



The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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Winter/Spring 2013

How do we make McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park relevant in the Halifax urban context?

By Patricia Manuel

This is the question posed last fall to 17 senior students in **Dalhousie University's School of Planning**, Bachelor of Community Design Program. With the help of professors **Patricia Manuel** and **John Zuck**, they set out to find the answer.

Students were given the challenge of investigating McNabs Island's potential as a "central" park for HRM. They needed to address two related questions: What is needed to make the park function as a major urban park? And, how do coastal processes affect park management plans and programming?

From September to December, the students immersed themselves in McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park learning all they could about the islands. Applying principles of environmental planning and urban design, they identified and developed options for the park based on broad concepts of urban context, park access and infrastructure, and factors pushing and pulling people toward the park.

The School of Planning has a long tradition of using McNabs Island as a teaching space and learning experience. Both Professors Manuel and Zuck know the island well and fully appreciate its value as a space for education, research, natural and cultural heritage protection and interpretation, and recreation. The puzzle is why a place of such huge potential is so underutilized.



**Dalhousie profs and planning students
returning from McNabs Island**

The students will talk about their findings through an illustrated presentation at the **Friends of McNabs Island Society's AGM on April 15th**

**Friends of McNabs Island Society's
23rd Annual General Meeting
Monday, April 15th, 7:00 pm
Small Craft Gallery
Maritime Museum of the Atlantic
1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax**

Can McNabs Island become HRM's Central Park? An illustrated talk by Dalhousie University Community Design Students, with professors Patricia Manuel and John Zuck

Friends of McNabs Island Society The Rucksack

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We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

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McNABS ISLAND PROJECTS FOR 2013

By Catherine McCarthy



New kiosk near Garrison Pier

Those who visited McNabs this winter will have noticed that Natural Resources has built a kiosk shelter near Garrison Pier. The design used is the same as kiosks in other provincial parks. When finished, this kiosk will serve as a trailhead orientation post and shelter for visitors. Interpretation panels and a large map will be installed to help visitors navigate their way to the numerous historic sites and features of interest on the island. Park benches will be added and the kiosk will also serve as a waiting area where visitors can pass the time waiting for their transportation back to the mainland.

This year the Friends of McNabs Island hope to raise enough funds to pay for the design and installation of the map and interpretation panels for the kiosk. Eventually, we hope to install a similar information trailhead kiosk near Wreck Cove and a smaller kiosk near Fort Ives. We also want to link the map and information to our website via QR (quick response) codes, and add GPS (global positioning system) coordinates pinpointing island trails and features.

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Cont'd — McNabs Island Project 2013



**British WD survey marker
on McNabs**



Design for new trail markers

New trail directional signs are also planned for this year. Currently, there are no trail signs on McNabs: the signs that the Friends of McNabs put up in the 1990s have all been stolen or destroyed by vandals. The design for the new trail markers will be similar in style to the old granite British War Department survey markers found all over the island.

All these plans are contingent on raising enough funds for the project. If you can help us in any way, please let us know.

McNabs Christmas Bird Count

By: Dave Currie (Nova Scotia Bird Society)

Mike King, the compiler for the Halifax/Dartmouth bird count sent the McNabs' results:

The list in no particular order is: Canada Goose, Common Loon, Herring Gull, Great-black-backed Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, American Black Duck, Common Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Double-crested Cormorant, Black Guillemot, Bald Eagle, Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, American Goldfinch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Junco, Song Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, European Starling, American Crow, Common Raven, Downy Woodpecker and Hairy Woodpecker



Boreal Chickadee



Black Guillemot



Yellow-breasted Chat

Memories of McNabs

By: Wendy Hayes

I grew up on stories of my mother's childhood on McNabs Island. Her parents, Ernest and Annie Farrant along with my Uncle Don and Aunt Ruth, emigrated from England and moved into the old Findlay Farm, in 1923. Ernest purchased the farm from his sister Constance's husband, Arthur James (A.J.) Davis. He had a summer house on the island. My mother, Joyce and her sister Jean were born the following year, my Uncle Bob the next. My grandparents would live on McNabs until the early 70s.

My grandfather set about farming, vegetables mostly, and I know that in the thirties he ran a small dairy farm on the island which he called McNabs Island Dairy. He supplied the forts with milk and vegetables. One of the chores the children had was driving the cows to one of the Thrumcaps to graze. My mother spoke of one time when they almost got cut off from McNabs by the incoming tide. Ernest also kept a few horses. In the 40s, my grandfather tried his hand at raising rabbits.



My grandfather in his garden (1960s)

That wasn't overly successful as many of them managed to escape. The story goes that he neglected to put wire mesh at the bottom of their pens and the rabbits dug their way out. My father spoke of the time when he went to the island to pay my mother a visit and instead of the courting he had in mind, he ended up chasing stray rabbits. I have often wondered if the wild rabbit population on the island isn't the result of my grandfather's errant bunnies

My grandfather played a small part in McNab history. When Ellen McNab died in the early 30s he was asked to transport her body to the cemetery. The wagon was painted black and with stove blacking he covered the star on his black horse's forehead, in keeping with the solemn occasion. He always said that he had buried the last McNab.

Besides the chores that all the children had, my mother also got a job delivering Mr. Perrin's newspaper. She would pick it up from the boat and bring it to his house for a dime a week. There was a dog at the house that she was deathly afraid of, with good reason, it once bit her. It left her with a permanent scar. It didn't, however, stop her from delivering the paper.

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Cont'd - Memories of McNabs



Farrant Home—taken from Farrant Road with the Hugonin-Perrin Carriage Road to right



My grandmother
Annie Farrant (1924)

I don't know of too many people who went to school in a fort but my mother did, Fort Hugonin. Some of the classmates that she used to speak of were Grover Cleveland, Jack Lynch, who later married her sister Ruth, Harold Curran, and the Faders. Then of course, there was Miss Aikenhead, one of their teachers. My mother probably remembered her because she punished her for pushing an outhouse over, with a boy inside. He had apparently teased her twin sister.

Life on McNabs wasn't just chores and school. According to my mother the children had a lot of fun too. There was skating and sledding in the winter. My grandfather didn't get the hang of sledding which the kids had convinced him to try. They'd be yelling for him to lift his feet, which he'd never do, resulting in him rolling down the hill like a giant snowball. The kids meanwhile were doubled over with laughter at the top. In the summer, there was fishing and swimming and an entire island to explore. My mother and her siblings were always musically inclined. They played guitar, fiddle, and mandolin. In the evenings they would listen to the soap operas on the radio.

My recollections

I remember the house on McNabs very well. To me, the house was a mansion. Downstairs it had two parlors in the front and in the back, the kitchen, with its big wood stove, and the dining room. Upstairs there were at least 4 bedrooms. Outside there was the barn and a couple of outbuildings. A great place in which to explore. Growing up I visited my grandparents there every summer. We'd catch the duty boat on the Halifax docks and motor over to the island. I don't think that that boat sat more than an inch out of the water.

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Conclusion — Memories of McNabs

My grandfather would usually be waiting on Garrison Pier with a wheelbarrow to take our bags up to the house. I loved that house even if it had no electricity or running water. That was part of its charm. My grandmother had beautiful flower gardens around it. She especially loved her pansies. I know because I once picked her a bouquet of them. She thanked me but told me that I should just let them grow.

We used to pretend to lock each other in the brink, something that my mother and her siblings couldn't do. Fort McNab was occupied when they were young. I also remember the ponies, my grandfather's nemesis. They liked jumping the fence in the back pasture to get into his garden. I can still see my grandfather waving a rake to chase them out of the garden. My cousins tried to ride the ponies but I never did. I have fond memories of fishing off the government wharf. I once pulled the jaw out of a fish. That's all that was on my line, a set of teeth! My cousins never believed me. I first read "Hangman's Beach" in the house on the island by the light of a kerosene lamp. Afterwards, I saw Maugher's Beach in a whole new light. It was interesting to visit the cemetery and see, on the headstones, the names of people mentioned in the novel.



**My cousin Bev, my friend and me on Garrison Pier
(1962)**



**My mother (Joyce Farrant)
in the backyard (1940s)**

My cousin Bev (Jean's daughter) and I visited McNabs about six years ago. Neither of us had been back in decades. The road leading to the house that army trucks could have driven on, was now a narrow overgrown path. The pastures were gone and a forest had grown in their place. All that was left of our grandparents' home were a few clapboards. It was almost as if the Farrants had never existed but we have our memories and those that were passed on to us by our parents.

Wendy grew up in Montreal but spent part of every summer on McNabs visiting her grandparents, Ernest and Anne Farrant. She is now retired and living in Brockville, Ontario.

McNabs Island on CTV Atlantic Morning Live

By Oskana Atwood



Royce Walker tells CTV Morning Live viewers about the Hugonin-Perrin Victorian Gardens in front of the old Teahouse

On November 12, Cyril Lunney, the CTV Atlantic personality and host of Morning Live (Breakfast Television), visited McNabs Island for a TV segment that aired later that week. There were six McNabs segments that included a beach cleanup, a visit to the old McNabs bottle plant, the Victorian Gardens and Fort Ives. The segments were part of "Outdoor Week" and though they aired for about two minutes each, took over four hours to film.

Filming behind the scenes was fascinating for the Friends of McNabs, who volunteered for the day, and got to see the local celebrity and Heather, his camera woman, set up each shot. Lunney, who is known to do just about anything for the show, did a mini cleanup on Maugers Beach, visited the Victorian Gardens on the grounds of the former

Hugonin-Perrin Estate, and the site of the old A.J. Davis Soda Pop Factory where a special beverage called "Pure McNab" was made. Ceramic shards from the original bottles are often found among the ruins and placed on the walls of the foundation to make a natural museum for the next visitor to explore.

Cyril and Heather left the island with a new appreciation for this island treasure and vowed to return. We're sure his viewers enjoyed seeing his unique perspective into McNabs Island Provincial Park. Keep an eye out for our celebrity friend of McNabs, you may just see him hiking one day on our beloved island!



Carolyn Mont tells the story of Hangman's Beach

Fall Foliage Tour: Sunday October 14, 2012

By Oksana Atwood

Each fall, over 200 people start planning their routes, setting out their hiking shoes and finding their cameras to prepare for an annual adventure on McNabs Island. The public purchase tickets for the boat ride and venture to the Island where they participate in free tours exploring the many historic sites and natural areas.

This year, the trekkers showed up prepared for typical

Nova Scotia weather with trace showers in the morning and temperatures only to 10 ° C in the afternoon. What are the best things to pack for a day like that? A rain-jacket, a good set of shoes, plenty of food and water, a map and the desire for adventure! Each season highlights different aspects of the island, and though it's cooler in the fall, the fallen leaves expose the ruins of buildings and old forts, and open up vistas.

The tours varied from Carolyn Mont's Hangman's Beach (book) tour, Mike Crowell's wildlife and nature tour to Royce Walker's history tour. There was even a tour offered in French led by Rachel Mansfield. To round off the variety, I offered a tour focusing on the tragedy of the S.S. England, a ship stricken with cholera that was quarantined off McNabs in 1866. Frequent visitors often have a favorite area of the island, but during the Fall Foliage tours opportunities abound to discover other areas, which reveal different stories about McNabs Island Provincial Park.

FRIENDS OF McNABS ISLAND EVENTS 2013



**McNabs Island Beach Cleanup,
Sunday June 2nd (rain date—June 9)
Time: 10am—5pm**



Kick off environmental Week by helping the Friends of McNabs Island Society cleanup McNabs and Lawlor Island Provincial Park! Location: meet at Murphy's on the water, Cable Wharf, on the Halifax Waterfront by 9:30 am. Space is limited to 190 people so everyone MUST register to guarantee passage to McNabs. Separate transportation from Eastern Passage will be provided, if needed. Bring work gloves, drinking water, a lunch and **ENTHUSIASM**. We will supply the garbage bags and **FREE** transportation to the island for volunteers willing to clean up the beaches.

To register with the Friends of McNabs Island contact: Fay (443-1749) or Cathy (434-2254 evenings) or mcnabs@chebuto.ns.ca

Over the past 23 years volunteers have collected more than **10,600 bags of garbage and recyclables** from the beaches of McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park

**Fall Foliage Tours of McNabs Island
Sunday October 20 (rain date October 27)
Time: 10 am - 5 pm**



Join the Friends of McNabs Island Society for the annual Fall Foliage Tour of McNabs Island Provincial Park. See the island in its autumn splendour and participate in guided history and nature tours. Wear comfortable shoes, and bring a lunch and drinking water.

Location: Meet at Murphy's on the Water, Cable Wharf on the Waterfront by 9:30 am. Space on the boat is limited to 190 people. Separate transportation from Eastern Passage will be provided, if needed.

Cost: \$12 (members and children) \$15 (non-members). Tickets must be purchased in advance through www.ticketatlantic.com or at Superstore outlets. Check website later for more details.

Larger groups should pre-register with the Friends of McNabs Island by contacting Faye (443-1749) or Cathy (434-2254 evenings) or mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca

Annual membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on the calendar year 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 cheque, payable to: **The Friends of McNabs Island Society**
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Phone Jon Cusick at 404-1939 for membership inquiries.

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