

Rucksack Spring, Summer, Fall 1999

Index

- [Spring Cleanup of McNabs Island](#)
- [Exchange Students Discover McNabs Island](#)
- [McNabs Island Paddle and Clean-up](#)
- [Private Properties on Sale on McNabs](#)
- [Fall Foilage Meander on McNabs](#)
- [Nova Scotia Coastal Water Trail and McNabs Island](#)
- [Note from the Editor](#)

SPRING CLEAN-UP OF McNABS ISLAND

The Spring Beach Sweep, the Friends of McNabs Island Society's (FOMIS) seventeenth such event on McNabs Island, took place on June 6. Perfect weather helped to attract 190 volunteers, who collected 320 bags of refuse and twenty bags of recyclables. FOMIS started to clean the island's beaches in 1991, and has collected so far an impressive -or unimpressive, depending on how you look at it- 6,000 bags of beach litter. The event is part of a province-wide campaign under the leadership of The Clean Nova Scotia Foundation, with Moosehead Breweries being the major corporate sponsor.

The McNabs Island event receives financial support from the Halifax Defence Complex, a unit of Parks Canada, while Murphy's-on-the-Water provides a discount on charters of their flagship, the Haligonian III. The N.S. Department of Natural Resources provided invaluable material support in the person of David Seaboyer, the island's caretaker, and boatmen Mike Tilley of McNabs Island Ferry Company and Chris Naugle and Dave Phelps ferried the bagged garbage to a dumpster, provided free of charge by waste hauler BF1, on the mainland. A big "thank-you" to chief organizer Catherine McCarthy and to all sponsors and participants.

Dusan Soudek

EXCHANGE STUDENTS DISCOVER McNABS ISLAND

On a hot July Saturday, twenty one francophone students from Quebec had the opportunity to explore a unique part of Nova Scotia's natural and historical heritage -McNabs Island. They were here with the federally sponsored Summer Work Student Exchange program, a bilateral exchange program for sixteen and seventeen year old high school students. The program gives participants the opportunity to improve their knowledge of

Canada's other official language while working in their host community and learning more about the variety of cultures that make up Canada's cultural mosaic.

Although a beach clean-up had originally been planned with the help of Cathy McCarthy and the Friends of McNabs Island Society (FOMIS), wet weather earlier in the week forced cancellation of the event. Fortunately, and unusually for Nova Scotia, the weather improved on the weekend and the students were able to at least visit some of the island's many historical landmarks.

Armed with the society's guide, *Discover McNabs Island*, and the accompanying map, program coordinators took the visiting students on a tour of the island's past. The morning was spent touring the northern part of the island, including the Conrad-Lynch estate and the old pleasure grounds from the days when the island was the social hot spot in the city. The group took a break at Fort Ives, allowing the students to get a hands-on experience with the old harbour defences. The return trip was interrupted briefly for a few stories of buried treasure on the island at Findlays Cove, drawn from *Discover McNabs Island*. Of course, treasure stories lead inevitably to ghost stories, and there are a few of those about previous McNabs Island residents as well. We had a picnic lunch at the site of the former Island Teahouse, a perfect location with its lawn and its large trees, offering a little relief from the sun. While walking around the area, students discovered the remains of Findlay Farm.

Once rejuvenated, we set out again. This time we headed south, climbing Jenkins Hill and then following a small and somewhat dubious trail back down to Garrison Road. We walked along Maugers Beach to reach the lighthouse, and back along Hangmans beach to Strawberry Battery. Unfortunately, the trail we had intended to take back to the beach, McNabs Pond Trail, sort of petered out well short of the beach, and a good half hour was spent looking for the bridge that we discovered had been long since removed. Still, this little detour did allow us to find a huge patch of raspberries, and we did make it back to the wharf in time to catch the ferry.

All in all, the exchange students had a great day, and learned quite a bit about a part of Halifax's history that remains obscure to far too many of the city's own residents.

Catherine McCarthy

McNABS ISLAND PADDLE AND CLEAN-UP

On September 19, two days after the remnants of Hurricane Floyd whipped the waters of Halifax Harbour, eight canoeists and kayakers gathered at Dooks Wharf in Shearwater. Several others had to be turned away due to lack of suitable equipment and/or experience, as it was uncertain whether the winds and waves will have abated by Sunday. However, the weather was perfect, with a gentle morning landbreeze blowing from the northwest, carrying us towards Back (Wreck) Cove. We stopped at Farrels Point and at several other small beaches on the "back" side of McNabs Island and collected litter, usually plastic and glass. At the sheltered Back Cove we had a lunch, and walked the portage trail to McNabs Pond. After considering our strengths and weaknesses, the chances of strong headwinds in the open harbour, and the time of the day, we decided to change our itinerary. Rather than crossing the island via the McNabs Pond route, involving two easy portages, to McNabs Cove and then circumnavigating the northern half of the island, we decided to stay in the relatively sheltered Eastern Passage and to focus on Lawlor Islands shorelines instead.

We stopped at the tiny Quarantine Station cemetery on the northern tip of Lawlor Island and then proceeded to the narrows separating Lawlor Island from McCormack Beach. Here we collected several dozen bags of beach litter. Conveniently, at about one o'clock, the wind reversed itself after about fifteen minutes of turbulence, and we were able to return to Dooks Wharf with a stiffening seabreeze at our backs. What a treat! Several keen members of our group chose to circumnavigate Lawlor Island before calling it a day.

We left about fifty stacked bags of litter at several strategic locations, as the McNabs Island Ferry Company was not available for pick-up. The bags were later kindly collected by David Phelps. The second annual McNabs Island Paddle and Clean-up was co-sponsored by The Friends of McNabs Island Society (FOMIS) and by the Environment Committee of Canoe Nova Scotia. See you next year!

Dusan Soudek

PRIVATE PROPERTIES FOR SALE ON McNABS

Yes, it is true. Two of the three or four small private properties on McNabs Island, remnants of long-ago attempts to subdivide the island and turn it into cottage country, are on the market. Both properties are land-locked.

The Jones property, asking price \$ 60,000, is located on Garrison Road directly across from Fort Hugonin and contains a somewhat decrepit cottage. It has seen very little use in the last five or so years.

The other parcel of land, the Taylor property (\$74,000), sits in the vicinity of the Matthew Lynch House and the Conrad-Davis House on the northern tip of the island, and also includes a cottage.

While the future use, including potential subdivision and development, of the two properties is largely precluded by the fact that the entire island is zoned as "parkland", it would be extremely useful if they were included in the future McNabs Island Provincial Park.

The federal-provincial Land Use Strategy for McNabs and Lawlor Islands, released in November 1998, agrees, stating that the "acquisition of the balance of private lands there is seen as the highest priority".

However, the N.S. Department of Natural Resources is pleading poverty. A private group involved in the purchase of ecologically significant parcels of real estate, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, is likewise unable to help.

The board of directors of the Friends of McNabs Island Society (FOMIS) is considering our alternatives, including a major fund-raising drive. Potential benefactors, considering purchasing one or both of the McNabs Island properties and donating them to Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Nova Scotia. i.e. to the public, for a charitable donation receipt should contact FOMIS director Cohn Stewart at 466-7168 or cstewart@chebucto.ns.ca.

Dusan Soudek

FALL FOLIAGE MEANDER ON McNABS

The annual Fall Foliage Foray of McNabs Island held Sunday, October 17, attracted visitors of all ages, from toddlers to octogenarians. About 135 people ventured from Halifax and Eastern Passage to McNabs for a day of island meandering. The weather was perfect with strong southerly breezes and warm temperatures. It seemed more like late August than late October. The warm weather even coaxed a garter snake out onto the warm rocks for sunbathing.

The island adventure -sponsored by the Friends of McNabs Island Society- included guided lighthouse, nature and history walks. Visitors could participate in a combination of tours that included a tour of the historic

homes and a lighthouse. Dan Conlin and Tim Hall of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society guided visitors through the Mangers Beach Lighthouse and recounted the history of the island's lights. The view of the island, harbour and the shores of Purcells Cove from the top of Mangers Light is one of the best views anywhere in Nova Scotia. Biologist Mike Crowell led those interested in the island's natural history on a tour around McNabs Pond to Strawberry Battery and then to Fort McNab. The group observed the effects of autumn storms that had transported tons of eel grass up onto Mangers Beach. Many visitors stopped along the way to gather a few hips from the salt-spray roses.

Island historian Barry Edwards handed out 'tar-baby' licorice has its origins as a child's treat handed out during public hangings centuries ago. Barry told visitors of the macabre history of Hangman's Beach and the British Admiralty's policy on punishment of those who refused to follow orders. Barry's history tour travelled to the north-end of the island, past the abandoned Teahouse and the Findlay Farm.

Eventually the walk reached the historic island houses that were once part of the McNabs Island community. Visitors were permitted to tour the inside of the Davis-Conrad and the Matthew Lynch houses. These properties, once part of the Conrad-Lynch estate, were bought by the province in 1986 and have been maintained by Natural Resources ever since. The Friends of McNabs Island and other groups have long supported that these houses should be converted into an outdoor education or interpretation centre. For now, they remain empty and unused.

The Fall Foliage Foray could not have been successful without the support of the many volunteers who donated their time, enthusiasm and energy to our favourite island. Thanks to Judith Campbell and Victor Dingle for "house-sitting" the Conrad and Lynch houses for the afternoon. Thanks to our tour leaders Dan Conlin, Tim Hall, Mike Crowell and Barry Edwards for introducing the island to old and new friends. Thanks to Murphy's-on-the-Water for providing free passage for our tour leaders. Thanks to Jillian Craig of Bell & Grant Insurance for arranging our insurance coverage on the government-owned houses for the day. A special thank-you goes to our co-sponsoring organizations and their volunteers, in particular Kathy Brown of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society and Marie Moverley of the Halifax Field Naturalists. We look forward to a continued partnership with the many organizations that share our interest in McNabs Island.

Catherine McCarthy

NOVA SCOTIA COASTAL WATER TRAIL AND McNABS ISLAND

Work is ongoing on the Nova Scotia Coastal Water Trail (NSCWT), a first of its kind in the Atlantic provinces, which will designate coastal water routes and services for recreational boaters in the province. The goals of the project, funded by the Ecology Action Centre, are to ensure that services are provided to improve boater safety, encourage economic support of coastal communities by boaters, and to promote conservation of the coastal resource.

The project, which is now entering its second year, has begun developing the trail in its pilot area which runs from Eastern Passage to Lunenburg so McNabs Island is included as one of the first attractions designated for recreational boaters at its eastern end.

This stage of the project includes meeting with community groups to confirm and develop sites already identified, and preparing a trail guide for the opening of the pilot area this summer. Activities, which the trail will promote, include enjoyment of natural settings as well as boater support of coastal services and accommodations.

As the trail is developed, one of the issues that have become very important to the project is the lack of public coastal wilderness for mooring, landing, and camping. This is partially due to the purchase and development of coastal lands for residential use.

In the past, private ownership has been less of an impediment to recreational boaters enjoyment of coastal lands, but presently many new land owners do not appreciate the importance of the tradition of boating in our culture, and do not welcome boaters access to private lands traditionally used for recreation.

Within the pilot area we have been lucky to identify public wilderness areas such as McNabs Island, where boaters can enjoy the island experience - particularly one so close to a major urban centre. We commend the persistence of the Friends of McNabs Island Society (FOMIS) in pursuing a long-term vision of the island as a public wilderness area, which they have been lobbying for despite the spectrum of proposals that have been put forward for the island's development.

The NSCWT coordinator, Sue Brown, has met with the FOMIS board of directors to discuss the way in which can be used by NSCWT members. The next step is to clarify the province's plans for the island.

In the process of bringing McNabs Island into the water trail, one of the project's first priorities is to ensure that our work supports the efforts of FOMIS. The water trail's objective is to create a membership of boating stewards who will participate, along with local communities and groups, in maintaining well-kept sites of interest as well as access to these locations.

The trail coordinator looks forward to an ongoing partnership with FOMIS in preserving the public use and wilderness state of McNabs Island. Those who would like more information are encouraged to contact Sue Browne at 852-3082 or at seatrail@istar.ca.

Caroline Cameron

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This is my last issue of The Rucksack. I put together my first issue of the newsletter in June 1993, having taken over from its founding editor David Smith. The next four or five issues were edited and produced by Anne Marie Feetham, and I took over again in the spring of 1995 with Issue One of Volume Four. For some time now it was clear to me that The Rucksack needed a new editor, but the board of directors of our society hasn't been able to find one until now. And so we will start the new millennium, i.e. Volume Eight, Number Four (Winter 2000), afresh. Happy reading! And, ugh, sorry about the lateness of the last few issues.

Dusan Soudek