McCarthy



People assembling to leave McNabs Island

South End McNabs: A walk on the “Wild Side”

Upon arrival at Garrison Pier during the Fall Foliage October tour, I decided to have the pleasures of both a long walk and an adventure of following trails in the southern section of McNabs Island. I wanted to see areas that I hadn't explored before, even though I have been a frequent visitor and camper on the Island for years. I had been inspired by the talk given by archaeologists, Fred and Lynne Schwartz of Black Spruce Heritage Services, our guest speakers at the 2007 Annual General Meeting. They spoke of structures seen on the south end of the Island, areas where they had completed their archaeological survey after Hurricane Juan. I wanted to find the range finder platform, the butt of the rifle range, and the derelict farm ruins on the southern end of the Island.



Mechanics to hoist targets at the end of the Range

As we were assembling at the end of the Pier, Judith Campbell, another member of our Board, said she was interested in a “brisk hike”, not just a meander. I told her about my plan to see the southern end of the island, then we were off. We kept a brisk pace down the Garrison Road until we reached the junction point where the Rifle Range Trail branches to the south. We were uncertain that we'd taken the right path until we saw the Rangefinder Platforms to the right of the trail and had to stop for a photo.

We had been warned the trail was challenging, maybe a bit extreme so we were expecting to meet some impassable situations that would cause us to turn back. However, with our maps, and a good sense of space and direction, we found that the trail was quite distinct and simply narrowed. The worst problem for us was that a trench, formed in the middle of the trail, had filled with water. By just wearing regular running shoes, we risked damp feet and were so ill prepared for the wet ground. But, both of us continued on undaunted stopping only to marvel at some of the natural wonders we happened upon. At the end of the trail there was a clearing and then the abrupt great drop at the end of the range. There still stands the rusted mechanics used to hoist targets up and down on the range. Of the entire day's hike this should be a cautionary point to remember if you follow in our footsteps. Care and attention is advised, there is a possibility of falling off the wall into the crevasse but it is really only a possibility for the foolhardy or reckless.



Mysterious “bus stop” off Green Hill Cove Trail

After a bit of poking around we found the Green Hill Cove Trail, scarcely a cut through the trees. Just as we entered, we saw an interesting, moss covered structure that was level with the trail. We climbed down to see it. The sunlight played through the trees and lit the mossy green so it was almost a magical place. I'm not sure what the structure was, or the purpose and no one seems to be able to tell me what it might have been. Because it is in line with the end of the Range perhaps it was part of that complex. It appeared to be a concrete “bus stop” with four wooden seats affixed to the back wall and a large trench lined in concrete blocks in front, perhaps for drainage. The trench was moss lined with

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small bridges leading across. Iron rings were mounted in the wall next to each small seat. I'm sure no one had been there in a very long time.

We returned to the trail and soon came to a point of the island where we could look across the harbour to Lawlor's Island. We walked along the beach and took the small natural causeway through the marsh at Green Hill Cove. We needed to poke about a bit to find a dry place to rejoin the Culliton Farm Trail and enter the woods again. The Culliton Farm Trail was wide and clear, easy hiking. We stopped at the site of an old farmstead on the left side of the trail. It was here that we met the first person on our hike after leaving the group at Garrison. I think most people had made their way to the north end of the



Judith at the searchlight emplacement at Strawberry Battery

island with the guided hikes. We took our time so the this part of our hike took about two hours. If you are looking for adventure and something a little different this hike certainly offers a unique opportunity to explore a little known part of the island.

We still had time left before needing to return to the boat and I had another look at the map. Neither of us had seen Strawberry Battery and we had energy to spare, so we decided to check it out. We found the Colin Stewart Trail off of the cut down to Fort McNab, found the Cliff Trail and continued on the western coast of the island. The weather for the Fall Foliage Tour was amazing and we could see across the harbour and watch boats meandering in the water. At one spot on the beach, someone had made an

Inukshuk, I couldn't resist taking a picture. We tried to find McNabs Pond Trail but somehow missed it and followed an animal made trail into the brush between what used to be McNab's Pond and the coast. Deer scat and some other droppings that looked a lot like dog (BIG dog) was scattered at intervals along the small track.

The going became rough and we decided to head out to the coast. We came out at one of the searchlight emplacements near the battery and decided to head inland straight through and see if we could find it. Our persistence paid off and we found the battery in short order. Once again the feeling while we were there was that few people ever found this place. We had it all to ourselves. For me it was so breathtaking to know that even on an island that I've been to and explored many times, I can still find some bit of history that I'd never seen before. When we left we decided to head towards the pond and try to find the McNabs Pond Trail. We succeeded, but this trail was very overgrown and had trees that must have been downed in Juan. We managed to head back and join up with the Garrison Road.

Our time was coming to a close. With the sun shining, we meandered along Maugers Beach but before we reached the end, the clouds opened up and sprinkled on us. We neared Garrison Pier and since the pump house was open so we had a look inside before we headed back to meet the return ferry.

For anyone who decides to try such a hike, wear good boots, preferably waterproof and take a backpack with supplies. We were glad to have a snack, water and a map. Our feet did get wet but it certainly didn't stop us on such a nice day. A walking stick might also help when things get a bit rough. It wasn't a hike for anyone not up to a bit of strenuous work, but it wasn't dangerous if you take you time and are always aware of the terrain. We both enjoyed it immensely.

Happy hiking!

by Theresa RolletMcWilliams

Notices



How can YOU help?

The Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on volunteer power, please consider giving a few hours of your time.

Do you have an interesting story about the Island? Submit it to the newsletter! Not all jobs take a lot of time, some can be one-time-only help with an event, doing call backs or mailing out the newsletter. Please contact the executive through our email address: mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca



McNabs Island Merchandise

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Email Updates

If you wish to receive updates about the status of McNabs Island by email, please send your contact information to:

mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca

Photo Credits for this Issue

If you attend any Friends of McNabs event and have some photos you think we'll be interested in, please email them to

theresa000@ns.sympatico.ca We prefer JPEG files that are 200 to 500 kb in size so that the quality in print is nice.

The historic photo of the Hugonin barracks was supplied by Barry Edwards.

Photos for the Fall Foliage article were supplied by Cathy McCarthy and Deborah White. Photos with the article about the south island were taken by the author.



Past McNabs resident Faye (Cleveland)
Power on the Fall Foliage Tour

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Willing to help out? _____

Annual membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society starts on the date of payment of dues and includes a year's subscription to the society's quarterly newsletter, *The Rucksack*. We thank you for your continued support and welcome your interest!

Send money or cheque, payable to:
The Friends of McNabs Island Society

PO Box 31240
Gladstone RPO
Halifax, NS
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or phone Carolyn Mont at 477-0187 for membership inquiries.



The society is a registered charity: CCRA number 88847 4194 RR 0001

The Rucksack is published by the **Friends of McNabs Island Society**.

Contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome.

Visit our website at: www.mcnabsisland.ca

Phone: Cathy (902) 434-2254 evenings

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