

Hammonds Plains Historical Society

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Who were the Hammonds Plains Moss Backs?

During the late 1800's, the sport of hockey was not only sprouting roots among the white population of the province, but was also of interest within many of the African Canadian Communities, as well. Unfortunately, due to segregation, players of African descent were excluded from playing with and against white players.

In 1895, the African Canadian communities within the Maritimes formed the 'Colored Hockey League'. However, it was not a league in the conventional sense of the term for there was no set schedule, as the games were played on local lakes and depended on Mother Nature to produce natural ice conditions. Games were arranged by letter of invitation or by a notice of a 'challenged match' placed in the local newspaper. Some of the teams did have access to indoor rinks, once white teams were finished for the year.

By the early 1900's, teams were located in Africville, Halifax, Dartmouth, Amherst, Truro, Charlottetown, and in Hammonds Plains. The Hammonds Plains team, called the **Moss Backs**, operated only for a season or two. The term 'Moss Back' came from the Underground Railroad, in which slaves escaping from the US, would look at trees to see which side of the tree the moss was growing, because they knew that moss grows on the north side of trees, which guided them northward.

Little is known about the Moss Backs teams. They probably did play some games in Upper Hammonds Plains, most likely on Taylor Lake. By 1906, the Moss Backs had disbanded. We know that the captain of the 1904 Moss Backs Team was Albert Emmerson. The League lasted until 1930.



Upcoming Presentations

January 27th (Cornerstone Wesleyan Church) – A Decade of Hope – Hammonds Plains of the 1960's

March 30th (Hammonds Plains Community Center) - History of Kemptown

The Maritime Colored Hockey League



Ad in the Halifax Herald advertising the 1902 Colored Hockey League Championship between the Halifax Eurekas & Africville Seasides

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.** Renewals don't need new forms.

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

We are looking for pictures from the 1960's

For our upcoming presentation on 'Life in Hammonds Plains During the 1960's', we are looking for pictures that we can used in the presentation. Let us know if you know where we can get some. (Below Eisenhauer Box Shop on H P Road – from 1961).



Old Photos of Hammonds Plains

If you have old photos of the community, we would love to be able to scan them into our resource file. Please let us know if you would be interested in sharing them with us. Originals will be given back to you. E-mail Cathy Munroe at cathy_munroe@hotmail.ca, if you can help us out.

News From the Past

Hammonds Plains News from Halifax Herald – December 1960

The regular meeting of the Home & School Association was held in the school. In the absence of the President, Mrs T. Hunter, Vice President presided. It was decided that they would supply the treats for the school concert to be held at the school on December 20th.

Following the business session the remainder of the evening was spent in a Christmas Program conducted by Rev. Gerald Steeves, refreshments were served. The next meeting will be January 11th, at the school.

The sum of \$95.00 was realized at the apron and pantry sale held recently by Saint Nicholas Sewing Circle.

The annual Christmas entertainment of the Baptist Sunday school will be held on Saturday in the church at 7:30pm, there will be the usual exchange of gifts, it is hoped Santa will arrive in time to give a helping hand and enjoy a treat to be served in the Vestry.

On December 21st, the Young Peoples Group will put on an evening of entertaining in the Community Hall on 8pm. Proceeds will be used toward the new Church Hall Fund.

Weekend visitors at the home of Mrs. R. D. McOnie were Mr. and Mrs. Boyd Maxwell, Sackville.

Li. Robert Linton stationed at Trenton was a visitor during the week at the home of his brother-in-law and sister Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Smith.

Visitors at the home of Miss Mae Wright were Mr. and Mrs. Percy Wright.

Hammonds Plains Leaders of the Past

Norman Hayes - 1841 - 1893

During the 230+ year history of the Hammonds Plains area, few individuals processed the leadership abilities of Norman Hayes. Norman Hayes was not only a leader in establishing the Hayes Family legacy during the 1800's, but was a tireless business leader and politician who left an enduring mark on the community during the mid-late 1800's.

Norman was born in 1841 in Hammonds Plains, the third child of John Wesley and Sarah Ann Hayes. He was brought up in a house located on the Pockwock Road, near where White Hills Long Term Care Center is to-day. The Hayes family by the time of Norman's birth, had established themselves in the forestry trade.

As a youth, Norman attended school in Hammonds Plains. There is a record of Norman attending the Hammonds Plains School at age 18, in 1859, so it is thought that he obtained one of the highest levels of education in Hammonds Plains during the 1800's. It was customary for most students in Hammonds Plains, especially males, to have left the school system by their mid-teens. In all likelihood, Norman attended both the Upper Hammonds Plains and Hammonds Plains Schools during his childhood, as they are records of the Hayes children being in both schools, during the 1840 - 50's.

Norman followed in his father's footprints after he finished his schooling, joining his father in the lumbering business (which his father had established at the foot of Pockwock Lake). Teaming with brothers, Johnathan and Onesimus, Norman worked with his dad to create a very profitable business in the Hammonds Plains area.

Norman married Mary Mason (daughter of George and Elizabeth Mason of Hammonds Plains) in 1867 and together they had a large family consisting of 11 children. Tragedy struck several times and all three of the sons passed away as young children, due to various illnesses. The children, all born in Hammonds Plains, were Rosa, Bessie, Blanche, Lillian, Clara, Maude, May, Daisy, Norman, George, and Wesley.

Norman and Johnathan built neighbouring homes in Upper Hammonds Plains in the early 1860's (near where the road branched off to Kemptown).

By the 1860's, brothers Norman and Johnathon had taken over the family business and upgraded the mill on Pockwock Lake to create a modern two story mill. The business also included a large warehouse, and a cooper shop (located on Bedford Basin). The mill was equipped with state of the art equipment, which Norman had travelled to the United States to select. The mill cut all the barrel pieces that were then transferred to Bedford Basin to make the barrels, which were mostly shipped by train to get to their destination.

During the 1870's, Norman built a large home adjacent to the mill on Pockwock Lake. When finished it was one of the largest homes in the Hammonds Plains area, looking stately next to the mill facilities. During this time, Norman became involved in community affairs. A priority for his family had always been education, Norman was instrumental in establishing a school near Pockwock Home. He served as trustee for the school.

In 1880, Halifax County was incorporated into a municipality and Hammonds Plains was assigned a Council seat for government purchases (District 16). Norman was selected to be the first councilor of Hammonds Plains. This obviously had to take his time away from the mill business and he was required to travel to Halifax to attend Council meetings once a month (over several days). He was voted in once again in 1884, thus ending up serving two terms until 1888.

An example of one of his passed motions in council was the following from 1883, in regards to a traffic problem of the times:

“ ... that in view of the risk of life and property caused by the carelessness of the drivers of unloaded barrel and box teams leaving the ladders projecting from their sleds while unloaded, and the travelling public in danger of getting valuable sleds destroyed, a fine of \$2 be imposed” – Motion made by Norman Hayes.

During his time on council he served on several committees including, Public Accounts and Finance, Hospital for the Insane, Jury Lists and On Early Trial of Criminals in Jail. He was also a Commissioner of the Court House and it was also Justice of the Peace.

In 1888, Norman and Johnathon decided to sell their mill business and sold their vast holdings to the Haverstock and Moran Families. They then moved, Johnathan to the Annapolis Valley and Norman to Halifax. Norman passed away soon after in 1893 at age 52. He was buried in the Camp Hill cemetery on Robie Street.



A view of the Hayes business on Pockwock Lake. On the left side is the two story mill. In the center is Norman's Estate Home that he built.