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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Ruth Bagnall Paints Island Stone Houses

By NEIL A. MATHESON

A TALENTED Hunter River lady, Ruth (Mrs. Frank) Bagnall, is painting houses built with Island dressed stone as her contribution to this province's Centennial year of 1973. All the buildings – at least one church is included – were made of Island stone.

She has painted seven already, she has a list of others to do.

The Stone Cottage at Springfield was erected about 1855 by Robert Haslam with the help of his six brothers. Mr. Haslam went to live there with his bride, Jane Weeks, in 1857. Mr. and Mrs. Haslam had fourteen children. At the present time, 1972, there are a dozen grandchildren.

Eric Sinclair and his wife, the former Lois Bertram, purchased the house and farm in 1956, and they live there with their family.

MacCallum House

THE MACCALLUM house was built by Captain James MacCallum in 1820 at Brackley Point. Two masons brought from Scotland were paid 75 cents a day.

Stones were hauled three miles with horses from the backfield of the farm now in possession of George MacCallum, Brackley Point.

Old documents in possession of Cairns MacCallum, who produced the information on this house, indicate that Brackley Beach, present name, was not in use then. It was known then as Brackley Point.

This house has double walls, has eight rooms, two halls, one fireplace and a large pantry.

Neil and James MacCallum were my great grandfathers, as my parents were second cousins, Cairns MacCallum wrote for Mrs. Bagnall. They in turn were the grandsons of Neil MacCallum whose spouse was Margaret MacKay. The latter two came on the Falmouth from Argyleshire, Scotland to P.E.I. in 1770.

They built their log house on the farm now owned by Fred Hughes, Brackley Point.

Neil and Margaret were interred in one of the oldest cemeteries on P.E.I., now the property of the National Park. At the time of their passing, Brackley Point Cemetery was not in existence. The old cemetery was at Stanhope. "I think it was a French burying ground," Cairns MacCallum wrote. Bodies were brought there for burial from as far away as St. Peter's Bay. The French were there in 1736.

The Aitken House

THE AITKEN House is at Lower Montague. It was built, some folks say, as early as 1820, others as late as 1848; Mr. and Mrs. George Aitken moved into this house on their Golden Wedding anniversary in 1848, according to Bessie Aitken of Montague.

It was built by George Aitken who went to Scotland to get the design. George married Hannah Bearisto.

THE BAGNALL Stone House at Hazel Grove was built by Edwin Bagnall in 1851 for his bride Christy Anderson of Stanley Bridge.

The house later came to Robert Bagnall, then to his son Merton.

After Merton's health got bad and he moved to Charlottetown, the house was sold for a short time to James Brown of Charlottetown. Mr. Brown in turn sold the house to Borden Bagnall who would be a grand nephew of the original builder.

Borden and his wife Marion, and two sons Keith and Arnold, live there now, Ruth tells me.

THE RAMSAY House at Hamilton, P.E.I. was built by Archibald Ramsay, fourth son of the original John Ramsey who came out from Scotland in 1770. The old house is situated at Beech Point, Hamilton and it is owned by Mrs. Leslie Ramsay.

While the house was being built, a son, Norman MacLeod Ramsay, stepped on a rusty nail and died of blood poisoning.

Stewart Hall

STEWART HALL was built in Malpeque 1820 by Charles Alexander Stewart – over the door were carved these letters and figures – “C.A.S. 1820”

This house had 10 rooms, two halls, seven fireplaces.

The information came from Mrs. Elphalet Howatt, Darlington – it had been her girlhood home as her father, Malcolm MacGougan, owned the place at the time.

The situation was about one-half mile from what is now Cabot Park, near what was known as “The Whaleback Bridge,” so called because of its “whaleback” shape. The old bridge has long since been demolished but its name was a part of the colorful folklore of this province.

Unfortunately Ruth Bagnall will not be able to paint Stewart Hall. It was demolished, perhaps 20 years ago, she tells me.

Clyde River House

THERE IS a great deal of information available on the Clyde River House, built by John Oldfield about 1882. Mrs. George Dixon, the Ellen of Ellen's Diary that appeared in the Guardian so many years, and relatives of her have a part in the old House's history. Hopefully I can go into the history at a later date; now I have to fit all of this into the two columns of type available for me.

Interesting to me is the fact that it is owned now by Jimmy and Dora Atwell, two friends I made while in Ottawa – his real name is E. A. Atwell. Dora is the sister of Mary G. MacDonald, Ambrose Street and sister of Phil MacDonald, a member of the P.E.I. Sports Hall of Fame. The Atwells are having heating and water installed in the delightful old house. And Mary assures me they are not spoiling it, this treasured relic of the 1800s. It is located on the Trans Canada highway.

There's an interesting stone house on West Street that is owned by Jack and Barbara MacAndrew, I've heard it called the Beales House in the past.

It was designed by William Harris, brother of the famous Island artist, Robert Harris, about 1885.

Superintendent Young of the CNR commissioned the construction. It has stained glass windows. There is a pillared patio. It is of Welsh architecture.

The Mahogany and Oak wood inside is beautifully finished. It has a winding-type staircase.

There are three fireplaces.

Information Desired

MRS. BAGNALL has a list of other buildings of hand chiseled Island stone. They include the Pickering House at Clinton, St. Martin's Roman Catholic Church at Cumberland on the South Shore that was built in 1867. She is going to paint them.

The Farmers Bank at Rustico – it operated from 1864-1892, and is of brick construction – it will be painted.

Mrs. Bagnall would like to hear about any houses there may be in the province made from Island dressed stone. She would appreciate hearing from you at Hunter River, or write me about them and I shall pass on the information.

This Bagnall stone house has recently been incorrectly called the Half-way house that existed in the Hazel Grove area when travel was slow and folk rested or had refreshments there while on their way to Charlottetown.

The Half-way house was built, I believe, by Richard Bagnall and it stood at the top of the hill, if you go straight up the hill, instead of bearing left and continuing to Fredericton, Kensington and Summerside. Up that hill was the Malpeque Road, not the one that turns toward Fredericton, etc.

The Half-way stone house does not exist now, but that was its location. The Bagnall house I have just described was built by Edwin Bagnall, the son of the man who built the real Half-way house.

By the way, that Half-way house location was later the home of Andrew Bagnall, former railroadman who has become even better known in recent years at the curling rink where he has served many times as referee of important matches.

To Ruth Bagnall, I hope I have kept those names straight and placed them correctly. These latter paragraphs I am writing at the office and doing it from memory. The notes you so kindly helped me with are at our apartment in the Dundee.