

Hammonds Plains Historical Society

www.hammondsplainshistoricalsociety.ca

Events from the Past – The 1951 Plane Crash



A local resident sitting on tail of crashed plane - 1951

One of the most unique newsworthy events of the 20th century in Hammonds Plains, was the **1951 plane crash**. The following reviews the details of the plane crash and its aftermath.

On March 27 1951, four Supermarine Hawker Sea Furies (Military Planes) piloted by Lt Doug Peacock, commander of 803 Squadron Shearwater, Sub-Lt. John Morehouse, Lt. Patty O'Connell and Lt. Ron Heath were flying over Wright's Lake (near Pockwock Lake) as part of a training exercise. Some witnesses say that they were practising stunts over the lake and flying very low.

Peacock's plane experienced some form of engine trouble around 10 AM and crashed into the lake and the plane sank. However, before the plane sunk, Peacock was able to get out of the plane and be rescued. Edwin



General Meetings for 2015-16:

We are once again looking at a variety of topics for presentations next year. Come and learn about our past, including a presentation on the overall history of the community (1786 to 2015).

Our next meeting is **September 28th**. Look for more details in the fall

Becoming a HPHS Member:

You can become a member of the Hammonds Plains Historical Society by filling out a registration form and e-mailing it to Dave Haverstock (haverstockdave@gmail.com) or mailing to 1541 Hammonds Plains Road, Hammonds Plains, Nova Scotia B4B 1P6. **Annual fee is \$10.**

Registration forms are available during one of our general meetings or by copying from our web site.

Wright who was on the lake at the time booming logs and brother Harold who was working at his family's mill, on the side of the lake, saw the crash and immediately got a boat and rescued Peacock. They took him to their logging camp, made him comfortable while awaiting a rescue plane.

The other aircraft in the meantime, were summoning help by radio, and a local amphibian aircraft from Shearwater responded to the call and flew to the scene. Morehouse was directed to dive low over the crash site to provide assistance for the coming amphibian. Tragically Morehouse, concentrating on trying to lead the amphibian to Peacock's location by flying low over the spot, inadvertently flew into the trees along the lake shore and crashed. The plane burst into flames almost immediately and Moorhouse was killed.

Lt. Peacock was taken to hospital in Halifax, suffering a slight fracture of the vertebrae.

The news of the crash spread through the community very quickly and during the days after the crash, many in the community made a trip to the crash site to see the damage for themselves. Apparently there were no accessibility restrictions after the crash, unlike what would happen to-day. As a result, the pictures in this article were taken at the crash site a day or so after the crash.

Both planes were salvaged by the military, taken to Shearwater, within a few weeks of the incident. The Naval Board of Inquiry did an investigation and found the incident was due to accidental reasons.

It was a big event in Upper and Lower Hammonds Plains, when the remains of the planes travelled through the community on the way to Shearwater. Many residents went out to the roadside to watch the remains of the crashed planes drive by.



Picture of fuselage of Morehead's crashed plane



Picture of motor of Morehead's crashed plane

[Hammonds Plains Cenotaph Project](https://myhammondsplains.ca) – Memorial Bricks are now for sale. For \$200, families can recognize a family member who has served his/her country. To order, visit myhammondsplains.ca



John Thomas Sr. (1810-1896)

Few Hammonds Plains residents had the impact on the early years of Hammonds Plains history that John Thomas did. Certainly no one was as controversial.

John Thomas was born in 1810 in Wales. He moved to Nova Scotia as a child, with his family. John's father, Joseph established a Hat and Fur Business in Preston and was able to provide a good life for his family. Becoming future community leaders was a common trait among his children.

It is thought that John came to Hammonds Plains in the mid 1830's as a victualler (supplier of provisions) to the African Canadian settlers of Upper Hammonds Plains. He was listed as a farmer in the 1851 census, so one would assume that he saw himself as a self-sufficient land owner when he first moved to the community. However, he soon saw an opportunity to have influence in the community and by the 1840's, he was major voice in community affairs. It was obvious that his financial standing allowed him to have access to money, which many others in the community did not. He seemed driven by prestige and power and as a result, he bought up properties and businesses in Hammonds Plains. John started using his money to create a banking system in the community, He loaned money and bought mortgages. While his banking business provided residents in both Lower and Upper Hammonds Plains with an opportunity to borrow money to build homes, it also led to ill feelings among many in the community as John foreclosed mortgages to those who couldn't pay back and several families were forced to move. Others who owed debts to him sometimes had to pay by providing free labor to his endeavors. While John was very respected for his power within the community, some of the prominent families saw him as a greedy land baron.

John married a local girl, Susan Haverstock in 1836 and had 12 children (Isabelle, Elizabeth, John Jr., William, Sarah, Eliza, George, Jane, Levi, Tillie, Ben and Susan). They settled on the lands across the road from the current Pin Hi Golf Course. Some of this land is still owned by the Thomas family to-day.

John Thomas was a man of great ability and a shrewd and ambitious businessman. However, he was also a man who drove a hard bargain and was not timid to demand that folks pay their debts to him. John used his money, family connections and shrewd business intellect to become a driving force in the community. He was considered a barrister (although there is no proof that he was a licensed lawyer) and as such, there are many Hammonds Plains documents in the 1800's with his name on them. He was commonly referred to a Squire, with Esq. quite often listed by his name in legal documents. By 1839, he was listed as an assessor for the community.

Squire Thomas was appointed as Community Census Taker for the 1851 Census.

In 1850, John's wife Susan passed away. Within four months, he had remarried, marrying Mary Jane Melvin and together they had 5 children (Julia, Amos, Elijah, Kezia and Keran), which added to the 12 he had from his first marriage. Soon after his second marriage, a land dispute involving John and the Melvin family (his new wife's family) rose to the forefront in the community. It appears that Mary Jane's family land (piece of land near where Blue Barn Farms is to-day) had a disputed mortgage. The Melvin family claimed that a mortgage was written to Amos Melvin Jr., but no mortgage on paper could be produced. John tried to get the courts to rule that since no mortgage could be found, the lands actually belonged to his wife and thus to him. The court settled the case by ruling in favor of the Melvin family (Mary Jane's children) auctioning the land off for a value much less than it was worth, since the Melvin children could not afford to pay the taxes on the land.

John was able to actually buy one of the lots of the disputed land in the 1850's. He was also able to acquire the original community meeting house (located at where Baptist Cemetery is located to-day) and move it to his property and used it as a store (located near intersection of Hammonds Plains Road and Lucasville Road).

John continued his desire to acquire more land and when the original Melvin estate came up for auction in 1855, he was the successful bidder. The estate land covered 1000 acres, most of it near the community of Upper Hammonds. Thomas decided to sell 800 acres to the African Canadian settlers.

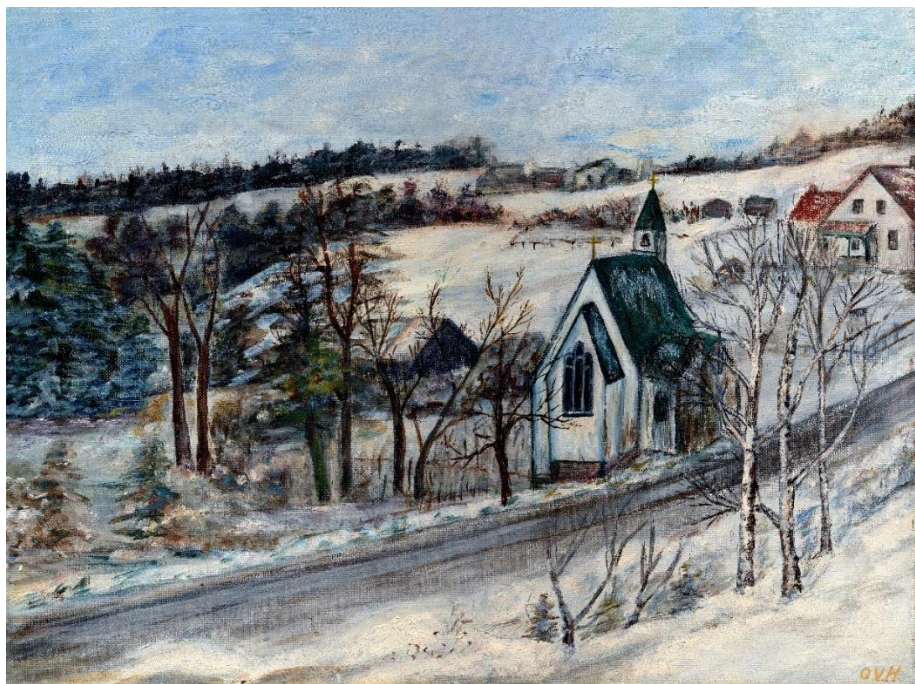
John Thomas can be thanked for his excellent hand writing abilities. His work on the 1851 census was a model of neatness and legibility, and generally far superior from that of census of other communities. His writing on the census forms is fairly large and clear and gives excellent accuracy. Due to his hand writing, we have a great record of who lived in the community in 1851.

Religion played a big part in the Thomas household and John was one of the original trustees of the Baptist Church in Lower Hammonds Plains.

During the 1860's and 70's, John Thomas seem to have his hand in all aspects of the community. Besides being a farmer and financier, he seemed to own at least one of the mills in the area.

There isn't a lot recorded about his later years. He was living in the community in the 1891 census, with Mary Jane. However, it seems that he may have spent his last years in Sackville living with his wife and one of his sons and their family.

He died on April 13, 1896 at age 86. While his funeral was held in Sackville, a house drawn funeral procession made its way along the Lucasville Road bring his body to its final resting place, the Hammonds Plains Baptist Cemetery.



This old painting of St. Nicholas Church shows much of the John Thomas Homestead in the background, including the old Thomas House (Red Roof)