

Peninsula Heritage Features Kingston Corner

By

Jane Barry

The Greater Saint John Community Foundation

It's unlikely there is another community in the Province with a corner more historic than the one in Kingston. Once the centre of a significant community, it is now a peaceful, rural village which has a vibrant and active community attracting visitors, history buffs and locals who want an opportunity to worship, meet, dine, shop or learn.

Kingston Peninsula Heritage Inc. is a small but mighty group of volunteers who recognize the value and merits of celebrating and preserving the local heritage of the Kingston Peninsula. The energetic volunteers formed Peninsula Heritage in the early 60's, recognizing the peninsula's wealth of artifacts and structures. They have received the Baxter property and the Cedars Lighthouse on Long Reach and operate the John Fisher Memorial Museum and 1810 Carter House at Kingston Corner, which was declared an Historic District in 2000. The province's earliest church (1789), Trinity Anglican Church, which contains the country's oldest pump organ (still working) and the rectory is also there. Kingston Merchants is still the local "corner store" continuously serving the public into its third century. 1910 MacDonald Consolidated School is still in the education business and houses the John Fisher Memorial Museum.

Judi Baxter, the group's President, says operating smaller community museums is a new challenge every season with renovations, finding sufficient operational funding and a myriad of other needs. Government grants to hire summer students are a great boon. Will Jones is senior in that group and now doing graduate work in history at UNB. This summer, his research is centred on native portage routes and will culminate in an August re-enactment. Most locals are familiar with the route between Kingston and the Kennebecasis which roughly follows the road to the Gondola Point ferry but now there are indications that other, more ancient ones may have existed.

On June 26, St. John River Day, Peninsula Heritage organized a canoe trip to Caton's Island to visit an historic monument to French explorer, Samuel de Champlain. The idyllic evening ended with a bonfire and tour of the historic Cedars Lighthouse. Students are conducting tours of Trinity Church and help operate Carter House, now a tearoom serving scrumptious homemade-style lunches and afternoon tea. A display, some collections, library and a genealogy room for research is also open there. While patrons await their lunch, they can shop at the gift shop, or rest in the beautifully maintained period garden. Volunteers like Beth Quigley, Eric McCumber, Darlene Love, Eleanor Hughes and Dorri Gorham, who was recently honoured, are key to success.

Mrs. Baxter, who also serves on the Board of Directors of Canada's Museum of Civilization and was instrumental in inviting them to have their first meeting outside Ottawa recently, is delighted that the John Fisher Memorial Museum is getting a major facelift this year. She has capitalized on her connections and succeeded in having two period wedding gowns sent to Ottawa for conservation. They will be part of the new permanent exhibit of the collections they now hold, once renovations are completed later this summer. She adds "The New Brunswick Museum has partnered with us providing exhibit expertise and advice on the construction of the gallery space. And the NB Heritage Branch has been exceedingly patient with the development time line, as well as funding resources."

Through the CURA (Community University Research Alliance) project, Will Jones has become noted for his ties with Kingston Peninsula built heritage. He states "Of note is a collection we salvaged from the old Keith homestead on Kennebecasis Island before it was torn down last fall. We received some really interesting pieces and were able to go in and photograph the architectural details before it was lost forever."

With the two Saturday Kingston Markets, the beautiful St. John River and Belleisle Bay, the Pottery Shop, craft stores, natural beauty spots and trails, and the heritage buildings clustered at the Kingston Corner, it is a perfect destination for a summer day trip. Watch for Beth Fullerton's new venture and a community gathering place opening in August at the corner of Route 845 and Williams Road.

Hours of operation for the museum & 1810 Carter House: Tuesday -Saturday 9:00 to 4:30.
Info: Kingston Peninsula Heritage Inc
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Photo: Judi Baxter, who leads Kingston Peninsula Heritage Inc.'s Board, joins Will Jones, a summer research student, in the churchyard of New Brunswick's oldest church, Trinity, at Kingston Corner where many public activities are available, thanks to the active group

Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880. To view other Community Profiles go to www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca