

Hammonds Plains Historical Society

Web Site: www.hammondsplainshistoricalsociety.ca

Facebook: Hammonds Plains Historical Society

Impact of COVID-19 – November Update

It appears that the second wave of COVID has arrived. We previously had cancelled our general meeting for this month (November 30th) due to the uncertainty of the COVID situation. Our Board of Directors have recently now have decided to cancel our general meeting for January, as well.

At the present time, it appears that conditions will improve gradually as a vaccine comes aboard in 2021. We are hoping to once again hold general meetings in later 2021, but at what point still remains a big question mark. We will keep you informed as 2021 moves along.

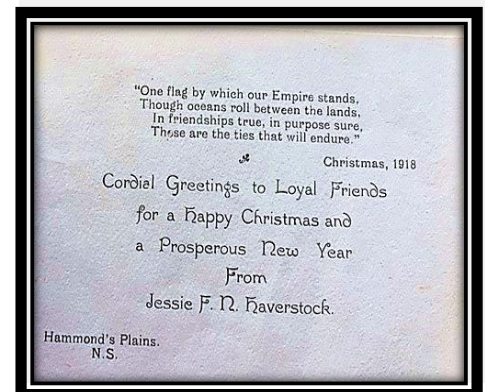
November Scenes of the Past



Hammonds Plains horse teams heading to the woods to begin logging operations – 1930's. (Unlike recent years, there used to be snow on the ground in November).



The Christmas Card which was once a big part of Christmas tradition in Hammonds Plains has slowly melted away, another victim of the internet age. Here's a look back at a personalized Christmas Card from 1918, send by and received by Hammonds Plains residents of the time. Interesting to note the simple form of the card (with no colour), as compared to one that one may receive to-day.



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.

[The following Article appeared in the November edition of the 'Friends of Hammonds Plains' magazine](#)

The Community Who had No Name

Throughout the years, Upper Hammonds Plains has played a historically prominent role in the legacy of African Nova Scotians. However, did you know that despite its exceedingly proud 200+ year heritage, the community actually had no official name for much of that history?

The origin of Upper Hammonds Plains dates back to 1815. This is when a large group of African refugees from the Chesapeake Bay area of Virginia, USA were transported to Halifax after the War of 1812, by British Admiral Alexander Cochrane with the promise of freedom from slavery. This group of refugees selected the lands north of the developing settlement of Lower Hammonds Plains as the site for their new home. Each family was allocated a ten acre lot. All told, approximately 102 lots (housing almost 500 folks) formed the original settlement.

There were many extreme hurdles faced during the establishment of this new township. Systemic racism, poor planting soil, bad weather, lack of resources/income were all challenges that got in the way of the community establishing roots. Many of the original residents either passed away due to illness or moved to a warmer climate during the first 20 years. Consequently, only 197 residents were still living in the community by 1838.

Despite the odds stacked against them, the refugees were determined to succeed. Several applied their knowledge and skill of milling lumber to set up small mills, thus ...

... providing a much needed economic stimulus. The community also leaned on both religion and education for support and hope.

The early settlers were deeply devoted to the Baptist faith and the church soon became the central focal point for the community, after the first meeting place was built during the 1820's. The power of religion has remained strong within the community since the early days, Fast forward to to-day, Emmanuel Baptist Church has one of the largest congregations in the province. The impact of education started when a school was built in the community in 1822 and free education was provided for all African residents. The teacher within the community often became the community catalyst for advocating for better living conditions.

Oddly enough, the community wasn't given an official name at the time of settlement and it remained that way for over 130 years. The community was known by many names in those early years, as evidence on 18th maps. It wasn't until finally in 1946, that the residents were finally successful in petitioning for an official name for their village, selecting the name of Upper Hammonds Plains. So, the community literally had no name for over a century.

To-day Upper Hammonds Plains stands as a historical symbol for the contribution of the African culture in our province, overcoming a past where their ancestors didn't have a name to call home by.



Upper Hammonds Plains from the 1940's

Postal Service in Hammonds Plains – A History

The need to transport and receive printed information has been a basic necessity residents have depended upon since permanent homes were first established in the Hammonds Plains area. In fact, the original road through the village was established as part of a network to transport mail from the colonial English capital of Halifax to the military stronghold of Annapolis Royal. Unfortunately, the road network was never finished and the mail route didn't endure.

During the late 1700's and early 1800's, most information gathered by the residents was passed either by neighbours or from folks outside the area travelling through on horseback, although some of the early residents did make trips to Halifax. There is some evidence that printed mail to Hammonds Plains was delivered by horseback from Halifax on an as need basis, but there was no official mail delivery service. Any official correspondence of the time, would have been coordinated through the British Post office and delivered through the Governor in Halifax.

As more folks settled in the developing village, the demand for mail service intensified. It is known that Thomas Johnson organized and ran the first post office in the community, starting around 1820. He was a well connected early resident, who was involved in several business dealings, including being a proprietor of an inn. He operated a rudimentary post office out of his home/inn that was located at where the Hammonds Plains Road meets the Lucasville Road. Mail would be transported to him by horseback from a courier travelling from Halifax to Chester. It is not known how often this service was. Johnson's son Thomas Jr. was a mail courier during the early years, as he is listed as a mail courier on the 1827 Hammonds Plains census.

In 1851, British North America is given responsibility to create its own postal delivery service by the British Government, leading to the first formalized mail service in the Nova Scotia colony. Then in 1867 with confederation, the Nova Scotian postal system becomes part of the Canadian Postal Service.

Soon after Nova Scotia takes over the responsibility of its postal system in 1851, a post office was established in Bedford. This led to letters being delivered to Hammonds Plains from that office. In 1864 a Way Office was established at English Corner (the area around where the Hammonds Plains Road meets the Pockwock Road) in a local residence. A Way Office was a place where residents could leave and pick up letters. A Post Carrier for Hammonds Plains was appointed to transfer mail from the Bedford Post Office to Hammonds Plains once a week. William Beales was the first person hired to deliver mail to the English Corner Office (a route of 14 Km's).

A Postmaster was appointed to run the English Corner Office, with James Thomson bring the first one. In 1876, the English Corner Office was upgraded to full Post office status (complete with the ability to hammer stamp envelopes to make the correspondence official mail), and Thomas Fitzmaurice was hired to deliver mail from the Bedford PO to English Corner. In 1878, a second delivery per week was authorized to English Corner.

The following postal hammer stamps imprints are actual stamp designs employed by the English Corner Postal Office (from 1878).



During the early years of the 20th century, a number of significant changes were made to postal routes in the Hammonds Plains area. First, in 1901, Lower Hammonds Plains set up its own post office, believed to be located in a residence near the intersection of Lucasville and Hammonds Plains Roads. Secondly, another post office was established at Pockwock Lake in 1905. During this time, the mail carrier would come from the Bedford Post Office, making stops at Hammonds Plains, English Corner, and then Pockwock Lake via horse and wagon. By 1905, mail delivery had increased to three times a week.

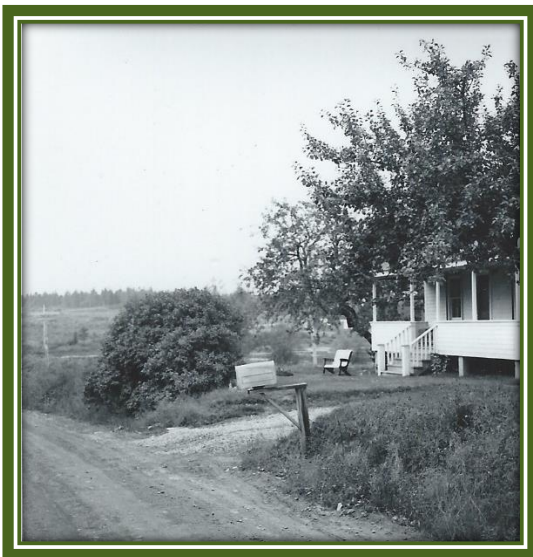
In 1913, an official rural mail delivery route was set up through the Bedford Post Office for Hammonds Plains. This led to the closing of the local post offices and the introduction of mail delivery to individual residences. All mail heading to Hammonds Plains was addressed as R R # 1 Bedford. Most of the residences in Hammonds Plains created a mail box for the mail carrier to drop letters in. As the mail delivery went from horse and wagon to a motorize vehicle, mail boxes were standardized on the roadside at the end of individual driveways or directly opposite the driveways. All mail boxes were located on the right side of the road, so the mail delivery person could drop off the mail to each mail box as they were heading from the Bedford Post Office. During this time, mail delivery became a daily process.

Hammonds Plains resident, Harry Smith was a long time and well known mail carrier during the mid-1900's. He was also known as a reliable taxi for many residents, as he often took passengers on his way to Bedford to collect the mail in the mornings.

By the 1970's, communal mail boxes were introduced, as the individual home mail boxes were phased out. Residents and businesses in the community were switched to site and box numbers as their mailing address, along with their R R #1 Bedford destination. Postal codes for Hammonds Plains were also introduced during the 1970's, as part of a national mail sorting restructuring plan.

With the introduction of the 911 civic address structure in the 1990's, mail addresses transferred over from the Rural Route number to one that just listed their street address and postal code. Also all mail started to be sorted at the mail post office in Halifax and then delivered directly to Hammonds Plains via mail carrier.

To-day, Canada Posts delivers mail to one's communal mail box 5 times per week, supplemented by packages being delivered by courier companies seven days a week.



Photos of Individual Mail Boxes at end of driveways – 1950's