



The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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

Volume Twenty Eight Issue Two

2019

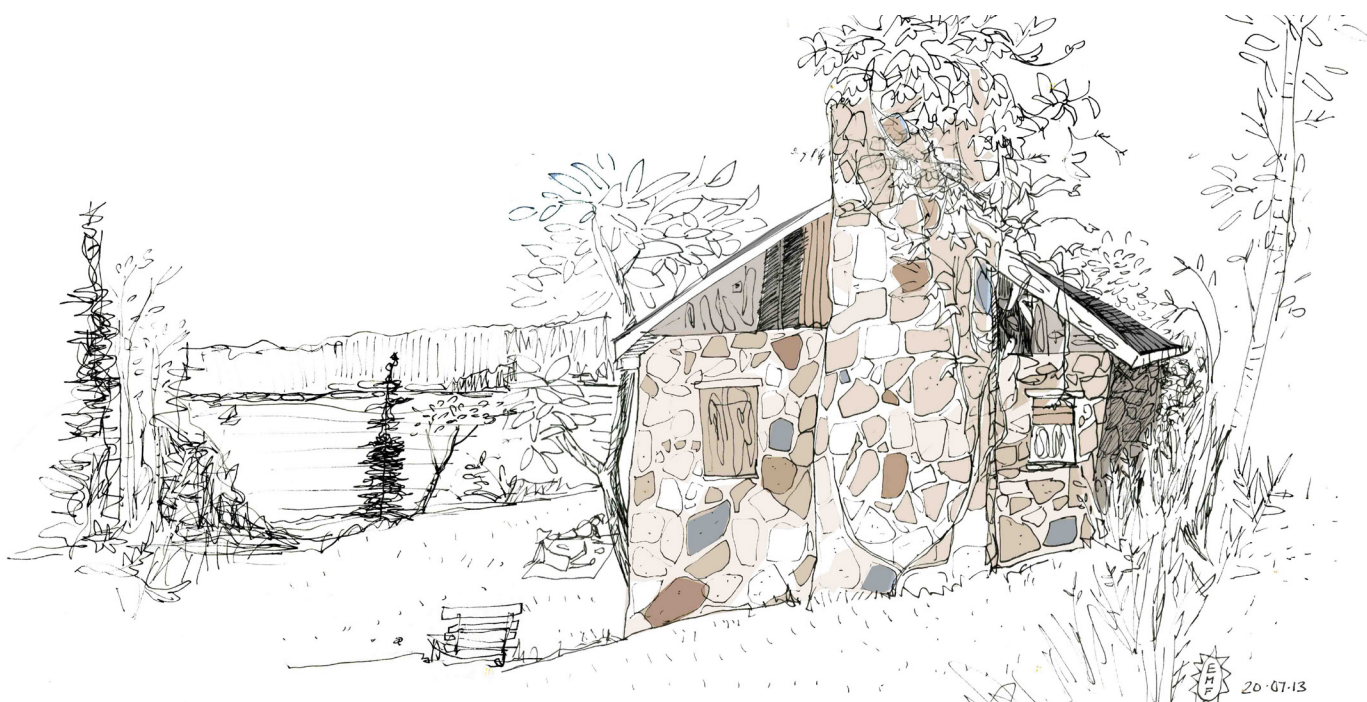
McNabs Island Teahouse Transformed

by Catherine McCarthy

Finally, we have raised enough money to begin to transform the abandoned Island Teahouse into an Island Centre, which will become a focal point for outdoor education and community activities on the island.

The location and character of the building has always been the appeal. Planted in the heart of the Hugonin-Perrin Victorian Gardens, this stone building overlooks Halifax Harbour and is not too far from Garrison Pier. John Jenkins, owner of the McNabs Island Ferry Company, built the Tea House in the 1980s. He salvaged stone from some of the nearby foundations to construct the Teahouse that operated as a café until 1994. The stone structure, which resembles a Scottish crofter's cottage, has been empty for the past 25 years!

Friends of McNabs Island volunteers have cleaned out the building, hauled away all the debris and now are ready to give this old building a new life. With the donated professional help of Harvey Architecture and BMR Structural Engineering, we have new plans for the building. (*con't ►*)



Drawing of the Teahouse
by Emma Fitzgerald - July 2013

Friends of McNabs Island Society

The Rucksack

Included with membership

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We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

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Content is for members' interest only.

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McNabs Island Teahouse Transformed (con't)

by Catherine McCarthy

Royce Walker and Brian Phelan have done an enormous amount of volunteer work on this project – working with suppliers, working with the government to get approval, and coordinating our volunteers. Gordon Warnica is volunteering his engineering services as our project manager.

Scotia Metals is giving us a discount on the metal roof and Metro Windows and Doors is discounting the price for new windows and doors. We will be installing skylights on the roof to let in natural light and converting the second storey loft into a mezzanine for storage. Solar panels will help power some basic equipment like laptops, cell phones and give us light during the dark winters.

Once the building is renovated, we will install interpretive panels, and will provide tables and benches for group activities. The building will be available for Friends of McNabs Island outdoor education programming and activities. Others, such as youth groups, schools and community groups will have access to the building too.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped with this project so far. Thanks for the financial support from long-time members Doris Schrader and Mary Ellen Donovan, the Sage Environmental Fund, Oceans North, Credit Union Atlantic, Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage and all our members and supporters who came out to our Good Robot Brewing fundraiser last fall.

It's wonderful to get this project off the ground. However, there is still an awful lot more to do. If you can help us with the renovations or assist financially, please contact us.

Letter to the Editor

We were pleased to hear from Angela, one of the participants of our popular Heritage Tours that we hosted this past summer. 07/23/19 Angela N. emailed:

Hi Cathy,

Just a quick email to say we thoroughly enjoyed the tour on Sunday. The staff were exceptional in their knowledge of the Island and although the temperatures were high, they made the trek unforgettable. Thank you to you & your organization for providing access to this local treasure. Every Nova Scotian should experience it!



Photo Credit
by Jacqueline Halsey

Regards, Angela

Volunteer Work Day on McNabs

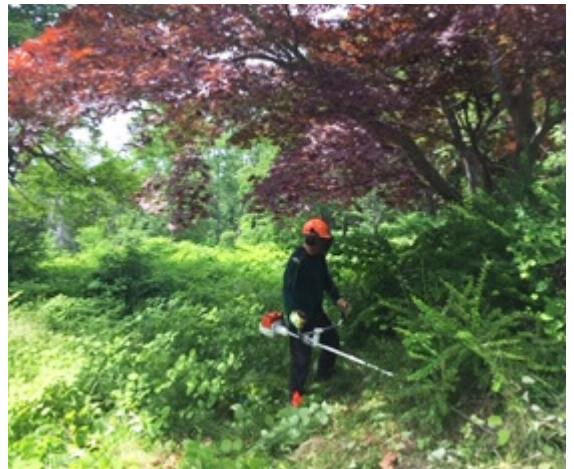
by Brian Phelan

The work party was Cathy Phelan, Manuel Moncayo-Adams and myself. The group was a little smaller than expected but we had a great day on the Island.

We used the Harbour Taxi and were on the Island at approximately 9:20 am and off the Island just before 4:00 pm. The brush saw worked like a charm and we put a pretty good dent in the knotweed. It was a bit on the warm side but we stayed hydrated. Manuel re-arranged the storage building a bit and now all 5 benches are in there. With tractor and trailer help, a work team of 4 could do the installation in a day.

I would like to schedule another volunteer workday at cutting the knotweed. Another good day would pretty much clear the rest of the terraced lawn area and the other areas of the English Garden.

If you are interested in helping with the English Gardens, get it touch with us - info@mcnabsisland.ca



Clearing the knotweed from English Garden area
by Brian Phelan

Volunteering, Environment, McNabs Island Annual Cleanup

by Kasia Johnson

What better way to spend your day than appreciating the world?

Taking part in the annual Friends of McNabs Island shore cleanup is a welcome opportunity to do just that.

“Travelling a short way by boat and spending a few hours tidying the nature around us is a modest commitment to make a significant difference for a greater cause. Naturally, only good can come from it.”

When I found out about the McNabs Island cleanup a few years ago through my mother who works at the law firm McInnes Cooper (who have participated for the past seven years), I immediately knew I wanted to join in.

I’ve always known volunteering would be part of my life, and most would agree that it is very important to help preserve the environment in any way possible, so I was excited to participate. Whether it surprises some that a fifteen year old highly enjoyed it, or whether it is expected that in my generation I would be more likely to gravitate to those sorts of events, I truly loved each excursion and would gladly sign up again.

The couple of times I have participated in the cleanup were so productive and gave me a fulfilling feeling. Walking through trails and picking up trash is tiring, but it definitely gives a feeling of achievement, which is why so many people take part every June.

It is of growing importance to take care of and restore our environment, but so many people find it difficult to find a way to contribute. The annual shore cleanup is a perfect opportunity to give back to the earth – more specifically, the beautiful and uniquely historic McNabs Island. (con’t ►)



McInnes Cooper Team
Kasia is second from left



Hauling away garbage Beach Cleanup 2019

Volunteering, Environment, McNabs Island Annual Cleanup (con't)

by Kasia Johnson

Events like the cleanup inspire individuals to continue this purposeful work. It is hard not to feel proud of taking a day to help sustain part of Nova Scotia's heritage and prized wilderness. It also encourages a greater sense of community, and sparks a deeper feeling of responsibility among the citizens of Halifax.

Participating in McNabs cleanup is a fantastic way to take part in the community. As a team, I feel we accomplished a lot in one day. It definitely shows how people can come together to help the environment around us.

Note from Editor: 2019 Annual beach cleanup had over 200 volunteers remove 350 bags of garbage, 50 lobster traps and large pieces of Styrofoam from the Island. This sadly brings us to 13,900 bags of garbage since 1991 and many other items, mostly plastics!

On April 8, 1866 - SS England arrives in Halifax.

by Royce Walker

On April 8, 1866 the SS England, sailing from Liverpool England for New York, arrived in Halifax with about 1200 German and Irish immigrants on board. Cholera had broken out during the Atlantic crossing and the ship was quarantined off McNabs Island.

“So began 10 days of hysteria and drama played out on McNabs Island.”

Four hundred sick were put aboard the ‘hulk’ Pyramus, which served as a hospital ship anchored next to the SS England, while the remainder were camped in tents on McNabs. The weather turned ‘cold and snowy’.

Before the epidemic ran its course, about 200 of the passengers and crew would perish in Halifax of cholera, starvation and exposure. Most were buried on the island.

On April 17, 1866, Dr. John Slayter died of cholera. He had lead the response to the epidemic on McNabs and he was the last person to die of cholera on the island. The SS England, having been fumigated and cleaned, sailed the same day bound for New York, with most of the passengers. Dr. Slayter was buried on the island the next day, April 18, 1866.

On May 17th, the approximately 50 passengers who had remained on McNabs to recover fully, left Halifax bound for New York on board the steamer Louisa Moore.



Image from www.norwayheritage.com

Parks Canada Halifax Defence Complex – Review 2019

by Royce Walker

As many of you will know, Fort McNab has been one of the five fortifications in Halifax that make up Parks Canada's Halifax Defence Complex (HDC). The Citadel, Georges Island, Prince of Wales Tower, York Redoubt and Fort McNab have been chosen, from the many fortifications in Halifax, to represent the evolution of the British military presence in Halifax since 1749.

Parks Canada reviews the Management Plan for the HDC on a 10 year cycle in order to keep the HDC Management Plan current with public expectations. 2019 is a review year for the Management Plan.

As Fort McNab is located on McNabs Island, and is an important historical and cultural resource in the park, it is important the Friends take part in the review process. On a cold, rainy April 3, Friends of McNabs members Ian Smith, Peter Landry and Royce Walker, all interested in military history in Halifax, joined Tony Loring and Danielle Hickey, at the Citadel to talk about Fort McNab, and the HDC. Tony and Danielle are responsible for gathering the public input in the first stage of the Parks Canada review process

Our meeting with Tony and Danielle presented a great opportunity to discuss Fort McNab and the HDC. We provided our thoughts and comments regarding Fort McNab, on behalf of our membership, and shared our observations about the visitor interest in Fort McNab, the Friends guided tours to the fort, and the very successful 'living historian' interpretation led by Liam Caswell in the past couple of years. We talked about the 'wow factor' visitors experience when they see the phenomenal views of the ocean and harbour from the ramparts of the fort.

Our meeting also presented us the opportunity to discuss collaboration by the Friends with Parks Canada, and the possibility for renewal of a formal agreement to allow the Friends to help with maintenance and projects at Fort McNab.



Aerial view of McNabs Island as part of Halifax Defence Complex



**Kelsey Walker and Liam Caswell
Military History Interpreters
Photo by Rochelle Owen**

Parks Canada Halifax Defence Complex – Review 2019 (con't)

by Royce Walker

At the meeting, Friends discussed the following points with Tony and Danielle:

- It is time for Parks Canada to support Fort McNab being a 'visitor destination' within the Halifax Defence Complex and McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park
- Formalize and operationalize policy in the site management plan regarding protection of the endangered barn swallows that call Fort McNab home
- Continued mitigation of public safety hazards
- Establish an appropriate ongoing maintenance program for the structures at Fort McNab
- Interpretation of Fort McNab - posted material / costumed historians / digital info / guides
- Defence Complex interpretation from McNabs
- Collaboration with Friends of McNabs Island
- Limited infrastructure - consider adding composting toilet / benches / shade
- View planes – identify and protect significant views from Fort McNab
- The management plan for Fort McNab should discourage 'special events' that draw large crowds given the barn swallow population and difficult logistics required for events.

Site vegetation control in Fort McNab, the McNab Family graveyard and other visitor areas

The HDC review will continue throughout the summer, and Parks Canada will summarize what they have heard, and issue a report back to the public. Check out more at the HDC review web page at letstalkparkscanadahalifax.ca

Friends of McNabs Island Society Official Citation

On July 10, 2019, we received the official Citation, with Seal of Nova Scotia affixed, acknowledging the work of The Friends of McNabs Island Society. The following was read into Hansard on October 10th, 2018:

Today, I would like to recognize the outstanding not-for-profit group called the Friends of McNabs Island Society. Cathy McCarthy and Royce Walker of the society put many long hours of hard work and dedication into advocating for such a treasured island.

They can count on sold-out tours year after year, annual cleanups, and maintaining the beautiful gardens, structures, walkways, and paths. All of this would not be possible without the dedicated board members, community volunteers, and a passion for preservation.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking the Friends of McNabs Island Society for its endless volunteer hours helping maintain the wonderful McNabs Island and our congratulations on another successful year.

Barbara Adams,

MLA, Cole Harbour Eastern Passage

We Are About To Be 30 Years Old!

2020 brings with it the 30th Anniversary of Friends of McNabs Island Society. The Society has cared for the Island: advocating for resources and putting in many volunteer hours to maintain its trails, structures and environment. Stay in touch to hear about our celebration plans and please...join us!

Where to Buy our Book

You can get your own copy of the Discover McNabs Island from Friends of McNabs Island and at the following locations in Halifax:

The Trail Shop - Quinpool Road
MEC - Granville Street
Bookmark Book Sellers - Spring Garden Rd
Canadian Museum of Immigration - Pier 21
Atlantic News - Morris Street
Maps and More - Lower Water Street
Carrefour Atlantique - Historic Properties

iNaturalist.ca

iNaturalist.ca is a place where you can record and share what you see in nature, meet other nature watchers and learn about other Canada's wildlife. By participating as a citizen scientist you can contribute to a growing wealth of knowledge of Canadian species and help conserve our natural world.



(Excerpt from www.iNaturalist.ca website)

McNabs Island has many species to record and submit -- come on over...but you can also start in your own back yard!

Annual Membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on the calendar year, includes a year's subscription to the society's newsletter and discounts at our events.

As a member, you will be supporting the ongoing care and appropriate development of this jewel in Halifax Harbour. The Friends advocate for funding to maintain the environment on the Island and participate in planning for the present and future well-being of the Island.

Renew Your Membership Now!

Thank you for your much needed continued support

Renew you membership directly via our website:

mcnabsisland.ca/membership-application

or send a cheque payable to:

The Friends of McNabs Island Society
PO box 31240, Gladstone RPO
Halifax, NS B3K 5Y1

The Society is a registered charity:
CCRA Number 88 474 194 RR0001

Visit our website or contact us info@mcnabsisland.ca or mcnabsisland.ca/contact
Cathy (902-434-2254).

For updates, follow us on facebook.com/McNabsIsland and Twitter [@mcnabsisland](https://twitter.com/mcnabsisland).

If you are already a member, invite your friends to join you. Talk to coworkers. As more people become aware of and support these gems, the better we will be able, together, to take care of them.

This issue went to print in October 2019
