

# *St. Andrews*

*An Historical Scrapbook*



Water Street, circa 1889  
Charlotte County Archives  
P214.1

# *St. Andrews*

*An Historical Scrapbook*

*Edited by David Sullivan*



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## Introduction

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**F**OR A TINY town St. Andrews has had an unusually picturesque and interesting history. In its beginnings as a well-connected town of Loyalist refugees from the Revolutionary War, it counted among its citizens persons of note in governmental affairs such as Thomas Wyer and Robert Pagan. During the heydays of the triangle trade with Britain and the West Indies, the population of St. Andrews swelled to over 4,000, and the town became a major ship-building center and exporter of lumber. The harbour of St. Andrews was filled with ships; its bustling wharves were owned by prominent and powerful businessmen such as Christopher Scott, John Wilson and James Rait, and its economy was on a par almost with Saint John. This changed when Britain removed protective tariffs first on Baltic timber in 1820 and later on colonial products entering the West Indies in 1842. The largely export-based economy of New Brunswick went into a permanent decline and St. Andrews did not rally significantly—and even here not very significantly—until the advent of summer tourism in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, when it became a watering place of note for well-to-do travellers from Boston and Montreal.

These aspects of the town's history have been well documented in books such as Grace Helen Mowatt's *Diverting History of a Loyalist Town*, Ron Rees' *St. Andrews and the Islands*, Willa Walker's *No Hayfever and a Railroad*, and my own *The Algonquin and Minister's Island*.

What hasn't been documented is a history of the town at street level: the occasionally unusual but mostly ordinary events and personages that have made up the life of the town at any given point in its past. I am speaking quite simply of news. St. Andrews had seven newspapers: the *St. Andrews Herald* (1819-1832), the *St. Andrews Standard* (1833-1880), *The Courant* (1830-?), *The Charlotte Gazette* (1846-?), *The Provincialist* (1856-1859), *The Bay Pilot* (1876-1889), and *The St. Andrews Beacon* (1889-1919). Of these the *Courant*, *Gazette*, and *Provincialist* are no longer extant, and only twelve issues of the *Herald* survive, so any newspaper account of St. Andrews history has to draw most heavily upon the *Standard*, *Pilot* and *Beacon*.

A perusal of these venerable weeklies will discover a smorgasbord of diverting events and characters that have passed largely from memory. Some are dramatic or of special importance, such as the inauguration of the St. Andrews and Quebec Railway, the Fenian scare, the construction of the Algonquin Hotel, and the arrival of noted Canadians such as Sir Leonard Tilley and Sir William Van Horne. Some were eventful in their day but are now largely forgotten: the execution of Richard and Maria Stewart in 1826; a tremendous snow storm or fire; a dramatic jail break; sea-monsters or the arrival of the first automobile. Many were of some interest in their own day but are now only curiosities which date the town quaintly to a particular point in time: a tramp printer, an early attempt at flight, a torchlight procession of the Torrent Fire Brigade; a wave of Scarlatina, the whipping of a thief, a chimney robber or a riverboat excursion to see Barnum's Great Show at Calais.

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Generally speaking, I have avoided information for its own sake, but with the passage of time even bare fact can take on a romantic cast, given the changes that have taken place in the town over two hundred years. The *Beacon* published several substantial selections drawn from the old Sessions records of Charlotte County which fit neatly into this category. What in 1783 were merely routine Court judgements had become by 1889 a curious window into a very different time and way of life. Also, the various newspaper editors were themselves interested in local history, and occasionally published reminiscences of “old St. Andrews” by local storytellers, some of the more entertaining of which are reproduced here.

In compiling this portrait I have made a special effort to do homage to certain important record-keepers of the town: three writers—Adam Smith of the *Standard*; Robert Armstrong of the *Beacon*; and Frederick Worrell of the *St. Croix Courier*—and two photographers—D. Will McKay and Archie Shirley. Not all items or photographs are theirs but most are, and I hope the reader will find their work as excellent and important as I have.

I have also tried to do some justice to the black and native populations of St. Andrews, two groups which history has largely passed over. The black population arrived with the Loyalists as a mixture probably of slaves and servants, but since as a group they were largely landless and illiterate, they have left few records behind them. They numbered as many as 60 in 1851, and had their own little shantytown just outside of town along what is now Cedar Lane. Caddy Norris, the last visibly black member of this population, died in 1948. As for the natives, there is still a tiny presence at Indian Point, though long before the local newspapers began to print the Passamaquoddies had been largely evicted and taken up residence in American territory, just across the border near Eastport. Some dramatic stories involving the Nicholas family are reproduced here and show that, as with the blacks, life was often not easy for them.—David Sullivan ❁