P. Ennals

The profile of Main Street in the Maritimes is clearly evident in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia.

The Main Streets of Maritime Canada

by Peter Ennals

Those of us who share a fascination for buildings have rather acute powers of what I will call the ability to summon up images in the mind's eye. We are, as a group, people who work with the visual; by instinct and by training we are individuals who see more and retain more than the average person. For most of us then, the words 'main street' produce an especially vivid picture. It is also likely that each of you has a sense that there are some quite distinctive regional sterotypes of these main street images. Who among us cannot conjure up the picture of the western main street with its false fronted stores breaking the horizon across a wide expanse of roadway and recalling a boom period that accompanied the coming of the railway. How it contrasts with the more intimate galleried buildings that trail away from the massive parish church along the street villages of rural Quebec, which in turn differ from the solid brick and cast iron italinate commercial facades that so emphatically mark the business core of towns in southern Ontario. But what of the maritimes; what stereotype applies to this little studied region? I suspect that most readers have a harder time rendering an appropriate image of main Street in Atlantic Canada generally. Peggy's Cove and Petty Harbour yes, but Yarmouth and Caraquet no . . . This paper is a preliminary attempt to explore the images and structure of Main Street in the Maritimes. I stress preliminary, for the paper only promises to be descriptive and contextural; the real empirical analysis of the buildings along Main Street, their creators and their antecedents has yet to be done. I should also declare that I have chosen to limit my exploration to the towns of the region, and I have furthermore restricted my attention principally to the coastal towns—those places that probably served some form of port function during the nineteenth century. The concern then is for the towns that occupied the strand between the land and the water.

Scholars in a number of disciplines share an interest in urban places and the past quarter century has seen a very real flowering of our appreciation and understanding of the nature of these settlement entities. It is probably true to say that cities have received greater attention than towns, and considerable work has focused on ports as a distinctive city type both by classical urban historians and geographers but also by the so-called "new" urban historians. In Maritime Canada one is inevitably faced with the smaller port towns since except for Saint John and Halifax, there were no cities in the past. Because of their scale many of these small towns had the main street and port function in an overlapping relationship and for much of what I want to discuss the two areas will be assumed to be part of a single spatial assemblage. Indeed, without resorting to too much convoluted logic, I think one can argue that at the time of their creation, the line of buildings constituting the port was the Main Street of the settlement in terms of its real economic function and dynamism, if not in its formal institutional sense. Apart from this intellectual rationale one could make a pragmatic argument for the timeliness of such a study. A leading member of the Canadian planning profession commented recently that increasingly the new frontier of planning effort in this country is the waterfront and this is indeed the case of several towns and cities that recently have, or currently are, in the process of rehabilitating this part of their urban fabric.[1]

Let me return for a moment to the matter of the context of towns and of the images and meaning that they evoke. There can be little doubt that towns played a crucial role in the settlement process of North America. However much we argue that the settlement of this continent was a product of the rapid and westward assault by an agrarian and resource hungry army of Europeans, it is none the less true that towns were often the leading edge of the frontier. Their function was vital—to connect the resource hinterland with the metropolitain markets. At the same time the towns served to integrate the population of both rural folk and townsman alike into a larger social and political fabric. Under the enormously bouyant economy of the nineteenth century, towns sprang up almost overnight across this continent. Perhaps not surprisingly the occupants of these towns found this instantaneous phenomenon a source of wonder, and it only served to reinforce their faith in the ideology of progress and materialism. Optimism knew few bounds and many small town leaders assumed that their community's destiny was surely to become a city. An unrestrained boosterism was commonplace, and its rhetoric frequently assails our imagination. This was driven home to me again recently when I found myself in Petaluma and Castroville, California—the chicken and egg capital of the world and the artichoke capital of the work respectively.

There is of course a darker side to the small town image; for many who experienced life in these towns they meant pettiness narrowmindedness, and all that was stultifying. We can now look back and identify a rich genre of fictional writing on this continent that both parodies and probes the nature of life within towns. The work of American writers such as William Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, Sherwood Anderson, Thornton Wilder, and Canadians such as Leacock, Robertson Davies, Margaret Lawrence, and Alice Munro are but a few of those in this genre. But the point is that small towns have had, and continue to have, a powerful emotional force in our imagination and a significant economic position in our regional and national development. Much of the power of these forces has been written into the landscape of these settlements and one of the most expressive agencies of this are the buildings of Main Street.

Let me begin my examination of the structure of Maritime towns by noting something of their morphology or layout. It goes without saying that most of these places have as their genesis a site that could be readily exploited as a port. The most likely locations were at the mouth of a river, a location that allowed access inland, reduced the effect of tidal ebbs and flows within the port, and often provided a ready source of energy for grist and saw milling. Many of the larger urban places of the region had had a highly ordered cadastre or town plat imposed by colonial authorities in which grid-iron plans were modified to produce narrow water front lots, ample public space, or in the case of garrison towns—a parade square. Halifax, Saint John, Fredericton, Charlottetown were places: Lunenburg, St. Andrews, and Horton (now Wolfville).[2] No doubt this formal model effected the layout of towns outside the scope of colonial authorities but it is also true that many of these other places developed in a more spontaneous and organic way, sometimes in defiance of the planning proposals of the authorities. Land use even today can be quite chaotic and it is clear that in the past the manipulative hand of one or two individual merchants might greatly determine in justaposition of functions. Moreover, because many of these small towns have not experienced the transforming effects of a dynamic economy in the twentieth century, pre-industrial and pre-automotive spatial patterns have been preserved. In other cases fires, long the enemy of the wooded built towns of the region, have led to a re-sorting of the commercial core of these towns.

Generally the layout of main street is such that it was built on a single street parallel to the waterfront. Indeed it is often called Water Street and the buildings along one side of the street back directly onto the water. In other instances however, the water street is given over to wharf and warehouse functions and the more conventional commercial street is removed one or two blocks inland. Local site conditions are important in this matter; very steep slope conditions may require particular adaptations. Along the upper end of the Bay of Fundy, port and town are frequently separate entities because of the peculiarities of the tidal regime. For example, Sackville and Amherst both towns at the head of the Bay had their ports on rivers within the Tantramar marshes, locations generally too low and exposed for town-building. Yet both were port towns in the nineteenth century. Note too that in the Maritimes, as in Ontario and Quebec, the impact of the railroad, when it came, was to shift the locus of commercial development and town-building toward the railway depot. Depending upon the specifics of local land speculation at the time, or of the engineering difficulties of making railroad and port coincidental, this often produced an altogether new main street orientation.

A fundamental theme in understanding the development of these places and their land use configuations must surely be the social and entrepreneurial history of each. It is worth noting that the conventional historiography of nineteenth century Maritime Canada is rooted in its profoundly mercantile nature. While Ontario's small town history in the nineteenth century is the story of an economy and society that grows out of agriculture, the maritimes is one that grows out of its fundamental prosecution of international trade. It is generally well known that the Maritimes built and contributed very large number of wooden sail-

ing ships to the global carrying-trade fleet and that a Maritime merchant class profited handsomely from the movement and sale of timber, fish and sugar products, among other things, arount the so-called North Atlantic triangle.

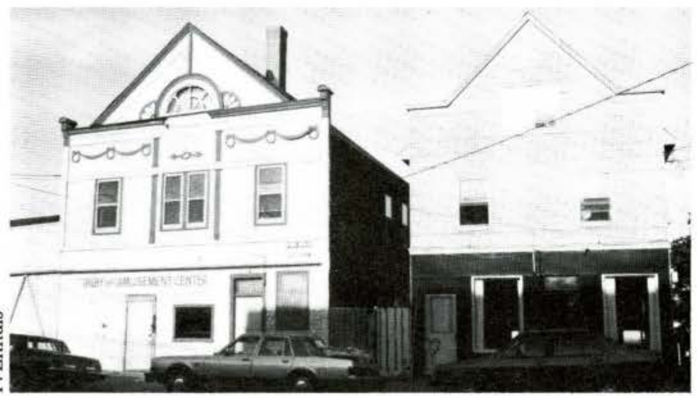
What is perhaps not so fully appreciated in this picture is that this merchant activity was carried on at several scales. Indeed there was a broadly based pyramid of mercantile activity that tended to see significant autonomus merchants based even in the small towns. Thus the term "local merchant" in the context of nineteenth century small town Maritime Canada meant much more then "storekeeper" or "wholesaler". Rather it implied someone who, in addition to supplying imported consumer necessities in exchange for local staples, was also likely to conduct a large and complex exchange with more remote hinterland areas often through loosely organized branch businesses and extended credit arrangements. The resources taken in were shipped in the merchant's own ships, sailed by local men, for sale in Liverpool or Boston, or other overseas ports. An intricate web of financial linkages tied these small town businesses together with larger merchant bankers in New England and Britain. Typical of these individuals was William Crane one of the leading merchants of Sackville, New Brunswick through the middle decades of the nineteenth century.[3] Crane entered into partnership first with a man named Turner and then later with Charles F. Allison and together they exchanged local staples for a variety of goods imported from Britian, Halifax, the American States and Quebec. A branch house of the orignal concern was established at Miramichi (Chatham, N.B.) some two hundred kilometers away, for the purpose of taking advantage of the important trans-Atlantic trade in timber from that port, and agricultural surpluses from the Sackville area went to supply the timber shanties of the Miramichi.

Despite its extensive trading connections, the firm's business was loosely structured, conducted on credit through agencies in distant ports. Wooden vessels, owned by Crane and Allison, and built and manned locally sought markets for New Brunswick timber in British ports, and endeavoured to make paying voyages, often via New England on return. Family links were important to the firm's business. William Crane's nephew came to Sackville to work in the store; another Crane ran a schooner on the firm's account in Northumberland Strait; and Halifax business was handled, in part, by Fairbanks and Allison, the successors of Enos Collins and Company, who for those of you who have been to Halifax in recent years were the merchant-banking house that built much of what is now the Historic Properties re-development on the waterfront of that city.

Crane became a leading figure in Sackville and throughout the county, later holding important local and provincial political offices. In addition, he was the principal financier for the local area, most notably being the source of mortgage money, and not surprisingly he ended up owning large amounts of real estate. Crane's house was built in 1832 and is now known as "Cranewood", an acknowledgement that his successor in the business and in the house was his son-in-law, Josiah Wood. It is one of the finer examples of the so-called "official Georgian" house to have been constructed in New Brunswick. When it was built it was located almost directly across the street from Crane's store, and Josiah Wood later was to litter the area behind the dwelling with a series of warehouses and out-buildings which served the business in its many dimensions—not the least of which was the Prince Edward Island Railroad that Wood established. Across the region this pattern was repeated in one form or another during the era. Fortunes were made and lost (Crane was said to be worth £120,000 when he died in 1853); some names have come down to us as major Canadian economic dynasties, eg. the Cunards of the Miramichi and Halifax, the Killams of Yarmouth—many more are hardly known outside the local area.

The townscapes that resulted from this high level of mercantile enterprise during the nineteenth century were a paradox of built form. On the one hand the merchants might build as Crane did a large and pretentious dwellings—aping the styles of British or American counterparts. On the other hand their merchant premises were, more often than not, extremely modest and functional buildings—not at all the palaces of commerce that one might expect from the scale of their operations. Of their houses I propose to say little more except that like mercantile urban places in many parts of the north Atlantic world, house and business were never far away from each other—as in the case of William Crane. It must be remembered that most of these small towns were not large enough to have fostered the beginnings of class distinct residential areas, let alone a suburb. Merchant and teamster, master mariner and cordwainer might easily live side by side in a social environment where rank was well known, and where economic symbiosis was probably relatively more important.

The reasons for the modesty of a merchant's "premises"—as they are often called in Atlantic Canada, may not be so obvious. Here we have to remember the nature of the mercantile function was to move goods—often very bulky goods such as squared timber, dried or pickled fish, bales


P. Ennals

Evidently the creators of Digby's main street had a more decorative touch than their successors.

of cotton, or coal from remote source locations to remote destinations. Many of these products never passed through the home port of the merchant except as a paper transaction. Under these circumstances the merchant's local warehousing needs might be restricted in scale to the amount of space required to house goods received from the for the local "store trade". Indeed, in many cases the premises probably served more as a chandlery for his own ships, and any others that might venture into the local port, than as a centre for organizing cargo. That said, the merchant's premises were by the standards of the towns they inhabited, substantial buildings.

Typically, the building was a three storey frame structure with its broad gable end fronting the street. The lower level provided accommodation for a store and offices; behind and above was the warehouse storage. Loading access to front and rear of these buildings was important since the sides frequently abutted neighbouring premises and thereby prevented side entry. The upper level of many of these stores was pierced then by one or more large loading doors to which goods might be hauled up or down using pulleys hung from short cranes set under the gable. While many of these buildings appear to have incorporated some sense of design into the store front sector of the facade, i.e. at street level, these elements were generally very restrained.

The overall impression or streetscape that resulted from this form of building was one of extreme angularity—produced mainly because of the repeated placement of gable end to the street. Unlike many other commercial blocks built elsewhere during the second half of the nineteenth century there was no continuity of roof lines or integration of cornice designs. Rather the appearance and scale is more like a late medieval English or south German market town.

Why should these towns seemingly depart from the canons of Main Street commercial design that were apparently infecting so much of Eastern North America at the time? What was the inspiration for these buildings if any? At this point I can only offer conjectural hypotheses. In an earlier paper on the vernacular housing of the Maritimes I have argued very strongly that the architecture of the region, like many other dimensions of culture, is in a very fundamental way derivative of that in New England.[4] Connections between the two regions were frequent and involved both economic and familial connections. It would hardly be surprising if Maritime merchants reproduced the utilitarian mercantile buildings they saw on the waterfronts of Portland and Portsmouth, Gloucester and Marblehead, Providence and New Haven. Clearly one needs to know much more about the commercial building traditions of

P. Ennals

The buildings of Montague Street, Lunenburg still house chandlers and marine machine shops.

the whole east coast. Some work has been done to develop biographical sketches of some of the buildings, especially in the province of Nova Scotia where the Heritage Trust has been most active.[5] A particularly comprehensive treatment is that carried out recently in Lunenburg, but much remains to be done.[6]

It would however, be wrong to give this image a broad regional currency. The Maritimes does have its industrial towns, and agricultural market towns, and the settlement landscape of Acadian areas—currently the most dynamic centres of development, are significantly different in a number of important ways. Nevertheless, I think it is now possible to define a genuine Main Street image or stereotype for a significant sector of the region. Perhaps it is now possible to add a new element to the file of Main Streets in your mind's eye and that on the strength of what I have suggested about the economy out of which they were created that this image will be something more than a mere cliche.

NOTES

1. Comment made by Gerald Hodge, Director of the School of Urban and Regional Planning, Queen's Univesity, at "Small Town Life in the Maritimes: an Interdisciplinary Workshop," Mount Allison University, February 1985.
2. See: J. David Wood, "Grand Design on the Fringes of Empire: New Towns for British North America," **Canadian Geographer** 26 (Fall 1982): 243-55.
3. Details of Crane's business are derived from Graeme Wynn, "Biography of William Crane," **Dictionary of Canadian Biography** Vol. VIII (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming). I am grateful to Wynn for permitting me to see a draft version of this entry.
4. Peter Ennals, "The Yankee Origins of 'Bluenose' Vernacular Architecture," **American Review of Canadian Studies** Vol. 12 (Summer 1982): 5-21.
5. See, for example: **South Shore: Seasoned Timbers** Vol. 2 (Halifax: Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, 1974): 63, 118.
6. William Plaskett, **Lunenbury—an Inventory of Historic Buildings** (Lunenburg: Lighthouse Publishing, 1984).

NOTES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

36. AO, RG15, Series V-2, folder 17.
37. AO, RG15, Series E-1, vol. 2/7, telegram, W.J. Palmer to Kivas Tully, 19 June 1873.
38. AO, RG15, Series V-2, folder 17; AO, RG15, Series E-1, vol. 26/10; AO, RG15, Series E-4, vol. 11/4; and Kivas Tully, "Appendix: Chief Architect's Report," in: **Annual Report of the Ontario Department of Public Works . . .** (for 1869, 1872, 1873, and 1874).
39. Pleasance Crawford, "H.A. Engelhardt (1830-1897): Landscape Designer," pp. 167-171; and Edwinna von Baeyer, **Rhetoric and Roses. A History of Canadian Gardening. 1900-1930** (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), p. 144.
40. Edwin C. Jellett, **Germantown Gardens and Gardeners** (Philadelphia: Horace F. McCann, Publisher, 1914), pp. 56-57, 93.
41. Elsie Pomeroy, **William Saunders and His Five Sons. The Story of the Marquis Wheat Family** (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1956), pp. 15-16.
42. Edwin C. Jellett, **Germantown Gardens and Gardeners,** p. 56; James Mills, "Report of the President of the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, for . . . 1882," in: **Annual Report of the Ontario College of Agriculture for 1882,** p. 17; and D.W. Beadle, "Report of the Committee Charged with the Oversight of Fruit and Forest Planting at the Agricultural College, Guelph," in: **Annual Report of the Fruit Growers' Association of . . . Ontario for . . . 1882,** p. 145.
43. Kivas Tully, "Appendix: Chief Architect's Report," In: **Annual Report of the Ontario Department of Public Works for 1873,** p. 10; and University of Guelph Archival Collections (hereafter UGAC), RE2 OAC AO55, plan of grounds, 1873.
44. Alexander M. Ross, **The College on the Hill. A History of the Ontario Agricultural College, 1874-1974,** p. 22.
45. AO, MU3292-3, Box 1, Fruit Growers' Association of Ontario Minute Book, minutes of Directors' Meeting, 20 September 1880, and minutes of Executive Committee meeting, 16 November 1880.
46. James Mills, "Report of the President . . . for 1882," p. 17.
47. D.W. Beadle, "Report of the Committee . . .," p. 145; and Ao, GR15, Series E-1, vol. 21/5, letters, William Saunders to Kivas Tully, 12 May 1882.
48. UGAC, RE2 OAC AO64, "Plan Showing Fire Protection"; and Kivas Tully, "Appendix: Chief Architect's Report," in: **Annual Report of the Ontario Department of Public Works for 1881,** p. 9.
49. Nancy Sadek to Pleasance Crawford, interview, Guelph, Ontario, 16 April 1985.
50. AO, RG15, Series E-1, vols. 21-22.

Nova Scotia Heritage Property Act

Complied by Richard MacKinnon

The Nova Scotia Heritage Property Act was passed in 1980. The Act provides for the registration, at both the provincial and municipal levels of government, of buildings, streetscapes and areas of historic, architectural or cultural value. Those properties registered by the Province are thereby given protection in law against demolition or substantial alteration of the exterior, except under the authority of an Order-in-Council. In the case of municipally registered properties, the authority rests with the municipal councils.

Since 1980, some forty-nine properties have been registered by the Province. Of these, thirteen are buildings owned by the Province, such as Province House and Uniacke House. Other than for the buildings provincially owned, a property case study has been prepared. These studies consist of a complete deed search, a description of historical associations, an architectural analysis and a discussion of the context or landmark status of a property. In most cases copies of these studies are available upon request. The following is a list of registered properties:

	PROPERTY	LOCATION
1)	Marconi Towers	Birch Grove, Cape Breton County
2)	Lyceum	George Street, Sydney
3)	Saint Patrick's Church	Esplanade Street, Sydney
4)	Saint John's Church	Town of Lunenburg
5)	McCulloch House	Town of Pictou
6)	Saint Paul's Church	Grand Parade, Halifax
7)	Government House	Barrington Street, Halifax
8)	Province House	Hollis Street, halifax
9)	Perkins House	Town of Liverpool
10)	Cossitt House	Charlotte Street, Sydney
11)	Old Halifax Court House	Spring Garden Road, Halifax
12)	Lawrence House	Maitland, Hants County
13)	Haliburton House	Town of Windsor
14)	Old Meeting House	Barrington, Shelburne County
15)	Prescott House	Starr's Point, Kings County
16)	Ross-Thompson House	Town of Shelburne
17)	Uniacke House	Mount Uniacke, Hants County
18)	Quaker House	Dartmouth
19)	Wallace MacAskill House	St. Peter's, Richmond County
20)	Old Sydney Mines Post Office	Sydney Mines, Cape Breton County
21)	Old Halifax Academy	Sackville Street, Halifax
22)	MacRae-Bittermann House	Middle River, Victoria County
23)	Gilbert H. Grosvenor Hall	Baddeck, Victoria County
24)	Little Dutch Church	Brunswick Street, Halifax
25)	St. Mary's Basilica	Spring Garden Road, Halifax
26)	St. George's Church	Charlotte Street, Halifax
27)	Cornish Pump House	Town of Stellarton
28)	Lunenburg County Academy	Town of Lunenburg
29)	Parker Farm	Belleisle, Annapolis County
30)	St. Mary's Polish Church	Wesley Street, Sydney
31)	Holly Ghost Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church	West Street, Sydney
32)	St. Philip's African Orthodox Church	Hankard Street, Sydney
33)	Universalist Unitarian Church	Inglis Street, Halifax
34)	d'Entremont House	Pubnico, Yarmouth County
35)	Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Farm	Cole Harbour, Halifax County
36)	Troop Barn	Granville Centre, Annapolis County
37)	Chignecto Marine Transport Railway	Fort Lawrence, Tidnish Bridge and Dock, Cumberland County
38)	Adams-Ritchie House	town of Annapolis Royal
39)	Bollard House	Dresden Row, Halifax
40)	Peter Smyth House	Port Hood, Inverness County
41)	Richard Brown House	Brown Street, Sydney Mines
42)	Yuill Barn	Old Barns, Colchester County
43)	Bard John MacLean House & Cemetery of Bard John MacLean	Glenbard, Antigonish County
44)	Belliveau House (former Glebe House of Abbé Sigogne)	Pointe de l'Englise, Digby County
45)	de Gannes-Cosby House	Town of Annapolis Royal
46)	The Barracks	Starr's Point, Kings County
47)	Goat Island Baptist Church	Upper Clements, Annapolis County
48)	Centenary United Church	Granville, Annapolis County
49)	St. Edward's Church	Clementsport, Annapolis County