



# *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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Fall 2013/Winter 2014

## **McNabs Island Trail Plan**

By: Catherine McCarthy

The Department of Natural Resources ((DNR) decided that they needed to do a new trail plan of the island and contracted the project out to RMA Tourism in Parrsboro. RMA has no experience on McNabs so subcontracted some of the ground work out to Bob Guscott, a retired DNR forester and Garnet McLaughlin, who rebuilt the trails along Teahouse Lane and through the Victorian Gardens for the Friends of McNabs in 2012. Both Bob and Garnet are familiar with McNabs.



**Fraser Farm Trail**

The trail plan was supposed to be finished long ago, but we haven't seen a final version yet. We did see a draft in September. The draft plan suggests that several trails be phased out and closed. The list includes: Hugonin Point Trail, sections of the Old Military Road, Farrant Road, Fraser Farm .

Trail, Hermits Trail, Howe Street, McNabs Pond Trail, the Cliff Trail, Searchlight Road, the Rifle Range and several unnamed short-cut trails in the south end. (Please refer to our map online or in our brochure if you are not familiar with the trails mentioned).

The Friends of McNabs opposes closing many of these trails and have provided feedback to DNR through the McNabs and Lawlor Islands Park Advisory Committee.

The draft trail plan calls for new coastal trails to be built around the eastern side of the island connecting Indian Point to Timmins Cove and then around to Wreck Cove and cutting a new trail in to meet up with the Pumphouse Road which leads to Garrison Road. Another coastal trail is planned in the south end connecting the Searchlights via Culliton Point to Green Hill Cove. The Friends cautiously supports a coastal trail from Timmins to Indian Point, but not at the expense of closing both the Fraser Farm and Hermits trails. We do NOT support a coastal trail through any of the environmental protection zones on the island from Timmins Cove southward.

Another suggested new trail would be from Indian Point through the extensive Hurricane Juan blow-down area bypassing the Hurshman property and connecting to the base of Howe Street between the former Roman Catholic Church site and the Hurshmans. This would be a welcome addition to the trail system as this area has been completely impassible since Juan. It would also avoid the necessity of walking in front of George and Amber Hurshman's trailer to get from Ives Cove to Indian Point.

**Friends of McNabs Island Society  
The Rucksack**

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**MEMBERSHIPS:** Individual Membership or Newsletter Only is \$20 per year, Family Membership is \$25 per year, Supporting Membership is \$75 per year and Sustaining Membership is \$150 per year. We are a registered charity and accept donations.

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*We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.*

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**McNabs Island Tail Plan—cont'd from Page 1**

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Realigning Garrison Road is also recommended in the draft trail plan. Details on exactly how this main road will be realigned are sketchy, though anyone who has visited the island in recent years knows this has to be a priority. The road is eroding rapidly along Finlay Cove and in front of Garrison Pier.

Natural Resources has not indicated how they plan to pay for implementing any of the recommendations in this trail plan. As far as we know, their budget for the island has not increased. All recent trail improvements have been thanks to the Friends of McNabs Island. Since 2009 we have raised \$500,000 for island trail and Infrastructure improvements.



**View of Halifax Harbour near Cliff Trail**

## ***Hugonin Battery Finally Part of Provincial Park***

The Department of National Defence closed Hugonin Battery in 1993 and declared the property surplus a few years later. Now twenty years later, the 11-hectare property has finally been transferred to the provincial government to become part of the provincial park.

The battery was named after Roderick Hugonin who married into the McNab family. It was constructed in 1899 as a quick fire battery and officer's quarters. The guns supported Fort McNab and Fort Ives and protected the minefield in the main Halifax Harbour channel. The battery was active during both world wars; during WWII it served as a degaussing station. Degaussing is a process which cancels the magnetic field on ships so that they wouldn't trigger magnetic mines laid in shipping lanes. Between the wars, the officer's quarters was transformed into a school for island children. Then during the Cold War and up until 1993, the battery served as a listening post which monitored ship traffic coming into Halifax Harbour.



Hugonin Barracks c. WW1

You may recall that in 2008, DND planned to demolish this historic structure and only reconsidered when we sent Defence Minister Peter MacKay this photo (attached) taken in WWI. Eventually the 2nd storey addition was removed leaving the original 1899 officers quarters.

The property transferred to the Province includes Hugonin Point which tells one of the sadder stories in McNabs' history. It is one of the burial sites for hundreds of cholera victims who succumbed to the disease aboard the SS England quarantined off McNabs in 1866.

## ***MCNABS FALL FOILAGE TOURS 2013***



Arborists Brian & Cathy Phalen pruned the historic apple tree in the McNab Family Homestead during Fall Foliage Tours.



Island visitors on the steps of historic Conrad-Davis House during the Fall Foliage Tours

## Returning to McNab's Island, August 2013 By Sherry Trethewey Caldwell

*Holding her up, he pushes, but will never  
Help her steer. She remembers it all as home.  
McNab's Island, half a century gone,  
The man on a bicycle is pedaling  
To work, drifting into a distant hill.  
A handsome man in uniform, her father.  
He calls her Jim, lets her ride sometimes,  
Though her feet can't quite reach the pedals.*

From the poem, "Life Story" in EVENING KNOWLEDGE 1991  
by Eric Trethewey

The young girl in the poem is my mother and the writer of the poem is my brother Eric, who put together remnants of stories told to us by our mother, **Bonnie Frederick Trethewey MacPhee** (1922-2002). The "handsome man in uniform" is our grandfather, Bill Frederick, who worked and lived on McNabs first, as a soldier and later, as a farm foreman for the Davis and Fraser Company near Indian Point.

Having grown up on the island for the first 12 years of her life, our mother would often regale us with story nuggets from her childhood paradise, McNabs. Later on, she became a member of the Friends of McNabs Island Society, a group dedicated to the preservation of the island. It was on one of the Society's special tour days several years ago that I had the opportunity to visit McNabs for the first time. My second visit was this past August when my siblings, our families and I booked a charter boat from Eastern Passage to return our mother to McNabs.

*When you take your first steps off the boat,  
the dock is sturdy, leads you toward a beach  
of glistening slate. Then, up a steep ascent  
damp, slippery, a climb in the gospel sense  
of the word. Your reward lies in the wild ferns on the outskirts  
of the fort scattered thick patches of soft tendrils, the late  
morning sun making ado of the unfolding, highlighting sacred  
places where such feral things grow.*

From the poem, "Mooring, McNab's Island"

by Kelley Shinn, 2013



Bonnie Frederick Trethewey MacPhee's  
family on McNabs Island last August

## ***Cont'd - Returning to McNab's Island***

*By Sherry Tretheway Caldwell*

This time, we were accompanied by great grandchildren and by a very informed guide from the Society, Faye Power, who also grew up on the island though many years after my mother's departure.

We explored the area around the "big" house and were invited to see the inside of a privately-owned cottage which may have been on the same site that my grandfather built two small homes many years before. Picnicking and playing on the surrounding grounds and inhaling the fragrance of the wood ferns with which our mother had had a life-long love affair, we came to understand how a child could thrive in this idyllic place called McNabs.

We gathered on the steps of the big house for photographs and sat in the shade of the surrounding trees where we imagined our mother had played. My brother read from his poem, "Life Story", which imagines the final departure of our mother from the island.

We ate blueberry cake reminiscent of the blueberry desserts that our mother made for us from the blueberries we gathered as children. Our niece, Robyn, waded into a nearby stand of tall ferns and, in a loving, languid motion, sprinkled her great grandmother's ashes. We cried, we hugged, we laughed, thankful for this tiny, rich moment of connection.

*A granddaughter spreads her ashes  
amongst the wild ferns that rise up to the hips.  
Flecks of bone free-wheel over the fiddleheads...*

From the poem, "Mooring, McNab's Island" by Kelley Shinn, August 2013

*(Ed. note: Bonnie MacPhee was interviewed for our book Discover McNabs Island and described life on the island in the 1930s)*

### ***McNabs Island Teacher Celebrates 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday!!***

Elizabeth (Eppie) Graves Webster Karrigan taught on McNabs Island during the 1930s when the school was located in Fort Hugonin. Joan Cleveland McGregor was one of her Grade 2 students. Eppie boarded with Joan's parents, Colin and Glennie Cleveland, lighthouse keepers who lived in the lighthouse off Old Military Road.

Joan's family kept in touch with Eppie all these years and on July 6, 2013, Joan, accompanied by her sister, Faye Power attended Eppie's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party in Kingston, NS.



*From L-R: Faye Power, Eppie Kerrigan  
and Joan McGregor.*

## ISLAND UPDATES

### Want to be a Tour Guide?

We get a lot of requests for guided tours and don't always have the volunteers to lead them. Royce Walker has given many, many tours of the island over the years and has offered to lead a training session for would-be McNabs Island guides. If you have an interest in island history or the natural environment and would like to become a tour guide, please contact Royce at 902-462-7346 or [roycewalker@eastlink.ca](mailto:roycewalker@eastlink.ca).

### Discover McNabs Island

Our self-published popular guidebook needs a distributor. If you want to help us get the books out around town and make sure the local bookstores and gift shops have their copies, please contact Faye Power at 902-443-1749 or [fayepower@hotmail.com](mailto:fayepower@hotmail.com).

### Pizza on McNabs?

Anton Self, who owned the former Taylor cottage across from the Conrad House, has lost his 15,540 sq. ft. property on the island in a mortgage foreclosure sale. The new owner Ziad Farid, who owns a pizza shop on Agricola Street, bought the property for \$120,000. Surprisingly, the Department of Natural Resources didn't even bid on the property. When asked why, the response was that the Department has a process for acquiring property and would have needed cabinet approval. We wonder if Zach Churchill, the new Minister of Natural Resources was even aware of the sale.

### Briginoli (Jones) (McKay) Property now part of the Park

The province has purchased the 1.8 ha Briginoli property from Richard Briginoli's estate for \$111,500. Island visitors are familiar with the cottage, which is located across the road from Hugonin Battery. The cottage was built by Lyman (Mac) McKay and his father-in-law Colin Cleveland in the late 1940s. Mac married Colin's daughter Marge in 1945 and served as caretaker at Fort Hugonin from 1945 - 1953. Both Mac and Marge are now their 90s and live in California.

## McNabs Island Signs Update

The Friends of McNabs Island have raised funds to install way-finding directional signs on McNabs, and interpretive signs and an orientation map in the new kiosk near Garrison Pier. Thanks to the Nova Scotia Dental Association, Nova Scotia Health and Wellness, HRM's Trail Program and our members for supporting these efforts to improve services for McNabs Island visitors.

We were hoping to get the signs designed and installed this fall but have to wait until the new McNabs Trail Plan is complete. In addition, NS Natural Resources is currently reviewing signage in all our provincial parks. They want us to wait for the results of that review, expected at the end of March 2014, before designing and installing directional signs on McNabs Island. So this winter we will concentrate our efforts on developing interpretive signs that will be installed in the kiosk in the spring.



The kiosk serves as a gathering point for visitors waiting for the ferry



John &  
Jacquie  
McNab from  
Saskatchewan  
visit McNabs  
May 2013

## McNABS ISLAND CLEAN UP - Déjà Vu!!

By Catherine McCarthy

On Sunday June 2, 2013, 200 volunteers traveled to McNabs to take part in the annual cleanup. They collected 400 bags of garbage and recyclables including an assortment of unusual items - a police evidence bag, a Santa Claus ornament and a toy lobster.

A&M Sea Charters and Murphy's Cable Wharf provided transportation for the volunteers who traveled to the island free-of-charge courtesy of the Friends of McNabs Island. NS Natural Resources assisted on the island and Taylor Made Tours looked after getting the garbage to Eastern Passage where it was picked up by HRM garbage and recycling trucks. Once again Clean Nova Scotia, Imperial Oil Dartmouth Refinery and Schooner Industrial Supplies supplied garbage bags and gloves.

This year we looked for financial support to help offset the cost of this cleanup that costs us about \$2,500 each year. We were fortunate to recoup half of our costs thanks to funding from **Ascenta Health**, who sends volunteers to the cleanup every year, and **McInnes Cooper**, who sent volunteers this year. Friends of McNabs Island members **Burnside Consultants** and **Dr. Galen Snook** also donated to the cleanup effort. After the cleanup **Sugah!** (Uncommon Group) treated our tired volunteers to ice cream.

Special thanks goes to the thousands of volunteers who have cleaned up the shores of McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park over the past two decades. This cleanup is the largest and longest running cleanup effort in the Maritimes. Since 1991, volunteers have collected a staggering **11,000 bags of garbage and recyclables** from the beaches of this Provincial Park and national historic site.



Fishing boat full of garbage leaves McNabs



Faye Power with McInnes Cooper volunteers on McNabs



Ascenta Health Team on McNabs

### ***CLEANING UP McNABS - THE FILM***

Filmmaker and journalist Jerry Lockett followed our cleanup volunteers as they gathered up garbage that had washed up on the beaches of McNabs Island. Jerry has been writing about conservation, the environment and the oceans for more than 25 years. He is the award-winning writer of *Captain James Cook in Atlantic Canada* and *The Discovery of Weather*.

Jerry has documented our volunteer efforts to keep McNabs Island clean in his newly released short film – ***Cleaning up McNabs Island*** which is accessible on YouTube by searching “cleaning up mcnabs island” or following this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-o6nuLZiWLM>.

The film can also be seen on Eastlink from time to time



Jerry Lockett

**Friends of McNabs Island Events 2014**  
**Mark your calendars!**

**Friends of McNabs Island Society's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**  
*(Date Spring 2014, guest speaker and venue to be confirmed)*

**McNabs Island Beach Cleanup**  
**Sunday June 1 (rain date- June 8)**  
**Time: 10 am – 5:00 pm**  
*(Details to be confirmed)*

**McNabs Island Summer Tours**  
Last summer we organized two summer tours that proved to be extremely popular and sold out early. *(Dates and details for 2014 summer tours to be confirmed)*

**Fall Foliage Tours of McNabs Island**  
**Sunday October 19 (rain date October 26)**  
**Time 10 am – 5:00 pm**  
*(Details to be confirmed)*

*Updates on our 2014 events will be sent via e-mail, Facebook and Twitter. Stay tuned!*

**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*.**

**Renew your Membership Now!**

We thank you for your continued support and welcome your interest!

Send cheque, payable to:

**The Friends of McNabs Island Society**  
**PO Box 31240, Gladstone RPO**  
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***The Rucksack*** is published by the **Friends of McNabs Island Society**.

Contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome.

Visit our website at: [www.mcnabsisland.ca](http://www.mcnabsisland.ca)

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