THE INFORMER

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:Isle Madame Historical Society
708 Veteran's Memorial Drive
Arichat, N.S.
P.O. Box 223, Arichat, B0E 1A0
TELEPHONE 902 226 9364
TELEPHONE 902 226 2880

From the Desk of the Editor

S. Marchand - Terrio

Happy Spring! Hopefully that is what we'll be saying soon! After 2 years of pandemic, we are all looking forward to the rebirth of spring 2022. For those of us involved in the daily running of the Historical Society we long to welcome visitors and residents back for another season. The planning committee has been working on plans for the coming summer with the office opening Tuesday May1st and the Museum on Tuesday May 31st. Popular events such as Tea in the Museum will return, along with Kid's Days in July. The Summer Learning Series will take place from June to September with a monthly event that includes three workshops and a book launch. Other events are also being planned for the summer season. Stay tuned to our next newsletter, website https://imhs.ca and our Facebook page for more information in the coming months.

At our Annual General Meeting in the fall, we said good bye to 3 board members: Leslie Marchand and Jarrod David, as well as our Vice Chair Ralph Mauger. All had served as directors for a number of years and their input into board decisions will be missed. We also welcomed 3 new members to the board: Gina Melanson, Meghan MacKinnon and Renee Samson who stepped up to fill the vacant seats.

2021 was a fairly quiet year compared to our pre-covid summers but it was an opportunity to refresh displays, scan and identify photos, catalogue artifacts, create finding aids, help visitors with research, provide museum tours and blacksmithing experiences. With the help of our students Laurier Fougere and Lauren Boudreau, our blacksmith Richard Boudreau and our site manager Rhea Boudreau and our volunteers, visitors were welcomed and programming took place.

We look forward to opening our doors and welcome visitors. See you soon!

The Isle Madame Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve and exhibit artifacts and documents relating to the social, cultural and natural history of Isle Madame for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations.



Arichat IMHS Ref. # AO-136



St Joseph's Parish Hall IMHS # PDG-066



Cap LaRonde IMHS, RBCO-012



Photos: IMHS Archives

The First Chapel on Isle Madame

By Odilon Boudreau

Over the years coastal erosion has changed the topography of the Arichat waterfront. Two hundred and fifty years ago there were forty water lots on the north side of the harbour. Sixty years ago children played baseball on a field along the shore, now the land where they once played has become part of the harbour.

In 1786 the Lieutenant-Governor of Cape Breton J. F. W. DesBarres had given permission to the Acadian people to build a school and a chapel. The petition was signed by 70 Acadian heads of families from Isle Madame. Where was this chapel? This question has intrigued me.

Sabine Rose LeBlanc, daughter of Captain Abraham LeBlanc, while at the Nova Scotia Normal College in 1911 wrote an essay on the history of West Arichat. Based on interviews with one of the oldest residents of West Arichat, Peter Boudrot, she claimed that the chapel was located where the Bishop's Palace was erected (the former St. Anne Hospital located at 14 Bay St.). This information had me convinced that this was the actual site of the chapel.

Historian A. A. Johnston writes that Father Lejamtel received a grant of land in 1803 which was "an extension of the small lot, near the shore, on which the first chapel of Arichat stood". It was an extension of lot # 16 which is visible on land grant maps.

It is interesting to note that there had been many additions to the chapel. When Bishop Denaut (1803) and Bishop Plessis (1812 and 1815) visited Arichat they were so impressed with the chapel that they called it a Church. A belfry and a bell were procured. The chapel had been enlarged and a vestry added. It was "furnished with vestments, a steeple and two bells, a rare thing in these parts." In 1816 Father Lejamtel said that "the Church was enlarged by building up to the level of the wings the two corners on the right and on the left of the altar".

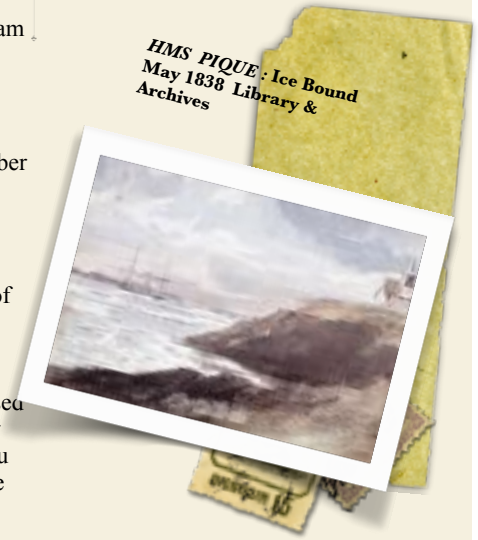
From Nova Scotia Archives, Cape Breton Island petitions 1787-1843: In 1808 Maximien Furry (Forest) occupied a lot between the Chapel and Mr. Clement Hubert's property. Louis Huro (Hureau) was applying for a grant of the Lot #15 in his own name. On a Lands and Forest map which shows who originally owned the land grants, water Lot #16 where the chapel was, was clearly the lot of land where the cannons are located today and the land on both sides of it which were situated down by the waterfront. One can observe on the index sheet that the chapel was between Louis Hureau's (Lot #15) and Clement Hubert's (Lot #17) water lots.

The lot where the present OLA Church and where the Bishop's Palace are located is between a lot belonging to a Paul Beausejour and bordering lots of lands belonging to Tremain and Co. and Simon Forest. This is the lot to the rear of the chapel and above the lower road. This is on a land survey done for Francois Lejamtel and the wardens of the Church signed by Lieutenant Governor William Macarmick, colonial administrator of Cape Breton. He had taken over from J. F. W. DesBarres.

New revelations with the discovery of a number of watercolours of Arichat from 1838, have allowed us to pinpoint the location of the chapel. Local author Merrill Boudreau found copies of the watercolours at Library & Archives Canada, which he included in two of his historical books. The *HMS Pique* a Royal Navy frigate, on her way to Lower Canada became icebound in Arichat. Captain James Bucknall Estcount and his wife Caroline passed the time painting while waiting in Arichat for the ice to clear. In three of their paintings, you see the chapel and in one painting you see the present Catholic Church and a big building which looks like the Clement Hubert house where the classes for St. F. X. began. It is clear that the chapel was on a water lot where the cannons are now located on Veterans Memorial Dr., below Bay Lane. Bay Lane did not exist before they built the new OLA Church in 1837. The only lane which led to what is now the high road was Marmeau Lane. This lane was on what is now the Richard property west of the cannons and it passed alongside and to the rear of the Bishop's Palace. Marmeau Lane was the road used to access the old cemetery. This lane ran up the hill and was adjacent to the old cemetery between Andre Boudreau's driveway and the graveyard.

I am pleased to say that the mystery of the location of the first chapel seems to be solved. When you visit the cannons that overlook the harbour think about our ancestors from Isle Madame who built this first chapel and the sacrifices that they endured for us. The Catholic faith was one of the defining and enduring fundamentals of the Acadian culture in years gone by. Also please visit our cemetery which is up Marmeau Lane where you can show your respect to all of the Acadians who lived through the deportation years. This is the final resting place of the Acadians who established the first Church and the community of Isle Madame.

Board of Directors 2021-2022
Anne Leavitt - *Chair*
Brittany Benoit - *Secretary*
Joan Clannon - *Treasurer*
Directors:
Renee Samson, Gina Melanson, Meghan MacKinnon, Odilon Boudreau, Nancy Samson, Marg Herdman, Susan Marchand-Terrio



" Volunteers Corner"

Why should you become a volunteer with the Isle Madame Historical Society:

* You are needed.
* You love history.
* You want to see the Isle Madame Historical Society offer great exhibits that tell our visitors the story of Isle Madame.

Volunteer opportunities are available in many areas.

If you are interested in a volunteer position please contact our office 902 226 9364 or 902 226 2880





IMHS-AO-086

Heritage Property:

In this edition of *The Informer,* we feature the **Richmond County Court House** situated in the shire town of Arichat. Although not a designated Provincial Heritage Property, it could easily qualify. It is a historical landmark and is significant to the judicial, political and cultural history of Richmond County. The exterior architecture of the building is Classic Greek Revival Style, that was inspired by the symmetry, proportion, and elegance of the ancient Greek temples of 5th century B.C. The Greek Revival Style reached its peak popularity from 1825 to 1860. With its imposing Greek Revival columns, tall windows and portico, the courthouse stood as a monument to Richmond County's mid-nineteenth century pride and prosperity.

This building completed in December of 1847, was built by Alexander McDonald known as "Sandy the Carpenter". A descendent of McDonald's reported that the builder himself used to go to the USA to obtain building plans and it is thought that the plans for the Richmond County Courthouse were copied from a Courthouse built in Maine. McDonald went on to build other Courthouses with nearly identical Greek inspired facades in Antigonish (1853) and Sherbrooke (1858).

Arichat did have a previous Courthouse that was constructed in 1814. It was located near the present-day St. John's Centre for the Arts. In 1844 the older building was sold due to its "defective condition" and plans for a new building began. McDonald signed a contract with the building committee in August of 1845 and construction began the following year. The cost of construction was $1030.00. It is said that the building committee requested many improvements and Mr. McDonald accommodated their requests. However, in March of 1848, Mr. McDonald still had not been paid for the extra work precipitated by the changes. His request for the outstanding payment was taken to the Grand Jury and eventually his petition went to the Lieutenant-Governor. Unfortunately, I have been unable to document whether "Sandy the Carpenter" was reimbursed.

Beyond the main entrance is a spacious hall running the length of the building. The first floor includes an apartment that was once used by the Sheriff and later by the person responsible for the jail. The jail which contains two cells and a common area is also on the main floor. The court room with its impressive bell-shaped dome is on the second floor.

The Courthouse, like others in small towns across the province, was traditionally a centre of community activity. Besides court sessions and municipal meetings, the space was used like a community hall, hosted political debates which took place before provincial and federal elections, the Councillor's & New Year's Balls were held there, along with vaudeville shows, plays and concerts. In 1915 the Richmond County Fair took place on the grounds and it was where volunteers signed up to serve in World War I.

In 2015 the Municipality decided to sell the building and it is now in private hands. This beautiful building has served this community well and this coming December will celebrate its 175th year!

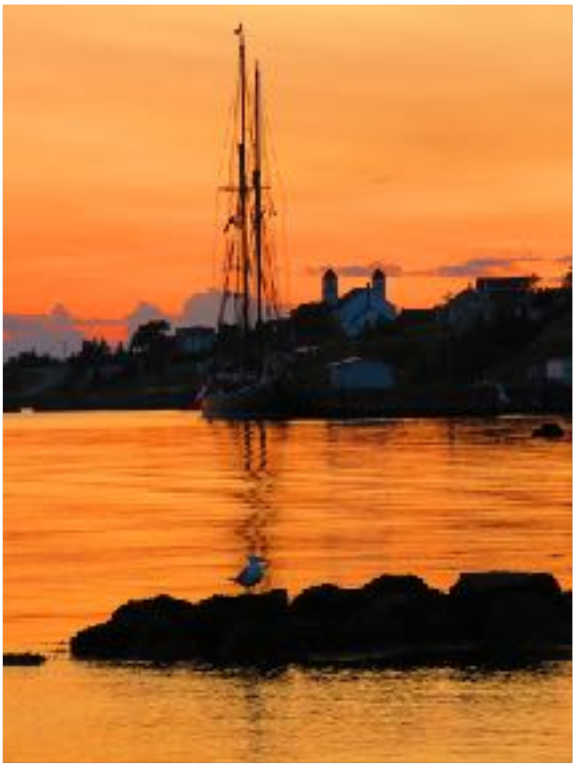
Winter 2022

Photos:

Top Left:Arichat Courthouse circa1900 IMHS AO-086

Top Right: LeBlanc MacNeil Collection 1968 (IMHS)





Snapshots of the Summer & Fall

Top Left: Kids Day Activities (IMHS)
Top Right: The Bluenose At Sunset (Donald MacLellan)
Bottom Right: Blacksmithing Workshop (IMHS)
Bottom Left: Repairs and Staining of the Forge (IMHS)



