

Peter McNab's Island

Scottish Settlement on McNabs Island 1782 to 1847

By

Vanessa Lynn Smith

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Approved: Jonathan Fowler
(Committee chair)

Approved: Paul Erickson

Approved: Ronald McDonald

Date:

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Abstract

On Christmas Day, 1782, or so the story goes, Peter McNab purchased the largest island in Halifax Harbour, which carries his name to this day. Folk and literary tradition has portrayed Peter McNab, a native of Highland Perthshire, as a Scottish gentleman “playing the laird” and deliberately creating an island community based on Scottish systems of farming, with tenant farmers and shepherds recruited from his homeland to work the land on his behalf. His son, Peter McNab II is said to have followed in his father’s footsteps until his death in 1847. This vision moved further into popular perception through the novel, *Hangman’s Beach*, by Nova Scotia historian Thomas Raddall. Through the use of historical cartography, archaeological reports, material culture, period artwork, deeds, and other archival materials, I argue that this representation cannot be supported by concrete evidence. I also explore the sources for this romantic historiography, including the influence of tartanism in early 20th century Nova Scotia. The results of the research suggests a more subtle expression of identity and Scottishness on the part of the McNabs, elder and son, as well as a more complex and dynamic community on the island than is expressed in the poetic image of a kilt-wearing Scot and his transplanted clan of shepherds.

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As the summers went by, the short Nova Scotia summers, McNab had a growing itch to own this pleasant retreat in the harbour mouth. Not just the beach or the cove. The whole island... He would build there a good house for himself, and cottages for servants and tenants... His retainers would clear away the woods... the clearings would make pasture for sheep, great flocks of sheep, as he had seen them grazing on the lands of gentry in Scotland. And in this delightful scene, he would wear the kilt and play the laird in the good old Highland fashion. (Raddall 1966:11)

from *Hangman's Beach* – Thomas H. Raddall

On Christmas Day, 1782, or so the story goes, Peter McNab, the first of that name, purchased the largest island in Halifax Harbour and began to establish himself and his family, as well as a number of tenant farmers, on the land. Folk tradition records that Peter McNab was Scottish by birth, but here the varying accounts become fuzzy. Some record him as being a near relative of the chief of clan McNab, hailing from the Breadalbane district of Perthshire (Dobson 1985:206). Others list him as arriving from Inverness in the north of Scotland.¹ Peter McNab is variously described as a lieutenant in the British Navy, arriving in Halifax after serving in the siege of Louisbourg, as a coxswain to Edward Cornwallis, as a merchant, and as a simple shoemaker or cordwainer, an older term for a shoemaker working in fine leathers.²

Despite this confusion, the folk history of the island depicts Peter McNab as an aspiring Scottish gentleman, eager to build a community on his newly purchased island and set himself in the role of lord (or, in Scottish terminology, laird) with tenants recruited from his homeland to clear and farm the land. In time, these sources suggest

¹ Nova Scotia Archives (hereafter NSA) MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

² NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908, NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour* NSA MG 50 Vol. 27 #9 Rosalind McKee *McNabs of McNabs Island*, NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 33D *The Most Historic Island in the Vicinity of Halifax* and Oxford English Dictionary online (for cordwainer definition)

that his son, Peter McNab II, hereafter Peter II, followed closely in his father's footsteps, overseeing the tenants on the island and continuing the distinctly Scottish lifestyle initiated by the elder McNab (Kinsman 1995:14).³ This particular vision moved further into popular perception through the 1966 novel *Hangman's Beach* by Nova Scotian historian, Thomas Raddall, as well as through other literary sources (e.g. Lancaster 1943).

For this thesis, my research investigates the patterns of settlement on McNabs Island during the time of Peter McNab and Peter McNab II, roughly 1782 until 1847, when the land passed to Peter II's sons and references to a Scottish lifestyle on the island begin to taper off. Were the first Peter McNab, and his son after him, "playing the laird" by replicating the traditional social arrangements and systems of tenant farming the elder McNab would have experienced in his native Scotland on a new landscape and, in what manner did their intentions shape the community on the island? Through an exploration of not only the lives of Peter McNab and Peter II, but also the lives of the various island tenants from this time period, as well as the marks they collectively left on the landscape, I argue that the prevailing folk and literary traditions are not supported by concrete evidence. Instead, my examination of archival sources, historical and modern mapping and surveys, period artwork, and material culture evidence suggests a more subtle expression of identity and Scottishness, as well as a more complex and dynamic community on the island than is expressed in the poetic image of a kilt-wearing Scot and his transplanted clan of shepherds.

³ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908, NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #12139

And what of this image of Peter McNab? Certainly this romantic vision came from somewhere, was adopted as a popular idea, and was perpetuated well into the mid 20th century. To supplement my argument, this work examines the creation of this portrayal, the historiography of Peter McNab and Peter II as aspiring Scottish lairds to their island community, detailing some of the prevailing images and discussing their foundations, where known.

CHAPTER ONE – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Shortly following the British settlement of the town of Halifax in 1749, the governor of the newly established colony, Edward Cornwallis, was granted “The Island called Cornwallis Island situate in the Mouth of the Harbour of Chebucto with three small Islands annexed with Stony Beech thereto”.⁴ Two years later, in 1752, Cornwallis transferred the whole of the 400-hectare island to his young nephews, James, Henry, and William Cornwallis.⁵ This original name, Cornwallis Island, derives from the family’s period of ownership. Far from an isolated location, the island was desirable for agriculture, as well as for its abundant timber resources, so much so that one Halifax resident complained over this nepotistic allotment of valuable resources, “... he [Cornwallis] gave to his family the very best island in the harbour of Chebucto... which in my opinion should be given in small farms to the many settlers of Halifax, instead of cooping them up on a small isthmus.”⁶

Henry, James and William Cornwallis never set foot on the island that bore their family name. Over the next 30 years, their island was leased to various local tenants, who made use of the island’s forests for timber and beaches for fish processing (Friends of McNabs Island Society 2008:51-52). By 1764, Henry Cornwallis had died and James and Elizabeth, the Countess Dowager Cornwallis, mother and legal guardian of the infant

⁴ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Vol. 1 p. 135

⁵ Friends of McNabs Island Society *McNabs Island Quick Facts*
<http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/QuickFacts.htm> and NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Vol. 1 p. 135

⁶ Friends of McNabs Island Society *European Exploration and Settlement*
<http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/history/hist-s2.html#europe>

William, assigned Richard Bulkeley the task of acting as their attorney in Halifax and leasing the island as he saw fit.⁷

One of the first leases for Cornwallis Island issued by Bulkeley went to Thomas Day in 1765. This document leased the entire island for a period of 25 years and compelled Day to plant an orchard of at least 100 apple trees within three years of the lease's commencement. In addition, any land cleared by the tenant was to be "sufficiently fenced and inclosed".⁸ Almost immediately, Thomas Day assigned the lease to another man, John Day, Esquire.⁹ In the same year, John Day transferred the lease to John Freave, a gentleman of Halifax.¹⁰ A local history states that, by 1766, a number of other leases had been issued, including one to a Peter McNab to conduct a fishery business at Maugher's Beach (Parker 2012:11).

In 1773, Joseph Peter, acting as agent for the Cornwallis family, placed the island for sale for the noteworthy sum of £1000.¹¹ Perhaps due to the price, the island remained unsold until 1783, when Peter McNab purchased the island for the full asking price.¹² In addition, McNab was required to pay Richard Bulkeley £313 for supposed improvements to the island. A letter written by Peter McNab to William Cornwallis shortly after the sale expressed his indignation at this additional cost. McNab was incensed that Richard Bulkeley would not allow him to view the account books that would justify the added

⁷ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Cornwallis to Bulkeley Vol.7 p.4

⁸ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Bulkeley to Day Vol.7 p.5

⁹ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Day to Day Vol. 7 p. 6

¹⁰ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Day to Freave Vol.7 p.6

¹¹ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*, also online *Halifax County, Nova Scotia Hewitt Histories*, accessed at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nshalifa/HewittChapters.html>

¹² NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Cornwallis to McNab Vol.19 p.270

expense and that Governor Parr had sided with Bulkeley on the matter. He also expressed frustration at damage done to the island by Bulkeley's timber harvesting activities.¹³

What can be said of this first Peter McNab? By all accounts, primary and secondary, Peter McNab was Scottish by birth. Beyond this, an array of sources offers dramatically varying descriptions of McNab's ancestry and background. McNab family tradition records that this first Peter came to Nova Scotia as a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. This source states that he arrived in Halifax after serving at the siege of Louisbourg, sometime after 1763.¹⁴ Another source puts him as a "native of Brandalbane, Perthshire" coming to North America as an officer with the British Army during the American Revolutionary War.¹⁵ One source states that he received McNabs Island because he was coxswain to Governor Cornwallis.¹⁶ *The Encyclopedia of Canada* lists him as a naval officer who settled in Halifax around 1758 (Wallace 1936:216-217). *The Directory of Scottish Settlers in North America 1625-1825 Vol. V* states that Peter McNab was born in 1735 in Breadalbane, Perthshire, emigrating in 1759 (Dobson 1985:206). Another genealogy concurs that he was born circa 1735.¹⁷ Handwritten notes beside archived clippings of H. W. Hewitt's *Dartmouth Patriot* articles on the island's history state that Peter McNab was a native of Inverness, arriving in Halifax in 1754.¹⁸ A variety of primary and secondary sources list him as a merchant, either a cordwainer or

¹³ NSA MG 4 Vol. 106 #2 Letter from Peter McNab to William Cornwallis Esquire

¹⁴ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

¹⁵ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 33D *The Most Historic Island in the Vicinity of Halifax*

¹⁶ NSA MG 50 Vol. 27 #9 Rosalind McKee *McNabs of McNabs Island*

¹⁷ NSA MG 50 Vol. 27 #9 Rosalind McKee *McNabs of McNabs Island*

¹⁸ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

shoemaker.¹⁹ In confirmation of his profession, the deeds for his various property transactions most frequently identify Peter McNab as a cordwainer.²⁰ As well, even the earliest deeds state that Peter McNab is from Halifax (for example, Bell to McNab 1774, Book 12, p.439, White to McNab 1773 Book 12, p.434). This suggests that he had been established as a citizen of the town for some time prior to the drafting of the deed, not newly arrived from Scotland.

Fortunately, an advertisement in the *Royal Gazette*, dated July 5, 1796, clarifies Peter McNab's time frame in Halifax. In the listing, Peter McNab informs readers he intends to close his business and gives thanks to the military and Halifax community for their custom "during the thirty-three years he has followed his business in this place."²¹ By this account, Peter McNab would have commenced his business dealings in Halifax around 1763.

While no documents could be located that definitively link Peter McNab to a particular area of Scotland, a number strongly suggest that his is connected with the McNabs of Perthshire. These include a family history account that indicates Peter McNab sent his son, Peter II, to be educated near Perth and a series of letters between Perthshire-based Robert MacNab and James Colquhoun that relate to Peter II's time in Scotland.²² One of these letters specifically mentions an uncle to Peter II who is based in Suie (which would likely be Suie Lodge, near the McNab clan seat at Killen, but might be Suie farther

¹⁹ NSA MG 50 Vol. 27 #9 Rosalind McKee *McNabs of McNabs Island*, NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

²⁰ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Peter McNab to Peter McNab Vol 33 p.74, Peter McNab to Philip Marchinton Vol. 23 p. 31 (as well as numerous other deeds)

²¹ NSA Newspaper Collection *Royal Gazette* July 5, 1796, p. 1

²² NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908 and NSA MG4 Vol. 106 #1 Letter to James Colquhoun Esq

north in the Spey Valley). Certainly, the majority of the secondary sources agree on this area of Scotland and the reference to Inverness seems to be an outlier.

Once in Halifax, Peter McNab established himself as an entrepreneur and attained a level of status in the community. Hewitt states that he was an “enterprising business man” who leased a part of then Cornwallis Island and established a business of fishing and sending ships to Boston and Philadelphia.²³ Author Thomas Raddall’s research notes on the island repeat that Peter McNab set up as merchant “dealing in codfish for export and importing British manufactured goods”.²⁴ The records and minutes of the North British Society, a Scottish fraternal organization, show that Peter McNab was a member from 1770 to 1782, holding the position of Moderator from September 1772 until November 1777, and Deputy Moderator in 1780.²⁵ In 1781, Peter McNab is recorded as serving on a Grand Jury (Akins 1973:81). Finally, church records chronicle that while he arrived a bachelor, he soon married Susannah Kuhn (or Koun), on November 23, 1763.²⁶ Collectively, these activities paint a picture of a newcomer to the area enthusiastically and successfully putting down roots in his adopted community and ascending the social ladder from anonymous emigrant to respected citizen.

²³ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

²⁴ Dalhousie Archives 20.5 Hangman’s Beach – Research Materials, Thomas H. Raddall collection *The Actual McNab Family*

²⁵ Internet Archive Annals of the North British Society 1768-1903 accessed at <https://archive.org/details/annalsnorthbriti00nortuoft>

²⁶ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at: <https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1700-6&Event=marriage&ID=191116>

Peter McNab's Island

Following the purchase of the island in 1783, Peter McNab began the process of occupying and developing the island for himself and his family, as well as populating the area with tenants. One source states that one of his initial activities following the purchase was the construction of a home on the island.²⁷

A significant amount of information about life on McNabs Island comes from a 1908 letter, titled *Narrative re MacNab's Island*, sent from Margaret (Cassels) Cook (and her husband Archibald Cook) to Chelsea Cassels, her niece. Margaret is Peter McNab's great-great-granddaughter and had spent time on the island as a girl. In the letter, hereafter the Cook-Cassels letter, she recalls family history on the island, primarily from the later period when Peter II owned the island, but also including information on the elder Peter and his activities.²⁸

Cook indicates that the original McNab house was located "at the head of the Cove just N. E. of where the Canteen now is by the old willow trees", describing it as a "long, low stone house" with a large drawing room and spacious pantry. The letter goes on to recount the deep set windows, the high, shallow mantle pieces, doors and bannisters of mahogany, white paneled walls and ceiling moldings. By the later period of Peter II, the house is furnished with Chippendale furniture and boasts a good deal of china, called "oriental, blue and white" and a punch bowl that would become a family heirloom.²⁹

²⁷ NSA MG100 Vol. 184 #330 "The Most Historic Island in the Vicinity of Halifax"

²⁸ NSA Narrative re MacNab's Island MG100 Vol. 184 #32A

²⁹ NSA Narrative re MacNab's Island MG100 Vol. 184 #32A

Figure 1 - *View of McNab's Island with Halifax in the Background*



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

In 1849, an advertisement describes the original McNab house, called “The Homestead”, as “a comfortable Two Story House, contains five rooms, a Kitchen, and Pantry, on the first floor, six Rooms on the second floor, with a large frost proof Cellar under the whole; there are three large and commodious Barns, with Stabling for 15 to 20 head of Cattle, and room for 70 to 80 tones of Hay”.³⁰ This building is depicted in the c.1860 painting by Captain Westcote Lyttleton, *View of McNab's Island with Halifax in the Background*, and in an undated painting, *McNab Cottage*, by an unknown artist (Friends of McNabs Island Society 2008:76).³¹ The Lyttleton painting (Figure 1) shows a story and a half or two story house with dormer windows, overlooking McNab's Cove

³⁰ NSA Newspaper Collection *The Nova Scotian*, January 8, 1849, p. 16, column 4

³¹ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.179 location 42-12 *View of McNab's Island with Halifax in the Background* c. 1860

and the northern part of the island. A low fence separates the house from the field in the foreground of the painting and a flagpole has been sketched in pencil near the house. The undated painting shows a similar building from a slightly different angle. This building has a second chimney and is clearly a two-story house. The flagpole is also present in this image.

Despite this reported elegance, Peter McNab and his family were not full time residents of the island. During the winter months, the family reportedly resided in the town.³² Shortly following the purchase of Cornwallis Island, Peter McNab's house on Barrington Street was sold at auction. The advertisement in the *Nova Scotia Gazette* describes this house thusly:

a Large Double Storey House well finished with 9 fire Places and 1 Oven, an Excellent Cellar Throughout the whole, a Large Back Yard Paved, with an Exceedingly good Well of Water, and a small Garden with many other conveniences.³³

Given that the McNabs had surrendered their Barrington Street home, where might this town residence be located? A number of deeds from the 1770s through the 1790s reference mortgages on property in Foreman's Division at Duke and Granville Streets, so it is possible that the McNabs' house in town was located in this vicinity.³⁴

As well as home construction, Peter McNab was also beginning to carve out an agricultural presence on his newly acquired island. A diarist of the time, William Dyott, noted that in 1787, only a "small proportion" of the land was under cultivation. The same source later specifies that there were "not more than twenty to thirty acres free from

³² NSA Narrative re MacNab's Island MG100 Vol. 184 #32A

³³ NSA Newspaper Collection *Nova Scotia Gazette* September 9, 1783, p. 3

³⁴ for example: NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Peter McNab to George McIntosh Vol. 29 p.16 or D. Tracey to Peter McNab Vol. 11 p. 253

wood” (Dyott 1907:31 & 34). In his account, Dyott notes the use of a type of wooden pole fencing, although his description does not match any known style of enclosure and had debatable utility for stock containment (Sanders 1990:7). Possibly, the fencing served to designate the boundaries of land leased to current and prospective tenants.

Notwithstanding this questionable fencing, at this time, the island residents were also raising livestock, particularly sheep. The census of 1783 records 200 sheep, 4 horses and 28 cows present on the island.³⁵ Over time, Hewitt relates that Peter McNab came to be known as “Governor McNab” to the island community.³⁶

Beyond these building and farming activities, Peter McNab also encouraged the well to do of Halifax society to make use of the land for entertainment and sport. William Dyott writes enthusiastically of a chowder supper and a shooting party on the island in 1787. He remarks that this manner of social event was a frequent occurrence (Dyott 1907:31-32).

A notice from the *Royal Gazette* of June 1790 advertises the opening of a “House of Entertainment at the Mansion House on Mr. McNab’s Island” by local businesswoman, Mrs. Mary Roubalet. In the advertisement, she promises that, “Gentlemen and Ladies may be accommodated with Dinner, Tea, Coffee &c. on the shortest Notice”. She advises interested parties to leave word at Mr. McNab’s house in the town.³⁷ Sanders (1990) speculates that Mary Roubalet must have been a relative of Peter McNab, given his willingness to permit and facilitate her business on the island (9).

³⁵ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

³⁶ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

³⁷ NSA Newspaper Collection *Nova Scotia Gazette* newspaper, June 15, 1790

In later years, the island continued to be used for sport and pleasure. The Cook-Cassels letter mentions a visit to Peter II by Lord John Lennox and his fellows to shoot woodcock.³⁸ Later, the author fondly states that Peter II and his wife, Joanna, “brought together under their roof, on the happiest of terms, priests and parsons and all sorts and conditions of men, with the official people of the day, and the sailors and soldiers stationed at Halifax, among them the old Queen’s Father, the Duke of Kent”.³⁹

In 1792, shortly before his death, the elder Peter McNab transferred ownership of the island to his son, Peter II.⁴⁰ Peter McNab died on November 3, 1799 at the age of 69 (according to the Stayner Collection) or 64 (according to his gravestone).⁴¹ The *Halifax Journal* of November 7, 1799 recorded the passing of an “old and respectable inhabitant of this town”.⁴² He is buried in St. Paul’s graveyard, with Henry, one of his young sons. When his wife, Susannah, died in 1822, she was buried in the plot beside him.⁴³

An inventory and valuation of his personal possessions after his death suggests a well furnished home, including mahogany desk, bookcase, tea table and dining table, silver teapot and other silver for tea service, china cups and saucers.⁴⁴ The valuation also lists debts and mortgages taken out by McNab but makes no mention of property. Possibly when he transferred the island to Peter II in 1792, Peter and Susannah moved into a rented house in town or lived in one of their sons’ properties.

³⁸ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

³⁹ NSA Narrative re MacNab’s Island MG100 Vol. 184 #32A

⁴⁰ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Peter McNab to Peter McNab Vol 33 p.74

⁴¹ NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #N8269

⁴² NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #6928

⁴³ NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #N8269, NSA Deaths, Burials and Probates 1749-1799 L-Z (Marble)

⁴⁴ NSA RG 48 Wills and Probate Peter McNab

Peter McNab II

As a child of eleven, Peter II was sent to study in Scotland and spend time with his McNab relatives. The Cook-Cassels letter states that Peter II was initially under the care of a grand-uncle, also called Peter MacNab.⁴⁵ Later, he was given over to Captain Robert MacNab of Dundurn and Robert's brother, who was then the MacNab clan chief, residing at the clan base in Killen.⁴⁶ Based on the dates of the letters, this "old laird" would have been the somewhat infamous and decidedly flamboyant Francis MacNab, the clan's 16th chief.⁴⁷ This noteworthy individual with his flair for the dramatic would have been larger than life to a young boy of eleven. Eventually, Peter II was sent from Scotland to England for further schooling. Here he was under the supervision of one James Colquhoun, who appears to have been acting as a legal representative for the Halifax McNabs.⁴⁸

After his return to Halifax, Peter II received title to McNabs Island in 1792, stepping into his father's shoes and the responsibilities inherent in his new role as the island's landlord.⁴⁹ In his article series, H. W. Hewitt contends that residents also knew Peter II as "Governor McNab".⁵⁰ It appears that, at some points in his writings, Hewitt

⁴⁵ The primary and secondary sources use both the "Mac" and "Mc" spellings for the family name. As a broad statement, it seems the family members in Scotland make use of the original "Mac" spelling (from Scottish Gaelic, meaning "son of"), whereas the spelling shifts to "Mc" for those in Nova Scotia, and is further shortened to "M'Nab" in at least one source (Annals of the North British Society). As well, the name occasionally appears as "McNabb".

⁴⁶ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

⁴⁷ *Clan MacNab* accessed at <http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/m/macnab2.html> and *Lairds and Lords of Loch Tayside MacNab Lands* accessed at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/tayside/chapter14.htm>

⁴⁸ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908 and colq letter

⁴⁹ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Peter McNab to Peter McNab Vol.33 p.74

⁵⁰ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

confuses and combines the histories of the two Peter McNabs but it is equally possible that, in taking possession of the island and associated management of the land and tenants, Peter II assumed the same familiar title.

Following in his father's footsteps, Peter II is also reputed to have brought shepherds from Scotland.⁵¹ Fortunately more information has been preserved concerning Peter II's agricultural activities and ambitions. The census of 1793 lists a Peter McNab Jr. [Peter II] on the island, as a farmer owning 2 horses, 12 cows and 200 sheep.⁵² In a later survey, in 1827, Peter II is listed as the head of a household with four women, as well as four servants, one female and three male. He personally has 90 acres under cultivation, with 177 acres collectively farmed by all residents of the island, primarily grains and potatoes. As well, he is recorded as owner of 5 horses, 7 horned cattle, 450 sheep and 4 pigs. Between 1783 and 1827, Peter II more than doubled the size of his sheep flock, suggesting a decided shift towards commercial sheep farming. Collectively, the island's stock was 32 head of cattle, 550 sheep, and 14 pigs.⁵³ The family history written by Margaret Cook says that more than half of the island was given over to sheep grazing during this time period.⁵⁴

An 1820 letter to Peter II, signed "Dalhousie," further illustrates Peter II's interest in sheep breeding as well as his network of elite social connections.⁵⁵ The letter writer is most likely the Earl of Dalhousie, George Ramsay (Sanders 1990:13). Dalhousie, a

⁵¹ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

⁵² NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

⁵³ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

⁵⁴ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

⁵⁵ NSA MG4 No.106 #3 Letter from Dalhousie to P. McNab Esq.

fellow Scot and Presbyterian, was at that point Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia and was known for a keen interest in agricultural improvement.⁵⁶ The letter offers Peter II use of his ram and promotes the wool qualities of the South Down sheep. In the same year, Peter II acted as a cattle judge at the exhibition held on Camp Hill (Akins 1973:193).

Like his father before him, Peter II married a daughter of one of the island's tenants. In 1792, Peter II wed Joanna Culliton, daughter of Thomas Culliton.⁵⁷ While Peter II is at all times listed as a Presbyterian like his father, the Cullitons (sometimes spelled Culleton or Cullerdon) and his new wife were Roman Catholic.⁵⁸ Family history recalls Joanna as being "tall and fair" and amongst the McNabs, she was known as "The Saint."⁵⁹ It appears that both Peter II and Joanna retained their respective faiths, however, their wedding was recorded at St. Paul's Church and their children baptized at St. Matthew's, both Protestant churches (Grey-Leblanc & Leblanc 2009:30). When Joanna died in 1827, she was "carried to the grave by the tenants belonging to her own communion" and was buried in the McNab family graveyard on the island.⁶⁰ In 1832, Peter II married his second wife, Mrs. Margaret Hopkins, a widow from Liverpool.⁶¹

In addition to developing the agricultural prospects of the island, Peter II also maintained a presence in the Halifax community. He served in the Militia, in the rank of

⁵⁶ Dictionary of Canadian Biography: http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ramsay_george_7E.html

⁵⁷ NSA St. Matthews church records MG 4 Vol. 49, February 1792

⁵⁸ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908 and NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

⁵⁹ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

⁶⁰ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908, NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #n6592

⁶¹ NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #6122

Colonel, and became a member of the Legislative Council in 1838 (Kinsman 1995:14).⁶² Following in his father's footsteps socially, Peter II may have also joined the North British Society. The annals of the society show that a "Peter M'Nab" joined the membership in 1797 (and a third individual with this name in 1815).⁶³ While Peter II lived on the island, occupying the house inherited from his father, he also maintained a residence in town at the corner of South and Pleasant (present day Barrington) Streets (Kinsman 1995:14).⁶⁴

Under the guidance of Peter II, the McNab family prospered. Trading during the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 proved lucrative for the family.⁶⁵ Margaret Cook recalls of the period, saying, "Money came in easily, and was spent freely" and describes the island as "a place of peace and plenty, during the storms of Empire."⁶⁶

Peter II died on June 1, 1847, at which point the island property was divided between his two sons, James and Peter III (Kinsman 1995:14). Two years following his death, the island was offered for sale. As well as describing the two McNab houses on the island (the original homestead and a later house built by Peter III), the advertisement states "3 to 400 acres are under Cultivation cut about 120 tons of the best Upland Hay, and will keep to advantage, from 1,000 to 1,500 Sheep". However, elsewhere, the listing notes that there were only 300 sheep "of the most approved breeds" on the island, and that these could be included with the purchase. It goes on to describe half the island being

⁶² NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

⁶³ Internet Archive Annals of the North British Society 1768-1903 p. 376-377 accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/annalsnorthbriti00nortuoft>

⁶⁴ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 33D *The Most Historic Island in the Vicinity of Halifax*

⁶⁵ NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #12139

⁶⁶ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

still covered in hardwood forest.⁶⁷ This advertisement provides a sense of the island at the end of Peter II's tenure.

The process of researching Peter McNab and Peter II was frequently challenged by the tradition of naming children, particularly male children, after their parents. In the McNab family, there are three Peters in three successive generations. As a result, primary and secondary source records are, by times, unclear as to whether they are referencing the first Peter McNab or his son, Peter II, during times when both men were conducting business in Halifax and leaving their names in the historical paper trail. Fortunately, in some cases, legal documents also reference the individual's wife or sometimes include the title of "Honourable", which the second Peter was entitled to as of 1838, when he served on the Legislative Council (Kinsman 1995:14). As has been noted earlier, this overlap also seems to have confused local historian H. W. Hewitt. Hewitt refers to both the first Peter and his son as being known as "Governor McNab" in his series of articles on the island history, sometimes in the same article. In other cases, he seems to interchange one Peter McNab for the other in describing their activities.⁶⁸ As an example, in a description of the first Peter, he also states:

I find Peter McNab's name on the list of Grand Jurors at the session which dealt with the impressment of several Lunenburg coasters by naval officers. This was in 1781 [this is clearly the first Peter McNab as Peter II would have been a youth at the time]. Again, I find his name as one of the cattle judges at the Exhibition of September, 1820, on Camp Hill, Halifax [This reference

⁶⁷ NSA Newspaper Collection *Nova Scotian* Jan. 8, 1849

⁶⁸ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

must be to Peter II, as his father had died 20 years earlier]. His two sons were named James and Peter [again, a Peter II reference].⁶⁹

A greater challenge to determining the ancestry and activities of Peter McNab and Peter II, as well as other McNab family members, is the presence of at least two other Peter McNabs, of no direct relation to the McNabs of the island, in the Halifax area during the same time period. A history of this McNab family shows that another Peter McNab arrived from Scotland in 1789 with his brother, Alexander. Confusingly (and apparently, incorrectly), the same history states that an unnamed daughter of this line married Peter McNab of McNabs Island. Upon their arrival, they reportedly stayed on McNabs Island before purchasing land in Eastern Passage from James Michael Freke Bulkeley and Edward Bulkeley, and hence, they will hereafter be referred to as the Eastern Passage McNabs.⁷⁰ A 1789 deed confirms this transaction as well as the presence of this separate McNab line in the area. This deed is transacted between the Bulkeleys and Peter and Alexander McNab, lately of Stair, Scotland. Their land, some 423 acres, is “to the northward of the Eastern Battery”⁷¹ This Eastern Passage McNab line of Peter and Alexander appears throughout the historical record, including census records, as well as in the will and probate accounts.⁷² In addition to at least one additional Peter McNab, this line also boasts a number of John McNabs and at least one James McNab, all first names shared with the island McNabs. An examination of will and probate records seems to show that Peter, Alexander and another brother, John, constitute one generation, and Peter’s children with wife Jane, sons James, Alexander, and Peter, and daughters Isabella

⁶⁹ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

⁷⁰ NSA MG50 Vol. 27 #9 *Pioneers of Malagash – The McNab Family*

⁷¹ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Bulkeley to McNab Vol. 28 p. 78

⁷² NSA RG 48 Wills and Probate Peter McNab 1828, NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

and Mary, the second. Of this second generation, it appears that the boys were also born in Scotland before coming to Halifax with their parents.

Yet another Peter McNab appears in the will and probate records, a baker, with wife Christian and son John Edington and daughters Jane, Catherine, and Christian.⁷³ This could be the second generation Peter of the Eastern Passage McNabs but the records are unclear on this connection.

Hewitt points out that the area known as McNabs Cove in Eastern Passage lies almost directly across from Indian Point on McNabs Island.⁷⁴ He states that the McNab brothers purchased land in Eastern Passage from a man named King. This transaction is also confirmed in the deed records.⁷⁵ These McNabs, Hewitt records, came from Scone in Scotland. Their father, who travelled with them, had fought at the battle of Prestonpans in 1745. Upon the death of this oldest family member, the Eastern Passage McNabs began a family graveyard near the Eastern Battery.⁷⁶ In another article, he lists some of the burials: Peter McNab (Feb. 4, 1823, aged 61), Jean McNab (Feb. 4, 1833, aged 70), Alex McNab (Feb. 15, 1864, aged 66), and Peter McNab Jr. (Jan. 2, 1870).⁷⁷ Thomas Raddall's research notes suggest that the Eastern Passage McNabs were cousins to the McNabs of the island.⁷⁸ Taken as a whole, this body of information suggests that the Eastern Passage McNabs were likely related, if distantly, to the McNabs of the island and that the two

⁷³ NSA RG 48 Wills and Probate Peter McNab

⁷⁴ *Halifax County, Nova Scotia Hewitt Histories*, accessed at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nshalifa/HewittChapters.html>

⁷⁵ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds King to McNab Vol.38 p.413

⁷⁶ *Halifax County, Nova Scotia Hewitt Histories*, accessed at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nshalifa/HewittChapters.html>

⁷⁷ *Halifax County, Nova Scotia Hewitt Histories*, accessed at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nshalifa/HewittChapters.html>

⁷⁸ Dalhousie Archives 20.5 Hangman's Beach – Research Materials, Thomas H. Raddall collection

families would have interacted, although there is no record of them intermarrying, which could suggest that they were more closely related than is apparent in the available genealogical information. Certainly, there are death records for John, James and Peter McNab which do not match the known years of death for the island McNabs of those names.⁷⁹ The repeating use of the same array of common names across multiple generations makes tracing the family trees of these two lines extremely difficult. See Appendix H and Appendix I for my attempts to bring some organizational clarity to the genealogical information for the two family lines, Island and Eastern Passage McNabs.

A history of the island under Peter McNab and his son, Peter II, following him would be incomplete without proper consideration of the tenants who shared the land with the family. While their activities and ancestries are not as well documented in the historical record, their presence on McNabs Island helped to shape the collective identity of the island as much as the physical landscape.

⁷⁹ Historical Vital Statistics records (various), NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #N12208, N10946, NSA Deaths, Burials and Probates 1749-1799 L-Z (Marble)

CHAPTER TWO – THE ISLAND TENANTS

In contrast to the primary male members of the McNab family, the early tenants of McNabs Island appear infrequently in the historic record. Owing to their lower status in Halifax society, their affairs were not remarked upon by the newspapers of the day, and few had wills or an estate recorded in the probate records. Nonetheless, some primary and secondary sources offer insight into their origins and activities. Foremost among these sources are the poll tax and census records of the area from 1792, 1793 and 1827 that enumerated the (male) community members and gathered information on their professions, other residents of their households, crops grown and livestock possessed. While not every significant life event was officially documented in this time period, birth, marriage, and death records added to the body of information. Allan Marble's comprehensive *Deaths, Burials and Probate of Nova Scotians from Primary Sources 1800-1850* and the Stayner Biographic Collection at the Nova Scotia Archives were also important in the search for tenant information.

In 1792, the census records the following residents for McNabs Island:⁸⁰

Thomas Fraser	James Peters	James Anderson
John McPherson	John Wright	John Quinland
Donald McIntier	John Modest	Beriah Rice
John Cook	George Ray	William Cooper
Andrew Johnston	Roger Swinney	Peter McNab Junior [likely Peter II]

⁸⁰ NSA RG 1 vol. # 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 047 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

James McNab John McNab John Watts
 Henry Kuhn Junior Henry Kuhn Senior --- Williams
 John Munday.

The next year, the 1793 Poll Tax assessment shows a similar set of tenants, with additional information on their professions and livestock holdings:⁸¹

Table 1 - McNabs Island Residents - 1793

Name	Profession	Livestock
Thomas Fraser	Farmer	3 Cows
James Peters	Farmer	1 Cow
James McNab	Farmer	1 Horse 4 Cows
David McGrath	Labourer	
--- Hawthorn Jr.	Farmer	4 Cows
Beriah Rice	Labourer	
George Ray	Labourer	
William Cooper	Labourer	
Peter McNab Junr.	Farmer	2 Horses 12 cows 200 sheep
John McNab	Labourer	
John Watts	Labourer	
Henry Kuhn	Farmer	1 horse 4 cows
Henry Kuhn Junr.	Labourer	

And by 1827, the census recorded a wide array of information, including male and female family members, male and female servants employed, profession, religion, amount of land cultivated, produce harvested and livestock owned. In total 55 people (13

⁸¹ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

members of the McNab family and the remaining 42 tenants or household servants) lived on McNabs Island in 1827. The census notes that 177 acres were under cultivation, with crops of grain, hay, and potatoes.⁸² The chart below shows the island residents listed with their noted professions and religious affiliations.⁸³

Table 2 - McNabs Island Residents - 1827

Name	Profession	Religion
Peter McNab	Agriculture	Presbyterian
Peter McNab Junior	Agriculture	Presbyterian
John McNab		Presbyterian
Thomas Culleton	Agriculture	Roman Catholic
Andrew Hutt	Agriculture	Presbyterian
Roger Drake	Fisheries	Roman Catholic
Peter Ott	Agriculture	Roman Catholic
John Cooney	Labourer	Roman Catholic
Jacob Lonar	Labourer	Presbyterian
Michael Cleary	Agriculture	Roman Catholic
John Fraser	Fisheries	Presbyterian

According to the folk tradition of the island, Peter McNab and Peter II actively populated their island community with tenants who worked the land on their behalf, in an effort to support Peter McNab's, and later, his son's, vision of himself as a proper

⁸² NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

⁸³ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

Scottish laird to his newly purchased lands. A family history, the Cook-Cassels letter, remembers that Peter II brought several Scottish shepherds to the island.⁸⁴ This historiography has been reinforced in various secondary sources. The *Encyclopedia of Canada, Volume IV*, states that Peter II particularly “recruited shepherds from Scotland to tend his sheep.”⁸⁵ A newspaper article on the history of McNabs Island, dated March 29, 1930, drawing strongly from the earlier Cook-Cassels letter, also reiterates this message.⁸⁶ Brian Kinsman (1995), citing J.P. Martin, says “He [Peter II], like his father brought shepherds from Scotland to tend his sheep” (14). Taken collectively, this popular belief should manifest in a majority of the island’s residents being of Scottish ancestry and working as farmers or labourers in the historical records.

H. W. Hewitt, in his series of articles in the *Dartmouth Patriot*, states that Thomas Fraser was one of Peter McNab’s first tenants. Of this individual, Hewitt reports:

He had been a soldier and had fought at Culloden in 1746. When the discharge of soldiers took place Fraser came out to Halifax. He died at the age of 103 years. Mr. John Cooney of Eastern Passage has a pair of fire tongs that once belonged to him. The age of the tongs is about that of the City of Halifax.⁸⁷

If these dates are credible, it seems likely that Thomas Fraser was a tenant on the island prior to Peter McNab’s purchase, and that he continued on as tenant to the new owner.

While Fraser does appear to be Scottish, this account suggests that the elder McNab did not intentionally recruit him from Scotland as a tenant. Thomas Fraser is first officially recorded in the 1792 census, and again in 1793, as a farmer and the owner of three

⁸⁴ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

⁸⁵ NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #12139

⁸⁶ NSA MG 20 Vol. 673 #2

⁸⁷ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

cows.⁸⁸ By 1827, Thomas Fraser is absent from the census record, but a John Fraser is listed as a resident of the island. This Fraser is noted as a Presbyterian fisherman, with a total of three males and no servants in his household. It is possible that John Fraser could be the son of Thomas Fraser. If this is the case, the younger Fraser has forsaken farming altogether, as the same survey records that his household has no crops under cultivation, or stock of any kind kept.⁸⁹ The 1827 census does record a Thomas Fraser, a labourer, living in Dutch Village, but even if the original Thomas Fraser lived to 103 years as Hewitt suggests, it is unlikely this is the same individual. Another possible son, Thomas James Fraser, is described as fisherman from McNabs Island on the certificate of his 1838 marriage to Barbara Frost.⁹⁰ An 1829 deed shows Peter McNab [Peter II], John McNab, and others selling a parcel of land at Cole Harbour to Daniel, James and William Fraser, of Cole Harbour.⁹¹

Another possible Scottish tenant was a man named John Little. Hewitt states that he was locally known as “Squire Little” and lived near what would become Fort Ives, near the location of Peter II’s (likely, Hewitt means Peter III) home in the north of the island.⁹² This tenant does not appear on any census record for the island, although a John

⁸⁸ NSA RG 1 vol. # 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 047 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp> and NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

⁸⁹ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

⁹⁰ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at: <https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1800-7255&Event=marriage&ID=197999>

⁹¹ NSA McNab to Fraser deed ref

⁹² NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

Little is listed in Dutch Village in the 1793 survey.⁹³ Elsewhere, another source identifies him as Captain John Little from Scotland (Gray-Leblanc and Leblanc 2009:44).

In the letter from Margaret Cook to her niece, Chelsea, she recalls that Peter II had brought several shepherds from Scotland, including one named MacDonald from Ross-shire.⁹⁴ No MacDonald is listed in any of the island surveys from this time period, however a local history of the area names him as William McDonald and agrees that he was a shepherd brought from Scotland by Peter II (Gray-Leblanc and Leblanc 2009:44).

A later arrival, William Frost, is listed a native of Argyll-shire in Scotland (Gray-Leblanc and Leblanc 2009:43-44). Another local source concurs but indicates that Frost first settled in Cow Bay as a farmer (and appeared in there in the 1827 census) before baptismal records for his children place him on McNabs Island between 1833-1840 (Stevens 2002:105). As noted earlier, a daughter of this Scottish family married into another Scottish family, the Frasers, in 1838.⁹⁵

Another family name, MacLain, appears on the 1808 Toler map, *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax*, but not in the census recording. The only reference found for this family on the island is a death certificate for a Neil McLean of McNabs Island, with his executor, John McLean, also listed as an island resident. This certificate identifies the deceased as a “Piper”.⁹⁶

⁹³ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

⁹⁴ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

⁹⁵ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at: <https://www.novascotiagenalogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1800-7255&Event=marriage&ID=197999>

⁹⁶ NSA RG 48 Wills and Probate John McLean

Island resident John McNab who is listed on the 1792, 1793, and 1827 censuses could be either one of the sons of Peter McNab, sometimes called Captain John, or a member of the Eastern Passage McNab family that arrived in Halifax in the 1790s.⁹⁷ The 1793 census lists this John McNab as a “labourer” like other individuals known to be tenants, whereas Peter II and James McNab are called “farmer”.⁹⁸ Certainly by 1827, there are two John McNabs listed, one on McNabs Island, and likely the son of Peter McNab, and the other in Eastern Passage, likely a member of the other McNab branch.⁹⁹ The Stayner collection notes the death of a Perthshire-born John McNab in 1845 aged 80, who was buried in the Camp Hill Cemetery.¹⁰⁰ In 1871, another John McNab, also born in Scotland, died in Halifax at the age of 62.¹⁰¹ This makes it likely one or both were members of the Eastern Passage McNabs, and not the brother of Peter II.

While not Scottish, the Kuhns are a noteworthy tenant family. Census and assessment records put Henry Kuhn [Senior] and Henry Kuhn Junior on the island in 1792 and 1793, although Henry Kuhn appears on the 1775 census, as living in Halifax.¹⁰² Hewitt says that the senior Kuhn was in charge of caring for “Governor McNab’s” [Peter I’s] sheep.¹⁰³ In 1763, Peter McNab married Susannah Kuhn (spelled Koun), a daughter

⁹⁷ NSA MG50 Vol. 27 #9 *Pioneers of Malagash – The McNab Family*

⁹⁸ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

⁹⁹ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

¹⁰⁰ NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #12208

¹⁰¹ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at: <https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1808-381&Event=death&ID=24145>

¹⁰² NSA RG 1 vol. # 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 047 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>, NSA RG 1 vol. 411 no. 7 p. 10 Halifax, Halifax County 1775 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>, NSA RG 1 vol. no. 444 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/default.asp>

¹⁰³ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

of the Henry Kuhn Senior (Stevens 2002:190).¹⁰⁴ However, by 1827, Jacob Kuhn, an Anglican farmer, appears in Cole Harbour, and the Kuhn family is no longer enumerated on McNabs Island.¹⁰⁵ Possibly the family began to move away from the island following the deaths of Peter McNab and Susannah (Koun) McNab. The origins of the Kuhn family (also spelled as Koun, Khoun or Khoun) are somewhat obscure. One source gives their ethnic origins as Swiss, coming to Canada from Zurich, particularly from Ryken/Reichen, Canton Zurich, Switzerland, with Henry Senior's original name being Henrick (Stevens 2002:190).¹⁰⁶ Akins (1895) lists a Henrick Kuhn as resident in the North Suburbs of the city by 1752 (249). Bell's *Foreign Protestants* (1961) makes passing mention of two or three families with this name, stating that they are "probably Swiss" (620). An 1853 birth record for the daughter of George Kuhn, a descendant of Henry Kuhn, lists her father as "Irish" but is best viewed as an anomaly in the face of the preponderance of evidence for Swiss ancestry.¹⁰⁷ Henry Kuhn Senior's will, written in 1786, lists him as a baker and appoints his friend "Peter McNabb Sen." as an executor.¹⁰⁸ At Henry Kuhn Sr.'s death in 1800, he is listed as "of Halifax, Yeoman" and the probate record depicts the belongings of a simple farmer, including stock, basic farm and household equipment.¹⁰⁹

Notwithstanding their important connections to the McNab family and lengthy presence on McNabs Island, the Kuhns clearly have Swiss, not Scottish origins and also appear to

¹⁰⁴ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at:
<https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1700-6&Event=marriage&ID=191116>

¹⁰⁵ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at
<http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

¹⁰⁶ NSA MG 50 Vol. 27 #9 Rosalind McKee *McNabs of McNabs Island*

¹⁰⁷ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at:
<https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1908-59100221&Event=birth&ID=211543>

¹⁰⁸ NSA RG 48 Wills and Probate Henry Kuhn

¹⁰⁹ NSA RG 48 Wills and Probate Henry Kuhn

have already been settled in the Halifax area well before Peter McNab purchased his island.

With the 1827 census, the Culliton (and its various spellings) family first appears on the island. The census lists the family, headed by Thomas Culliton, as Roman Catholic farmers, with four cattle and modest amounts of grain, hay and potatoes under cultivation.¹¹⁰ Like the Kuhns, the Cullitons are noteworthy for their connection to the McNab family. In 1792, the same year that he took possession of the island from his father, Peter II married Joanna Culliton (Friends of McNabs Island Society 2008:71). Hewitt identifies Joanna as sister to the tenant Thomas Culliton.¹¹¹ While the Cullitons do not appear on the earlier 1792/1793 assessments, folk tradition and later sources assert that Joanna was the daughter of one of the island's tenants; presumably this means the Cullitons were tenants prior to the 1792 marriage (Kinsman 1995:14). A 1775 deed between James Culliton (spelled Cullerton), father of Thomas and Joanna, and Henry Kuhn (spelled Kouhn), father of Henry and Susannah, shows that the Culliton and Kuhn families were present in Halifax prior to Peter McNab's purchase of the island. This document also demonstrates that the two families were already acquainted with Peter McNab, as he acts as the witness to this transaction.¹¹² Thomas Culliton died on McNabs Island on December 12, 1837, aged 72, and another family member, Sarah Culliton, died on the island in 1833.¹¹³ Thomas Raddall's research notes on the island state that the

¹¹⁰ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

¹¹¹ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island from Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

¹¹² NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Culliton to Khoun Vol 14 p. 292

¹¹³ NSA Deaths, Burials and Probates 1749-1799 L-Z (Marble) Sarah Culliton

Cullitons were an Irish family.¹¹⁴ Their professed Roman Catholic faith would seem to support this ancestry.

A later tenant, Michael Cleary, present in the 1827 census, may be the same Michael Cleary who died in 1873, aged 70. This individual is noted as being born in Kilkenny, Ireland.¹¹⁵ A local history states that a Malachi Cleary lived near the government wharf in Back Cove before moving to Eastern Passage (Gray-Leblanc and Leblanc 2009:43). Another source suggests that Malachi and Michael Cleary was the same individual (Stevens 2002:43). The same history states that tenant Andrew Hutt was a Swiss immigrant and another, John Cooney Sr., was a native of Ireland.

The Cassels-Cook letter has a section devoted to descriptions of “Servants and Tenants”, mostly from Peter II’s time period, many of whom do not appear in any of the available census data. The first named is an “old soldier” named Timmons, who lived on Timmons Point. The letter indicates this location “has one of the loveliest views of the Island, looking towards Bedford Basin, our boundary line running just below the cottage”.¹¹⁶ The letter says Timmons was initially a servant to the McNab family and then became a tenant until his death. Another secondary source records that the old soldier was named Daniel Timmons (Gray-Leblanc and Leblanc 2009:44). While there seem to be no records of this elder Timmons, a number of marriages of female Timmons from McNabs Island are recorded, with a Daniel and Joanna (or sometimes Hannah)

¹¹⁴ Dalhousie Archives 20.5 Hangman’s Beach – Research Materials, Thomas H. Raddall collection
Cornwallis (McNab’s) Island Notes

¹¹⁵ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at:

<https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1808-476&Event=death&ID=26024>

¹¹⁶ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

Timmons, farmers, listed as their parents. In one (Joanna Timmons to Robert Adair), Peter McNab [likely Peter III] is listed as a witness.¹¹⁷

Next, the letter records another family, the Harrigans, who started as servants to the McNab family and later became island tenants, eventually giving their name to Harrigan's Point for a period of time. A tenant called "Old Oats" was responsible for ferrying the McNab family about on a ballasted schooner. "Black" Harry Hill is mentioned as a "negro with a large family of children", living in the north of the island. The author asserts that Harry Hill is the only Black person to have ever lived on the island. The enigmatic "English John" is said to have come from "nobody knew where" although he was reputed to have been a gentleman from his department. The letter's author states that he had been given a small parcel of land near Back Cove.¹¹⁸

One early tenant, described by Hewitt but not present in census recording for the island, is Jacob Horn.¹¹⁹ He is recorded as being a German who had been granted land on McNabs Island after serving with Wolfe in Quebec (Gray-Leblanc and Leblanc 2009: 29). A local history of the area states that Horn lived near the master gunner's quarters in a house that was later remodeled by Peter McNab before it burned down some years later. The island proved inconvenient, however, for transporting his cattle and farm produce to market (Gray-Leblanc and Leblanc 2009: 29). This information would seem to place Jacob Horn on McNabs Island prior to Peter McNab's purchase. In early November of

¹¹⁷ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at:
<https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1815-91&Event=marriage&ID=45836>
 and <https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1815-134&Event=marriage&ID=46706>

¹¹⁸ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

¹¹⁹ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

1798, tenants Jacob Horn Sr. and son Jacob Horn Jr. received land grants in the South East Passage area (Trider 1999:378). The 1827 census finds them and other Horn family members established in Eastern Passage.¹²⁰

In considering this body of information, it appears there are some individuals who might be interpreted as the reputed shepherds brought from Scotland – for example William McDonald, the McLean/McLains, Thomas Fraser, William Frost, and John Little. As well, other tenants may have had Scottish ancestry, owing to their surnames bearing the Scottish “Mc/Mac” prefix, including David McGrath, Donald McIntier, and John McPherson. However, this is rather flimsy support for the great romantic vision of an aspiring New World laird and his island of Scottish recruits. There seems to be little concrete evidence for a deliberately constructed community drawn from Scotland to suit Peter McNab’s vision. In truth, a review of all available information on the origins, activities and movements of the island tenants from 1792 until the mid 1850s gives a picture of a varied and shifting group of farmers, fishers and labourers, with diverse ethnic origins, who are more frequently recruited from the local Halifax population.

While it appears that a few tenant families, for example the Frasers, Kuhns, and Cullitons, remained on the island for many years and through successive generations, the majority of the tenants occupied their properties on the island for relatively brief periods of time. The three census records for 1792, 1793 and 1827 depict a mobile tenant population, with names appearing and disappearing. The Cook-Cassels letter also suggests that other tenants did not stay long enough to have been enumerated on any

¹²⁰ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

census of the time.¹²¹ The 1827 census shows that tenants generally had small amounts of acreage under cultivation and with few owning stock of any sort. It appears that many left the island for holdings on the mainland, often in Eastern Passage. As an example, by the 1827 census and in the years following, we find not only the Horn family, but also the Cleary, Cooney, and Fraser families listed as residing in Eastern Passage, having moved on from their tenancy on McNabs Island.¹²² In contradiction to the folk tradition, it seems that if, in fact, Peter McNab or Peter II had brought these tenants from Scotland, their loyalty to their supposed laird was short-lived. A local publication on the area states that, in 1785, Peter McNab was advertising land for rent for the purposes of farming, fishing and harvesting timber (Trider 1999:288). If this is the case, this advertisement confirms that a portion of the tenants had been drawn from a local population, not necessarily recruited from Peter McNab's homeland.¹²³

It is also worth noting that Peter McNab did not purchase an uninhabited landscape onto which he placed his various tenants. It seems that at least one tenant was in residence on the island near the time of Peter McNab's purchase, if not a number of pre-existing inhabitants like Jacob Horn. William Dyott (1907) references the dwelling house owned by "a poor fisherman" present during his August 1787 visit to the island (32). It is important to not discount these earliest tenants when we consider Peter McNab's development of the island.

¹²¹ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

¹²² NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

¹²³ This reference is somewhat problematic. The original information is uncited. The work's bibliography lists a number of area newspapers as source materials but none were from the time period of February 1785 when the ad was allegedly placed. A review of all available local newspapers from around this date did not locate this advertisement.

Having identified a number of the main tenants occupying and lending their interests and identities to the emerging community on Peter McNab's island, we now turn to locating those families on the island, and evaluating how they shaped the landscape.

CHAPTER THREE - POPULATING THE LANDSCAPE: CARTOGRAPHY, ART, AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The previous chapter identified a number of important tenants who occupied the island during the time of Peter McNab and Peter II. With an understanding of their backgrounds, the focus now shifts to situating them and the McNab family on the island's evolving landscape. The marks the McNabs and their tenants collectively left on the land offer a degree of insight into their lives, their activities, and the overall development of the island from Peter McNab's purchase until the death of Peter II.

To gain a better sense of the occupation and use of the island, a variety of resources were employed, including historical and modern mapping, period artwork depicting scenes of island life, archaeological reports from survey and excavation work conducted on various areas of the island, as well as aerial photographs and LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) survey of the area. Each source offered a unique perspective on the residents of McNabs Island, with some proving to be more informative than others.

Overview of the Historical Mapping

A variety of historical maps documenting activity on McNabs Island were located in the collections of the Nova Scotia Archives, as well as through various online map collections.¹²⁴ These documents depict the locations of various structures, roads and pathways, fields and field boundaries, orchards and other constructed features. In some cases, the names of the tenants holding the land are also noted. However, the majority of

¹²⁴ Due to the density of footnote references for this chapter, all cited maps will be fully referenced in the first footnote and in an abbreviated form thereafter.

maps dating from the time period of 1782 until 1849 simply record McNabs/Cornwallis island as a featureless geographic area (for example, the 1824 map, *The Harbour of Halifax in Nova Scotia*) or else only note topography but not the human presence on the land.¹²⁵ In order to gather additional information, a selection of maps drawn in the years following the death of Peter II has been included. While these maps could include growth that postdates Peter II's period, they also offer a sense of the progression of development on the island from the earlier mapping and are important for locating various island residents. Royal Engineers maps REO A87 *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island* (1865) and REO A88 *South End of MacNab's Island* (1867) were particularly chosen for their extensive detailing of structures, topography, field boundaries, and roadways.¹²⁶ Each source came with its own perspective and priorities. In some cases, the maps recorded the island in its totality, while others focused, for various reasons, on a select area, leaving us with a narrower sense of the island and the residents on the land from that particular time period. See Appendixes B through G for full images of the main maps referenced in this work.

Table 3 – Complete List of Maps Viewed

Date	Name	Source
no date	<i>Plan de la rade, baye et port de Chibouctou ou d'Halifax en la Nouvelle Eccosse ou Accadie</i>	Gallica - Bibliothèque nationale de France
1750	<i>Harbour of Chebucto</i> (Harris)	Nova Scotia Archives
1780	<i>Atlantic Neptune – Halifax Harbour... Catch Harbour</i>	Norman B. Leventhal Map Center

¹²⁵ NSA Map Collection V6/239 ca 1824 *The Harbour of Halifax in Nova Scotia* ca 1824

¹²⁶ NSA Map Collection *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island* Royal Engineers Office 1865 R.E.O. no. A-87 and *South End of MacNab's Isld.* 1867 R.E.O. no. A-88 (hereafter in this chapter: NSA REO A87 and NSA REO A88)

1808	<i>Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax</i> (Toler)	Nova Scotia Archives
1814	<i>A Map of Cabotia</i> (Purdy)	University of Virginia Library
1824	<i>The Harbour of Halifax in Nova Scotia c. 1824</i>	Nova Scotia Archives
1826	<i>Chart of Part of the Coast of Nova Scotia</i>	Nova Scotia Archives
1850	<i>The Estate Plan of Peter McNab, Esq.</i>	Nova Scotia Archives
1853	<i>Halifax Harbour</i> (Bayfield)	Library and Archives Canada
1865	<i>Township Map of Halifax County</i> (Church)	Nova Scotia Archives
1865	REO A87 <i>Halifax Harbour MacNab Island</i>	Nova Scotia Archives
1867	REO A88 <i>South End of MacNab's Isld.</i>	Nova Scotia Archives
1886	<i>Halifax and Environs</i> Sheets 4 & 7 (Akers)	Nova Scotia Archives
2000	<i>Friends of McNabs Island Society – McNabs Island</i> (modern map)	www.mcnabsisland.com

It is puzzling that such an extensive piece of land, centrally located at the mouth of the harbour, should have so few maps which record the property in finer detail. In comparison to historical maps from Peter McNab's homeland in Perthshire, Scotland (for example, the detailed maps generated for the 1769 *Survey of Lochtayside*), very few of the Halifax maps record anything approaching to this level of detail (see Farquharson 1936).¹²⁷ As well, there are significant periods for which no mapping is available, particularly from the time when Peter McNab purchased the land until some years after his death in 1799.

A variety of reasons could account for this dearth of cartographic records. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, it is very possible that maps were created for this time period and with careful attention to the details of island settlement. It seems reasonable that Peter McNab would have employed some form of mapping to assign land to his

¹²⁷ For another examples of Scottish mapping, see <http://maps.nls.uk/joins/664.html>

tenants, designating where they could build their houses and how much land to clear for their farms. If additional maps were created, they have been lost over the course of time, or else reside in other archival or family collections not consulted.

In considering the available cartography, Nancy S. Seasholes (1988) stresses the subjective nature of all mapping and suggests that these documents be evaluated for the intended purpose, audience, inherent bias of the cartographer, and the map's overall accuracy (93). In the case of McNabs Island, the most detailed of the maps were created at a time when the ownership of the island was shifting from a single McNab owner to multiple owners. In the case of the Royal Engineers maps, *South End of MacNab's Island* of 1867 and *Halifax Harbour-MacNab Island* of 1865, these maps were drawn up in relation to the sale of portions of the island to the British military and only include those areas relevant to the transfer. In other cases, the maps have been created to assist marine navigation in the harbour (e.g. *Chart of the Coast of Nova Scotia* 1826), and emphasize depth soundings and the location of shoals over terrestrial features.¹²⁸ Beyond identifying the cartographer's bias and purpose of the mapping, Angèle Smith (2007) highlights overarching problems inherent in the understanding of maps as simple spatial records instead of documents relating to issues of power and control. She states:

The map is a “meta-narrative” in the sense that it claims universal understanding and truth, while masking the fact that it represents only a single authoritative version of the truth. Maps have been used to exclude by constructing certain kinds of spatial knowledge while silencing others. (85)

In many cases, the McNabs Island maps broadly ignore the presence of the land's tenants and often the land's owners as well. Their dwellings might be inscribed on the

¹²⁸ NSA REO A87 and NSA REO A88, NSA *Chart of Part of the Coast of Nova Scotia* 1826 Hydrographic Office H. O. no. 345 hereafter NSA *Chart of Part of the Coast of NS*

cartographic record but rarely are their names included. The 1808 Toler map, *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax*, is the first to identify the island as belonging to the McNab family but, curiously, fails to label the original McNab homestead.¹²⁹ Stranger still, Toler does inscribe two names on his map, clearly marking the farms of tenants Fraser and McLain. In other areas of the island, buildings are shown but their owner is not named. Was this information unavailable or simply irrelevant to the mapmaker? Conversely, were the Fraser and McLain families somehow significant residents and important to be noted whereas others were not? The same question of naming choice arises with the two Royal Engineers maps.¹³⁰ In both cases, the occupants of some structures are named, while others remain anonymous. For what reason have the properties of tenants Timmins, Innes and Cunningham been particularly identified? These choices raise interesting questions about the mapmakers' intentions and priorities.

Provincial Archaeological Reports

Table 4 – Archaeological Reports

Year	Report Title	Report Number
1991	Heritage Resources Survey of McNabs Island	A1991NS08
2004	Identification of Archaeological Features and Monitoring the Impact of Hurrican Juan Restoration on McNabs Island	A2004NS35
2009	McNabs Island, Halifax Regional Municipality: Archaeological Monitoring of Oil Spill Delineation Testing, Garrison Road, McNabs Island	A2009NS41
2011	McNabs Island Trail Improvement Project: Archaeological Resource Impact Assessment	A2011NS16

¹²⁹ NSA Royal Engineers Dept. Y-26 *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax* 1808, hereafter NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*

¹³⁰ NSA REO A87 and NSA REO A88

In addition to the maps, provincial archaeological reports on non-military sites dating from the 18th and 19th centuries offer insight into the early colonial sites on the island. However, it should be noted that, beyond work on the various military sites, very little archaeological research into this time period has been conducted on the island to date. For the most part, work involved assessing or monitoring a particular area for a specific development, under the auspices of a commercial archaeology contract, resulting in a somewhat piecemeal body of information. The exception is the 2004 island-wide survey of archaeological features carried out by Black Spruce Heritage Services (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004). Unfortunately, while this survey is decidedly comprehensive, the sites identified receive only limited, surface examination.

Paintings and Prints

Paintings and prints of McNabs Island from the 19th century offer another perspective on life on the land. As with any artistic endeavour, these representations must necessarily be viewed as a highly subjective rendering of the landscape. The artist has chosen a select perspective and made decisions regarding which aspects of that view will (and will not) be included, based on primarily aesthetic reasons. In this period, these decisions were heavily influenced by the popularity of the picturesque aesthetic in representing domesticated landscapes. The concept of the picturesque and its influence on representation in the literature and artistic works of the 18th and 19th century has been widely discussed by numerous authors (for example: Bentley 2012, Farag-Miller, Miller & Kirkpatrick 2013, Sha 2002, Austin 2007). Bentley (2012) has identified a particularly Canadian “settler picturesque” that ties the key themes of the picturesque aesthetic: harmonious combinations of colour, texture and physical features, with an interest in

signs of improvement and prosperity, particularly those of an agricultural nature, through a “gaze in search of prospects or outlooks in both the pictorial and the economic senses of the two terms” (69&72). These decisions are generally in service to the creation of an aesthetically pleasing piece of art, rather than the production of an objective rendering that faithfully documents the space before the viewer. One artist depicting island scenes, Captain Westcote Lyttleton, was a partial owner of the island, which he acquired through marriage to Peter II’s granddaughter, Joanna (Kinsman 1995:25). As such, it is important to bear in mind that he may have been painting with the deliberate (or even unconscious) intent of representing his property in a pleasing and prosperous light.

Locating the McNabs and their tenants on the landscape

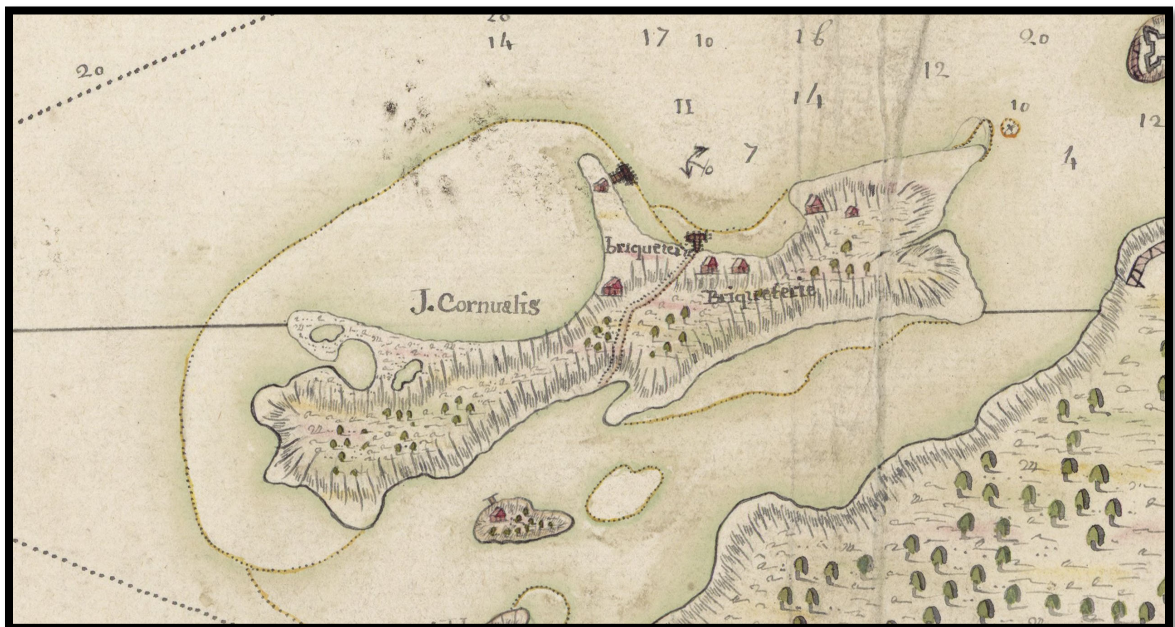
As we have seen, prior to Peter McNab’s 1783 purchase, the island was known as Cornwallis Island, with the name stemming from the land’s previous owners, first Edward Cornwallis, followed by his three nephews, Henry, James and William Cornwallis. Following 1783, the cartographers gradually came to label the island as McNab’s Island, although the Cornwallis name endured well into 19th century mapping (for example, later versions of Des Barres’s *Atlantic Neptune* map series and the 1814 *A Map of Cabotia* inset of Halifax Harbour).¹³¹

Setting the stage for Peter McNab’s purchase, a number of maps depict human activity on the island while it was under the ownership of the Cornwallis family. Some describe possible prior land use and tenant presence on the island, emphasizing the

¹³¹ University of Virginia Library *A Map of Cabotia*, accessed at <http://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/uva-lib:1563451/view#openLayer/uva-lib:2063837/3244/4092/0/1/0> and Norman B. Leventhal Map Center/Boston Public Library *Halifax Harbour... Catch Harbour*, accessed at <http://maps.bpl.org/id/15142>, hereafter Leventhal *Halifax Harbour... Catch Harbour*

possibility that Peter McNab may have taken on tenants already in residence when he bought the land. The 1750 map, *Harbour of Chebucto*, with inserts, by Moses Harris, gives the area the name Cornwallis Island, and labels various locations around the island.¹³² It indicates the location of one early resident, Captain Rouse, in the north of the island on the point of land called “Gull Point” on the map (present day Ives Point). Hewitt tells us that Rouse and others were engaged in a fishing business on the island.¹³³

Figure 2 - *Plan de la rade, baye et port de Chibouctou ou d'Halifax en la Nouvelle Eccosse ou Accadie* (detail)



Source: Gallica - Bibliothèque nationale de France

Another early map, *Plan de la rade, baye et port de Chibouctou ou d'Halifax en la Nouvelle Eccosse ou Accadie* (no date), shows six structures scattered around the central and northern parts of the island, two wharves in McNabs Cove, and a trail or road spanning the middle of the island, running roughly east-west from present day McNabs

¹³² NSA Map Collection *Harbour of Chebucto...* 1750 S. B. 4

¹³³ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

Cove to Back Cove.¹³⁴ The artist also identifies two locations as “briqueterie”. Hewitt has noted that the island was used for brick manufacture prior to 1783, but this industry does not seem to have continued past the purchase date.¹³⁵ Other structures may belong to some of the island’s earlier residents, such as Jacob Horn, who were likely present around the time when Peter McNab acquired the land.¹³⁶ However, none of these structures appear to correspond with early McNab-era occupation.

Figure 3 - *Halifax Harbour...Catch Harbour* (detail)



Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

¹³⁴ Gallica - Bibliothèque nationale de France *Plan de la rade, baye et port de Chibouctou ou d'Halifax en la Nouvelle Eccosse ou Accadie* (no date) accessed at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8458470z.r=Plan+de+la+rade%252C+baye+et+port+de+Chibouctou+ou+d%2527Halifax+en+la+Nouvelle+Eccosse+ou+Accadie.langFR>

¹³⁵ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

¹³⁶ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

While many versions of the Des Barres mapping of the harbour represent the island without any particular detail, one rendition of *Halifax Harbour...Catch Harbour*, dating from 1780, records what appear to be boundaries between a series of lots on the island, but without indication of tenant names.¹³⁷ These divisions could represent areas leased by Richard Bulkeley, but do not reflect later property assignments under Peter McNab.

Following the purchase of the island, secondary sources suggest that Peter McNab set about constructing the family's original homestead at the head of present day McNab Cove. The Cook-Cassels letter indicates that the family home was located "at the head of the Cove just N. E. of where the Canteen now is by the old willow trees."¹³⁸ In Thomas Raddall's research notes for the novel, *Hangman's Beach*, he states that the McNab family home was situated on the hill now occupied by Fort McNab, some 200 yards from the "landing place" to the house. The notes state that the house was a long, low dwelling, 70 feet above sea level and was surrounded by willow trees that were still present in 1903.¹³⁹

Beginning with the 1808 Toler map, *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax*, a series of maps describe a group of structures in this area. The Toler map shows two unidentified structures on the shore of McNabs Cove.¹⁴⁰ As well, it marks a number of roadways across the island, including a long track that connects the north of the island to these structures. A branch of this same track begins nearby and accesses the south end

¹³⁷ Leventhal *Halifax Harbour...Catch Harbour*

¹³⁸ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

¹³⁹ Dalhousie Archives 20.5 *Hangman's Beach – Research Materials*, Thomas H. Raddall collection *Views and Distances from McNab's House on the Island and Cornwallis (McNab's) Island Notes*

¹⁴⁰ NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*

of the island in a similar fashion. The layout of these roadways is noteworthy and could suggest that the structures on McNabs Cove were a central hub to island activity, as would befit the home of the land's owners.

Figure 4 - *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax (McNab House Detail)*



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

The hydrographic survey of 1826 also records two structures in the same area, with the inlet now identified as “MacNabb’s Cove”, lending further credence to the notion that this is the original homestead site.¹⁴¹ By the time that Captain H. W. Bayfield charted the harbour 27 years later, the two earlier structures had been joined by a third building a short distance from the others.¹⁴² This cartographer also shows a wharf in the cove

¹⁴¹ NSA *Chart of Part of the Coast of NS*

¹⁴² Library and Archives Canada map collection online *Halifax Harbour, surveyed by Capt. H. W. Bayfield R.N. F.A.S.*, 1853, accessed at

adjacent to the buildings. The Bayfield map, drafted 1853, gives perhaps the best sense of the island and its residents at the end of Peter II's period of ownership. In 1865, the Royal Engineers' map A87, *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island*, again records the area.¹⁴³

Figure 5 - *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island* (McNab House Detail)



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

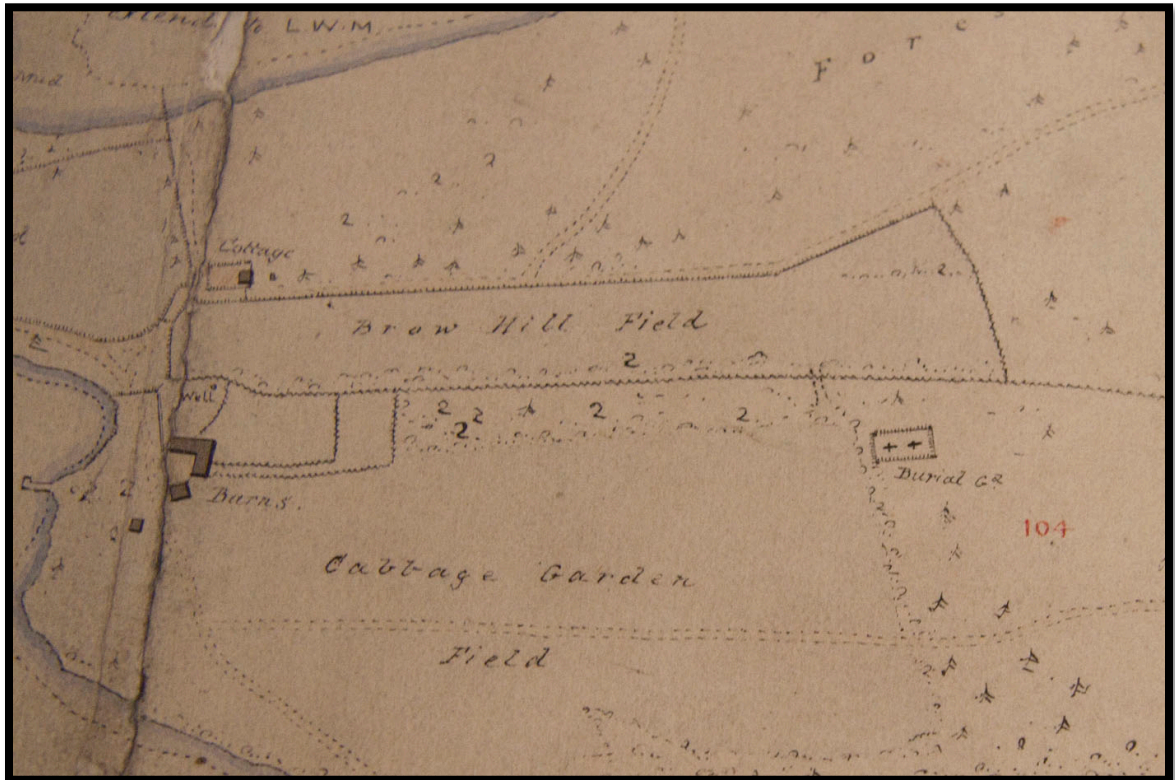
This map shows only a single, U-shaped structure where previous maps recorded two buildings. This building is clearly identified as a farm and has an enclosed yard. The wharf in McNabs Cove is present, as well as the structure nearby that appeared in the Bayfield chart. REO A87 is the first map since the Toler map to show roadways in the area and a comparison of the two documents shows significant extension of the basic

<http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/jp2/image2.htm?collection=&fi=jp010694082.jp2> hereafter LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁴³ NSA REO A87

roads, with numerous secondary roads branching out around the area of the McNab homestead. This map also states that the forest in the vicinity has been cleared.

Figure 6 - *South End of MacNab's Island* (Detail McNab House & Area)



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

Two years later, REO A88 *South End of MacNab's Island* gives a more highly detail version of the same area.¹⁴⁴ Here, there are again three structures, including two noted as “Barns”, which raises the possibility that the third, smallest structure is the site of the dwelling house. This cartographer has also noted field names in the vicinity (for example Cabbage Garden Field, Stone Wall Field, and Brow Hill Field) and boundaries, including what appear to be markings denoting two distinct styles of fencing or boundary marker. For the first time, the McNab family cemetery is depicted. By this date, Peter II and his

¹⁴⁴ NSA REO A88

first wife, Joanna, (as well as Thomas Culliton and his wife, Sarah, and a number of other McNabs) have died and been buried in the island cemetery (Kinsman 1995:37).¹⁴⁵ This burial ground would eventually become incorporated into Fort McNab, becoming, according to Thomas Raddall, “the world’s best guarded graveyard”.¹⁴⁶ The Cook-Cassels letter asserts that this land must have been specifically sanctified for burial, saying “There is no record of the setting apart or consecration of this graveyard, but the priest could never have laid your great, great grandmother to rest in unconsecrated ground.”¹⁴⁷

It is surprising that none of the maps label these various buildings as belonging to the McNab family. While no structures are specifically identified on the maps created for marine navigation, this omission is curious on the Toler map, as well as the later Royal Engineers mapping, where the cartographers have selectively noted ownership of some other structures but not the home of the island’s owner. Brian Kinsman (1995) notes that the buildings on McNabs Cove are not labeled with the family name on the REO A87 map because the house had been occupied in the 1860s by McNab relatives, the Lyttleton family, who had recently left the island for England (25). On the REO A88 map, the building was absent because it had burned several months prior to the map’s date (Kinsman 1995:27).

Both of the Royal Engineers maps were drafted a few years after Captain Westcote Lyttleton painted *View of McNab’s Island with Halifax in the Background*

¹⁴⁵ The McNab Family Cemetery, Friends of McNabs Island Society website
<http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/HeadStoneInfo.htm>

¹⁴⁶ Features of Interest, Friends of McNabs Island Society website
<http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/FeaturesOfInterest.htm>

¹⁴⁷ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

depicting the original house (see Figure 1).¹⁴⁸ At the time of the painting, the Lyttleton family was occupying the McNab homestead and it seems likely that Captain Lyttleton was recording his home and family members in the artwork (Kinsman 1995:25). The painting shows the house and two additional buildings from a vantage point upslope from the farmstead. While there are discrepancies between the painting and the two Royal Engineers maps, it is clear that they are all representing the same area.

Archaeological work in the McNabs Cove area sheds additional light on the structures associated with Peter McNab's original homestead. The 2011 report *McNabs Island Trail Improvement Project: Archaeological Resource Impact Assessment* documented a group of sites and related artifacts in the vicinity (Munro 2011). Along the modern Colin Stewart trail, a foundation identified as belonging to the McNab family home, as well as another small foundation, were recorded on the northern, waterside of the trail. Nearby, on the southern side of the trail, a large foundation was noted. Dating on the foundations was complicated, as the cellar depressions had all been used as garbage dumps into modern times (Munro 2011:14-15). No artifacts were recovered from any of these sites. Artifacts from the nearby Brow Hill trail work yielded dates from the early to mid 20th century (Munro 2011:15). Another archaeological survey also recorded the large rubble foundation measuring 12 x 10 metres, called feature M-4 in the report. The authors believe the structure could be a barn, based on the dimensions (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004:32). Given the relative size and location of this feature, it seems likely to be the foundation for one of the barns shown in the 1867 Royal Engineers map A88. Artifacts found in a number of tree throws in proximity helped to establish 18th and 19th century

¹⁴⁸ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.179 location 42-12 *View of McNab's Island with Halifax in the Background* c. 1860

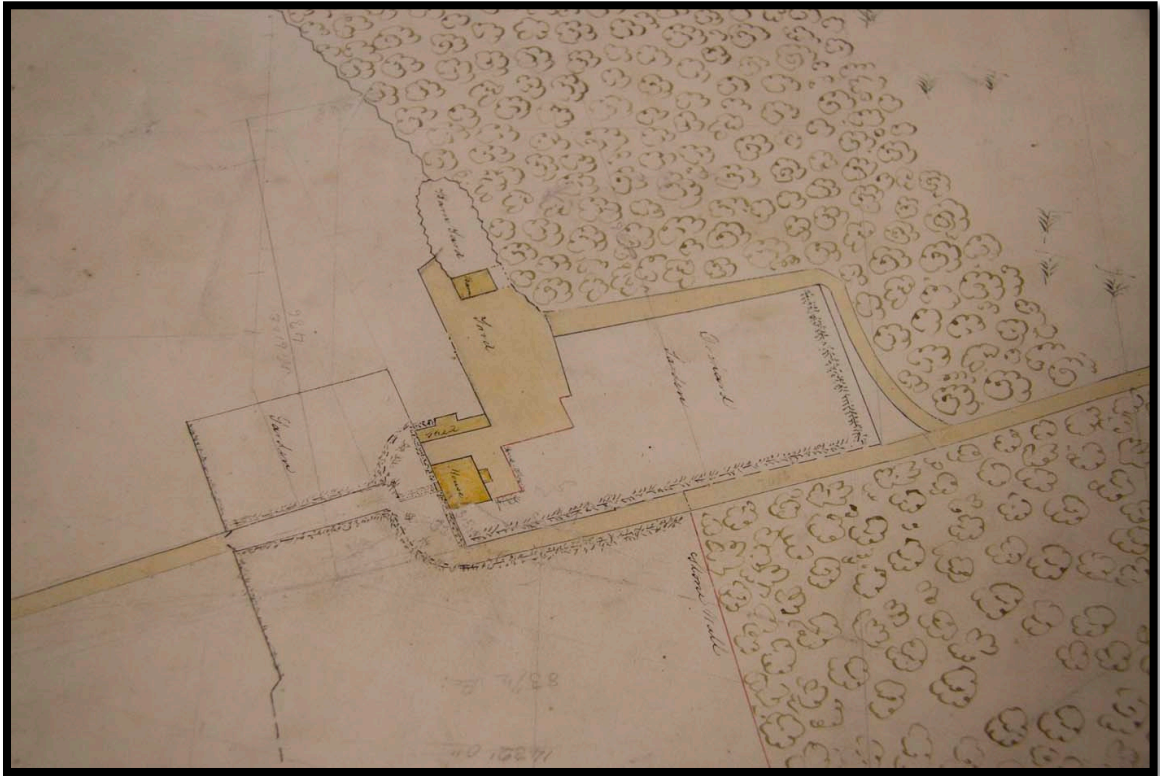
timeframe of occupation for the various foundations in this part of the island (Schwarz and Schwarz 2004:31). Of particular interest are the wine bottle sherds from throw M-2 that the author believes date to the 1783 to 1867 period of the McNab house, and a moulded creamware plate rim, identified as either a “Royal” pattern or an edged motif, from 1785-1820 (Schwarz and Schwarz 2004:31). A personal visit to this site in the autumn of 2013 confirmed the presence of these foundations. As well, tree throws in the area of the foundations showed brick and ceramic fragments, although it was not possible to date these from visual inspection and none were collected. The larger foundation appears to be a dry stone construction, while the other foundation (the possible site of the original home) appears only as a depression in the ground. An apple tree, reputed to be from the McNab period, grows near the foundation (Cathy McCarthy, personal communication, Oct. 20, 2013).

While this first homestead served the two generations of McNabs on the island, in the early 1830s, Peter II’s son, Peter III, constructed a home for himself and his family in the north of the island (Kinsman 1995:30). This structure is noted in a 1849 advertisement in *The Nova Scotian*: “At the North end of the Island, there is an excellent Two Story Stone Dwelling House, with four Rooms, Pantry, and Hall in the first floor, with Kitchen, Dairy, Wash-house and Out Houses attached”.¹⁴⁹ The foundation of Peter III’s house is believed to have been reused in the later construction of the Matthew Lynch house in the 20th century, the location of which is noted on the modern map of McNabs Island in Appendix A (Sheldon 1991:10). A report for the provincial museum agrees with this history, noting that the discovery of an unworn 1832 penny in the mortar of the

¹⁴⁹ NSA Newspaper Collection *The Nova Scotian*, January 8, 1849, p. 16, column 4

Matthew Lynch house definitively dates the foundation and connects it to the early home of Peter III.¹⁵⁰

Figure 7 - *The Estate Plan of Peter McNab, Esquire* (Detail of Main House)



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

This dwelling and its outbuildings are most clearly illustrated in *The Estate Plan of Peter McNab, Esquire* from 1850.¹⁵¹ The map itself is quite large scale, surveying a small part of the northern portion of McNabs Island in extensive detail (See Appendix E). The main house sits in a well-developed landscape with outbuildings, an orchard, and various gardens. Walls and what appear to be hedges surround all of this. The front of the house is approached by means of a long drive that curves up through the trees from the

¹⁵⁰ NSA MG 9 Vol. 42 p. 106 *Report of the Provincial Museum of Nova Scotia 1930-1931*

¹⁵¹ NSA City Engineers Office V4 no. 3457 location H. G. 2 *Plan of the Estate of Peter McNab, Esquire, 1850*, hereafter *NSA Plan of the Estate of P. McNab*

wharf in what is labeled as McNab's Cove on the map but corresponds with modern day Ives Cove. Moving from the cove, the road straightens and the vista opens up, revealing the main house with its symmetrically arranged front gardens, set in an expanse of cleared fields. With much less detail, the 1853 Bayfield map also shows two structures in the same location as the main house on the Estate map, as well as the same nearby wharf in Ives Cove wharf drawn on the earlier map.¹⁵²

The Estate Plan of Peter McNab, Esquire presents a very ordered vision of the landscape, quite different from the earlier maps and reflective of this later McNab's aspiration toward the popular Georgian style of architecture and landscape design and perhaps an identity different from that of his father and grandfather.¹⁵³ While Peter II had been content to occupy the home built by his father, Peter III clearly had more fashionable ideas about the presentation of his home and his ambitions reflect a distinct change in ideas on how the island might be occupied and the sorts of residents sought after. Kealhofer (1999) has remarked the role of the garden as a "conscious presentation of self" (70). While her comments are directed at the ambitions of 17th and early 18th century Virginia, they have resonance with the attitudes of colonial Halifax as well. She states:

At the household scale, individuals in the seventeenth century began to use garden and landscape style and content to define themselves. These identities are manifest in where and what they choose to grow or produce, where and how they built their houses, and more importantly here, where and how they configured their gardens. The style of garden, its meaning, and its social context, reveals choices made by men to define and legitimate their place in the world (Kryder-Reid 1994; Leone 1994). (Kealhofer 1999:75)

¹⁵² LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁵³ NSA *Plan of the Estate of P. McNab*

The mapmaker's decision to identify the cove near Peter III's home as McNab's Cove is also revealing. Where this name had previously been applied to the cove near the original McNab family home, the relocation in this later map speaks a shift in the power base of the island to this new northern location.

This map may have been generated to assist in the subdivision and sale of parts of the property. This attempt to sell planned property lots shows a shift away from an island occupied by tenants to a more planned settlement of property owners. Given the dimensions of the lots (some a diminutive 54x70 feet) these plots are obviously intended to be house or cottage lots, not farmsteads. An even later attempt to sell the island lots sheds light on the target market for these lots and highlights the island as a retreat from "the dust and heat of the town during the hot weather" (as cited in Kinsman 1995:23).

However, this raises the question of whether the various structures, roadways and other developments shown on the *Estate of Peter McNab, Esquire* map were actually constructed or if aspects of the map could be viewed as purely aspirational on the part of Peter III. One major artery is clearly noted as a "Proposed Road" and the divisions in one area are only "Proposed Lots". Certainly, it appears that some of the gardens depicted on the map were constructed. A 20th century survey of the island noted that a row of basswood trees planted by Peter III in the 19th century were still standing at the time of the study.¹⁵⁴

Moving from the McNab family to the main tenants of the island, Hewitt locates later generations of the Kuhn family, specifically George and Alexander, as living in the

¹⁵⁴ Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources *Management Plan for McNabs and Lawlor Islands* 2005, page 16 accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/natr/parks/management/pdf-mcnabs/dmpa.pdf>



Figure 8 - *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax (North End of Island)*

“head of the island”.¹⁵⁵ This could correspond to one or more of the unlabeled structures, shown on the 1808 Toler map, as well as *Chart of the Coast of Nova Scotia* (1826), the 1853 Bayfield map and the *Estate Map of Peter McNab*, on the northern tip of McNabs

¹⁵⁵ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt McNab's *Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

Island, running from Ives Cove to Indian Point.¹⁵⁶ George and possibly Alexander are the great-grandsons of early tenant Henry Kuhn (Stevens 2002:200). The Toler map shows two clusters of unlabeled structures on the point. By 1826, the hydrographic survey map records three areas of settlement in the north of the island, roughly corresponding with the farms marked on the earlier map, with additional buildings appearing around the bottom part of Ives Cove. An archaeological survey identified site BdCv-12/Foundation 2 in this vicinity. This foundation is a field stone lined depression with early 19th century artifacts discovered during shovel testing and test pit excavation. The structure also appears to have been reused into the 20th century, which confuses conclusive dating (Sheldon 1991:6-7). The *Estate of Peter McNab, Esquire* map also shows a house and barn on the eastern shore of Ives Cove (McNab's Cove on this map), although this location corresponds more closely with the site of another tenant's farm. In 1853, two groups of two buildings again appear in the north of the island, on the seaward slopes of the two drumlin hills between present day Ives Cove and Indian Point. The 1865 Church map of the region records a Kuhn still in residence near Indian Point (Kinsman 1995:39). By 1886, the Kuhns appear to have departed as another map of area shows this point of land without structures and only an "old orchard" in the vicinity.¹⁵⁷ Allowing for a degree of variation due to the skill and accuracy of the various cartographers, this demonstrates continuity from structures shown on the 1808 Toler map until 1865. A 1991 archaeological investigation recorded a number of early foundations in the area of Indian Point. Sites BdCv-11/Foundation 1 and BdCv-14/Foundation 4 are located on Indian

¹⁵⁶ NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*, NSA *Chart of Part of the Coast of NS*, NSA *Plan of the Estate of P. McNab*, LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁵⁷ NSA Map Collection 240/1886/89 V 2.2.1.12 *Halifax and Environs* Sheet 4

Point and are connected by a path that leads to the shoreline. Nearby, the survey reports a dry laid, fieldstone wall, as well as piles of fieldstone thought to be the result of field clearing. Foundation 4 is thought to be the house, with the larger Foundation 1 being an associated outbuilding. While no artifacts were produced from shovel testing near Foundation 1, tests from Foundation 4 produced a number of 19th century ceramics. These included refined earthenware/pearlware, and probable Mocha dating from the period of 1800-1820, pearlware c. 1830-1840 and mid-19th century North American stoneware and coarse earthenware. Based on this evidence, the site was dated to the 19th century (Sheldon 1991:6&9). Close to this cluster of foundations, another depression, BdCv-13/Foundation 3, was located. This site lies on the eastern side of Indian Point, facing Eastern Passage. Artifacts from this site include pearlware and burnt refined earthenware (Sheldon 1991:8&A2). The author suggests that the two clusters possibly represent the remains of the Kuhn and the later Trainer farms (Sheldon 1991:9). The Friends of McNabs Island Society currently label this area as the site of the Fraser and Trainer farms.¹⁵⁸ Tenant Henry Kuhn Senior may have lived on Big Thrum Cap Island that adjoins the southern tip of McNabs Island (Kinsman 1995:37). While the earlier Toler map does not show habitation in the area, the *Chart of Part of the Coast of Nova Scotia* from 1826 does record two structures on the higher ground of Big Thrum Cap.¹⁵⁹ These structures disappear in later maps.

On the 1850 *Plan of the Estate of Peter McNab, Esquire* map, a group of proposed lots sit on an area labeled “Harry’s Field”, possibly referencing a previous

¹⁵⁸ Friends of McNabs Island Society McNabs Island map, accessed at <http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/McNabMap.htm>

¹⁵⁹ NSA *Chart of Part of the Coast of NS*

tenant who had occupied the land.¹⁶⁰ As Harry can be nickname for Henry, this might be Henry Kuhn Junior, who was present on the island around 1792-1793.¹⁶¹ More likely, the Cook-Cassels letter references a tenant of Peter II named Harry Hill (or “Black Harry”, as he was noted to be the only African Nova Scotian to have lived on the island, according to the letter’s author). The letter also states that Harry Hill’s property was located “where Findlay’s picnic place [Findlay’s Picnic Grounds on the modern Friends of McNabs Island map in Appendix A] now is”, which places him in this vicinity.¹⁶²

Peter II’s inlaws, the Culliton/Culleton family are said to have lived in the south of the island, near land that was later used for the Naval Rifle Range, approximately 700 yards from the shoreline (again, see Friends of McNabs Island map in Appendix A for the location of later island structures).¹⁶³ The 1808 Toler map shows a single structure situated at the end of the long north-south road extension that begins near the site of the first McNab family home.¹⁶⁴ This structure has been identified as the site of the Culliton family homestead, as well as the probable location of Mary Roubalet’s house of entertainment, called “The Mansion House”.¹⁶⁵ The 1826 mapping does not show structures in this area, although the 1853 Bayfield map does show two buildings in this

¹⁶⁰ NSA *Plan of the Estate of P. McNab*

¹⁶¹ NSA RG 1 Vol. no. 444 - McNab’s Island Halifax County 1792 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 047, accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/returnsTax.asp?ID=6621> and RG 1 vol. no. 444 - McNab’s Island Halifax County 1793 Poll Tax 1791-1794 Sheet 069, accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/returnsTax.asp?ID=11044>

¹⁶² NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908, see Appendix A - Friends of McNabs Island map for these locations

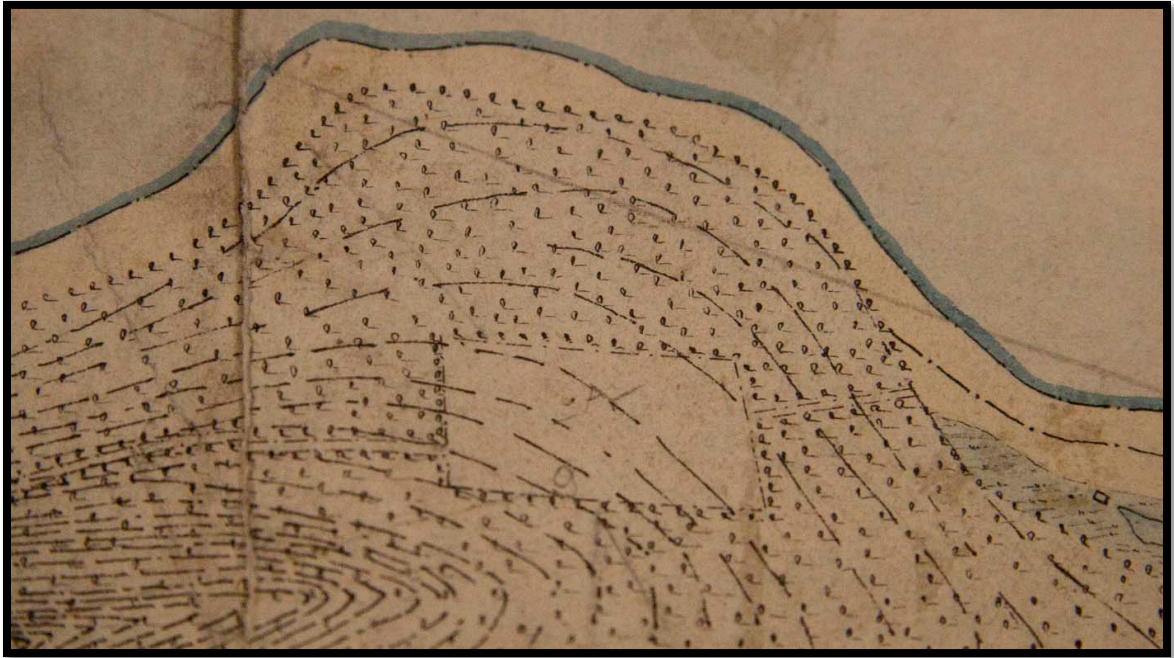
¹⁶³ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

¹⁶⁴ NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*

¹⁶⁵ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab’s Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

general area.¹⁶⁶ Later still, the Royal Engineers maps show the continued presence of the roadway to the south end of the island, originally recorded on the Toler map, as well as a rectangular field where buildings had previously appeared.¹⁶⁷

Figure 9 - *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island (Detail of Culliton Farm Area)*



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

In both maps, the road continues through the cleared field to the shoreline at present day Green Hill Cove. Archival records indicate that this site was abandoned sometime between 1827, when Thomas Culliton appears on the census recording for the island, and 1849, when the entire island is offered for sale.¹⁶⁸ The 1849 advertisement for the island mentions the structure as, “a large Dwelling house in the South end of the Island – containing 8 room, with Cellars, &c.” The listing also says that the house is in a state of

¹⁶⁶ LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁶⁷ NSA REO A87 and NSA REO A88

¹⁶⁸ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

disrepair but could be readily returned to use.¹⁶⁹ Archaeological survey of the area in the 20th century describes this part of the island as “readily recognizable as an area of former field clearances” (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004:33). While the area has generally been overwritten by the later period of military use, a foundation and artifacts located in tree falls push the date of the site into the earlier period of occupation. Feature CF-4 is a rubble foundation, seven metres by six metres, with a depth of one metre. In close proximity, a tree fall produced a variety of ceramic sherds, primarily creamware and pearlware, most dated to c. 1780-1820 (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004:34). Based on the artifacts, the report authors believe that the foundation (CF-4) is the foundation of Mary Roubalet’s 1790 “Mansion House” (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004:37). The “Mansion House” may also be the Culliton home (Friends of McNabs Island Society 2008:93). Nearby, a possible foundation, labeled RRR-6, could be an outbuilding related to the Culliton farm (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004:42).

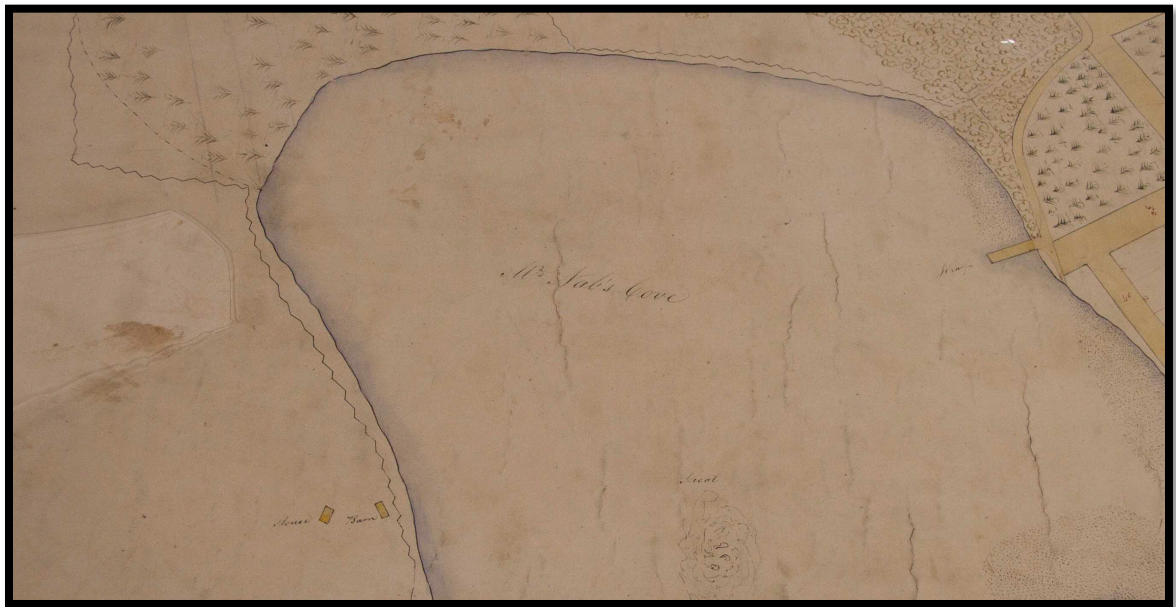
The location of island tenant Thomas Fraser and his family would seem to be clearly noted on the Toler map of 1808 (See Figure 8).¹⁷⁰ Here, the cartographer has clearly has decisively labeled a cluster of four buildings on Ives Cove as “Fraser’s Farm”. While this map evidence would seem to be reasonably definitive, a 1901 article suggests that the Fraser family instead lived across from the Myers property in Eastern Passage, near a brook. It also states “[t]he Indians encamped not far from his place in great numbers”, suggesting a spot somewhere near Indian Point on the east facing shore of the

¹⁶⁹ NSA Newspaper Collection *The Nova Scotian*, January 8, 1849, p. 16, column 4

¹⁷⁰ NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*

island.¹⁷¹ Michael Sanders (1990) believes this alternate location is referenced on the 1808 map with the single structure indicated on the eastern side of the island (26). The labeled Fraser Farm site is also situated very near a marked stream and is approximately the same distance to Indian Point as the other structure. While the named site does not actually face Eastern Passage, possibly Hewitt intended to give a rough “as the crow flies” approximation of the location in relation to the Myers property, or to show that the Myers’ land was visible from the hill behind the Fraser farm site. In the area of the Fraser Farm site, as marked on the Toler map, an archaeological survey noted the presence of a number of field clearance mounds (called in the report features FFT-1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Near FFT-5 the report indicates a structure that could be a Fraser Farm outbuilding (or, as an equal possibility, a later structure) (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004:21-22).

Figure 10 - *Estate of Peter McNab, Esquire* (Detail of cove and farm)

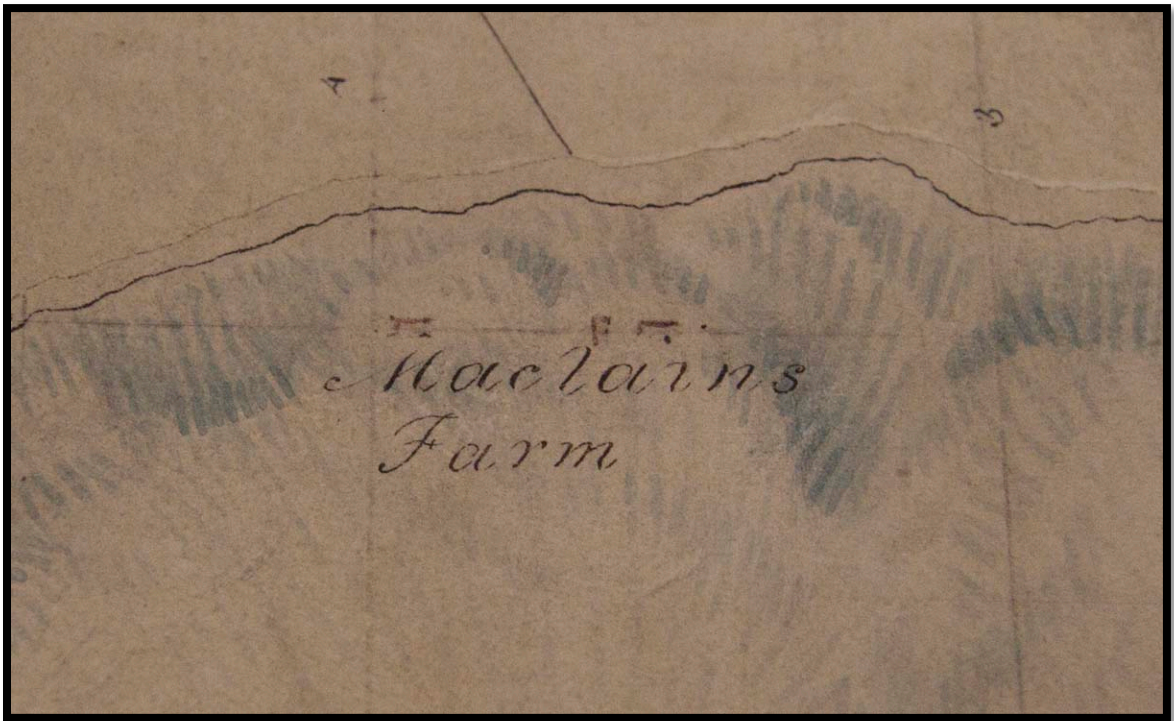


Source: Nova Scotia Archives

¹⁷¹ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island* from *Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

As previously mentioned in the discussion of the Kuhn family, the *Estate of Peter McNab, Esquire* map shows a house and barn on the eastern shore of Ives Cove (McNab's Cove on this map), as does the Bayfield map.¹⁷² While these structures could correspond to other, unlabeled structures shown in the area on the Toler map, they appear to be in closest proximity to Toler's Fraser Farm site.

Figure 11 - *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax (MacLain Farm)*



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

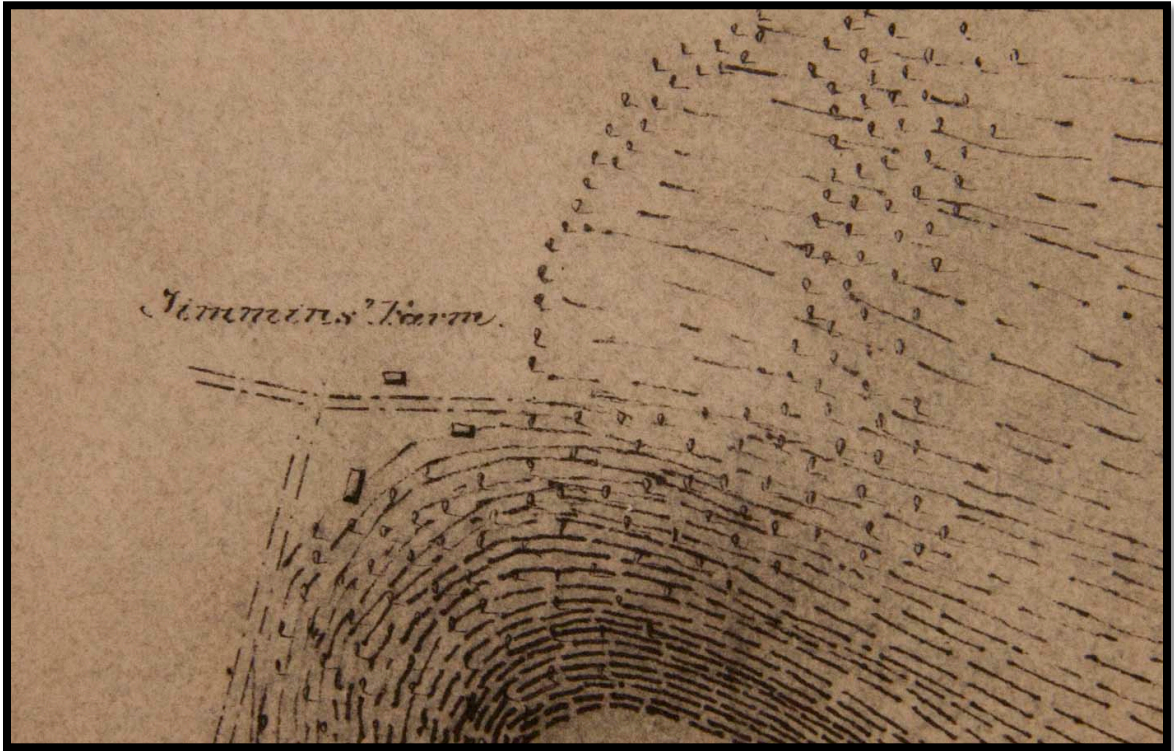
The 1808 Toler map also gives a strong indication of the location of the McLain family during this time period.¹⁷³ Toler labels a group of three buildings on the eastern shore of the island as “McLain’s Farm” (and the area is still identified as such on the

¹⁷² LAC *Halifax Harbour, NSA Plan of the Estate of P. McNab*

¹⁷³ NSA *Toler Plan of the Peninsula...*

modern map created by the Friends of McNabs Island Society).¹⁷⁴ While no structures are shown here in 1826, Bayfield does show one structure in this area in 1853.¹⁷⁵

Figure 12 - *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island* (Detail of Timmons Farm Area)



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

Sources record (and a certain degree of logic dictates) that the tenant Daniel Timmons (or Timmins) occupied the land called Timmins Point, which is likely on present-day Timmins Cove.¹⁷⁶ The 1808 Toler map has a faint marking upslope from the cove that could represent a structure in this area.¹⁷⁷ There is no evidence of this structure in 1826, but by 1853 another building appears in Timmins Cove, at enough of a distance

¹⁷⁴ Friends of McNabs Island Society McNabs Island map, accessed at <http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/McNabMap.htm>, hereafter Friends of McNabs Island Map

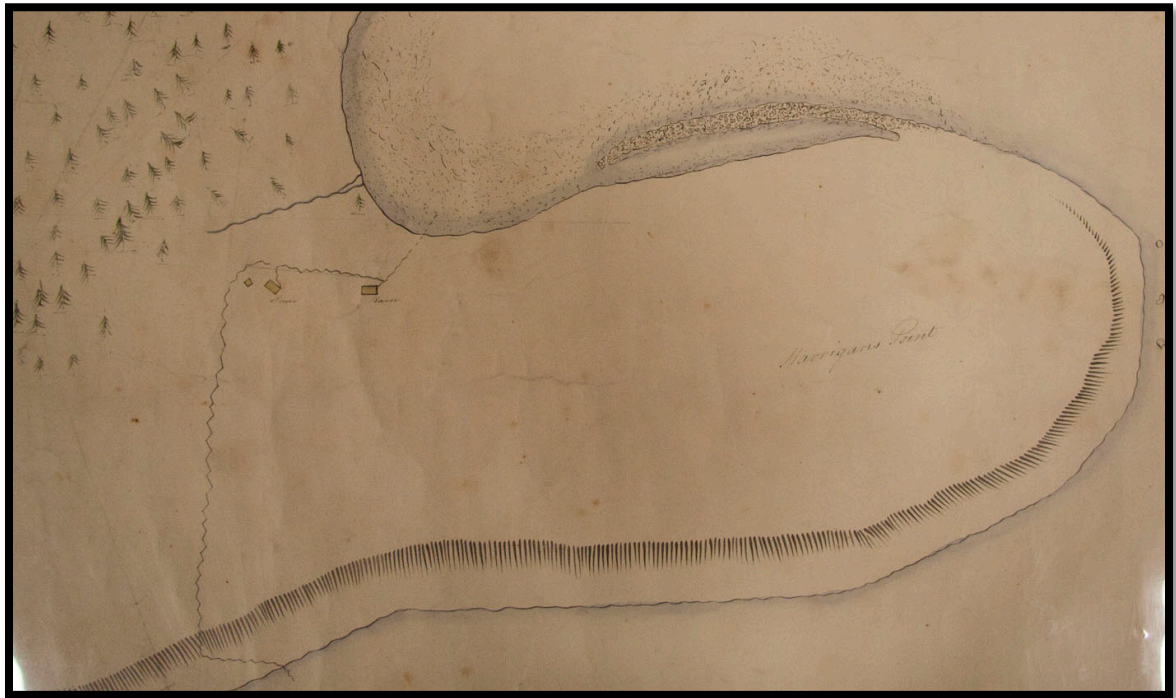
¹⁷⁵ LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁷⁶ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908

¹⁷⁷ NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*

from the structure shown by Toler to indicate that this is a different building altogether.¹⁷⁸ Conversely, the Royal Engineers A87 map from 1865 does specifically locate some Timmins family members on a farmstead in a more central part of the island.¹⁷⁹ Here, three buildings range on either side of a roadway that connects the cluster to a cleared (and possibly fenced) area and a nearby farmstead belonging to another family. This could represent the growth of the Timmons/Timmins family and a multi-generational presence on the island.

Figure 13 - *Estate of Peter McNab, Esquire* (Detail of possible Harrigan Farm)



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

Following the same logic, the tenant John Harrigan and his family may have occupied the farm indicated on the *Plan of the Estate of Peter McNab* map, and the 1853

¹⁷⁸ LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁷⁹ NSA REO A87

Bayfield, near what was once called Harrigan's Point (now Hugonin Point).¹⁸⁰ On the estate map, the farm is located to the south of the McNab property, close to the shelter of the tellingly labeled Harrigan's Cove.¹⁸¹ The cartographer has indicated a house, barn and unlabeled outbuilding, as well as a pathway leading from the western shore of the island, past the farm to Harrigan's Cove. Three years later, Bayfield shows two buildings in the exact location.¹⁸² Kinsman (1995) agrees that the structures built near Harrigan's/Hugonin Point were likely built by either John Harrigan or his father (37). Supporting the map information, the painting *Halifax from McNab's Island* from circa 1860 shows a small house and possible second building at the head of Harrigan's Cove.¹⁸³ These structures appear to correspond to the house or the barn shown on the 1850 and 1853 maps.

The residence of tenant William Frost may be deduced from the name of the stream running into Back Cove: Frost Fish Brook. The Hewitt article of June 1, 1901 states that William Frost lived at the head of Back Cove. As well, Hewitt notes that this site was also formerly occupied by another tenant, Jacob Hutt.¹⁸⁴ The name, Frost Fish Brook, first appears on the 1867 Royal Engineers map of the area and is still in use on modern maps.¹⁸⁵ While it names the brook, this map does not show any homes near the watercourse. The area around the brook is marked as "swamp", which could mean that

¹⁸⁰ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island from Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

¹⁸¹ NSA *Plan of the Estate of P. McNab*

¹⁸² LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁸³ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.140 location 40-26 *Halifax from McNab's Island* c. 1860

¹⁸⁴ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island from Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

¹⁸⁵ NSA REO A88

the Frost family resided on a more elevated area further along Back Cove. REO A88, unfortunately, does not detail this part of the island but the 1853 Bayfield map does show a single structure and a wharf further along the shoreline at the foot of one the hills that could belong to the Frosts, although it is not strictly speaking located in the head of the cove in keeping with Hewitt's account.¹⁸⁶

Less information is available on other McNab tenants. John "Squire" Little is said to have lived near the site of Fort Ives, on a drumlin hill in the north of the island.¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately, none of the available maps show structures in this area. Peter Oates, who may be the "Old Oats" who was in charge of a schooner that transported the McNab family, resided in a cleared area on the eastern side of the island, opposite the lands of the Cooney family in Eastern Passage.¹⁸⁸ The 1853 Bayfield map does show a single structure with a wharf on the eastern shore of the island, facing present day Eastern Passage but without a clear idea of the location of the Cooney family, it is uncertain if this was the home and landing place of Peter Oates.¹⁸⁹ The Cook-Cassels letter states that the mysterious English John had been "given a bit of ground near the Back Cove".¹⁹⁰ In all of these cases, the tenants can be situated in general areas of the island but not tied to particular structures represented on the various historical maps.

¹⁸⁶ LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁸⁷ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island from Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour*

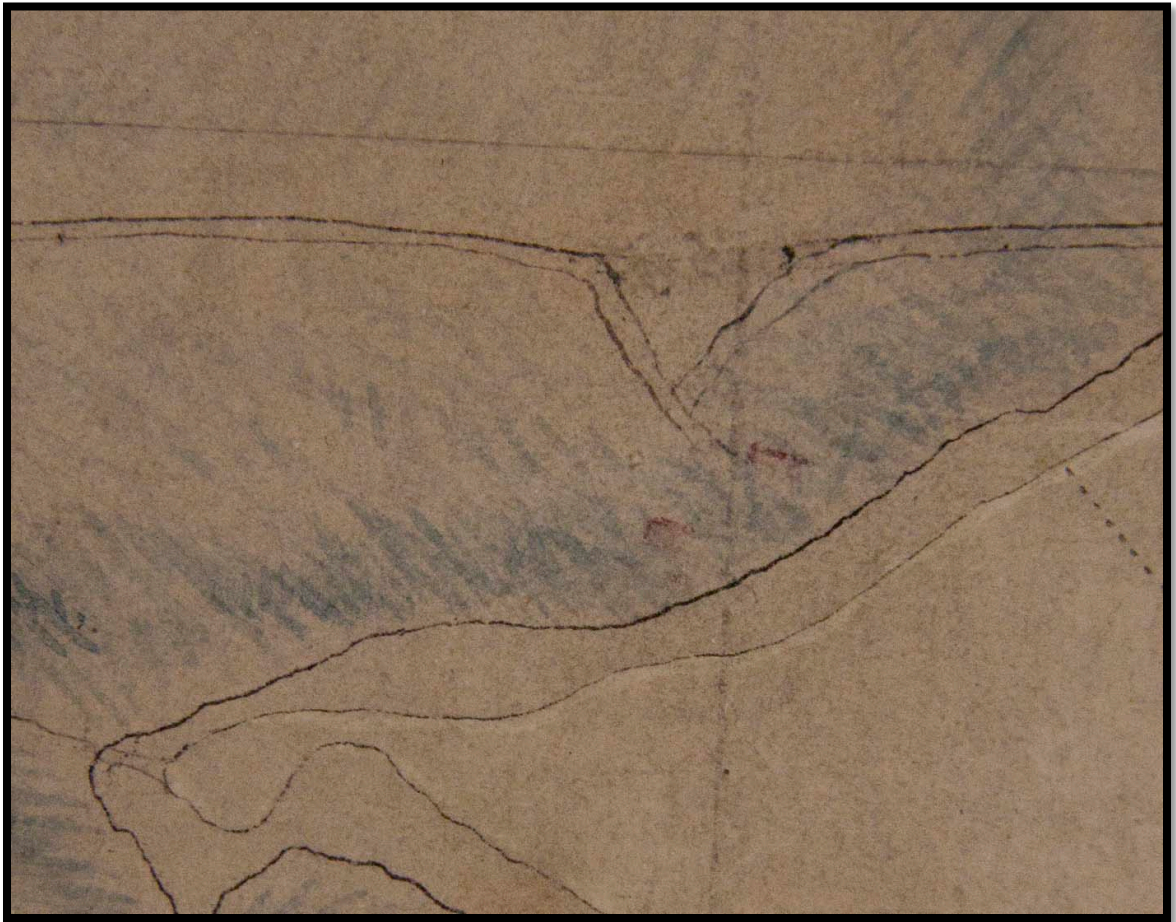
¹⁸⁸ NSA MG 20 Vol.673 #2 H. W. Hewitt *McNab's Island from Historical Sketch of Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, Cole Harbour and the Islands of Halifax Harbour* and NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island 1908*

¹⁸⁹ LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁹⁰ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island 1908*

In addition to the locations already discussed, there are a number of other sites that date to the relevant time period that cannot be tied to a specific McNab tenant. Of particular interest is a site shown in the north of McNabs Cove on the 1808, 1826 and possibly the 1853 maps. In 1808 Toler shows a structure (or possibly two structures) off a

Figure 14 - *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax* (Unnamed Farm)



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

V-shaped diversion from the main north-south roadway.¹⁹¹ Two structures are also present in the same area on the *Chart of Part of the Coast of Nova Scotia*.¹⁹² By 1853, a

¹⁹¹ NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*

¹⁹² NSA *Chart of Part of the Coast of NS*

wharf appears in this end of the cove but the two structures are no longer present near the shore.¹⁹³ However, four buildings are now shown a short distance away. The later settlement is further from the shoreline and positioned at a higher elevation, which could suggest the original houses were abandoned or relocated for a more protected position. A survey of the island identified a rubble foundation, called FD-1, in this part of McNabs Cove. Artifacts retrieved from the site span a date range from mid 18th to early 20th century. Nearby a tree fall, FD-2, produced an equally broad range of artifacts, but intriguingly, one was a kaolin pipe stem piece bearing the partial stamp, "...SCOTLAND" which is a tantalizing detail (Schwarz & Schwarz 2004:23).

The Changing Island

Beyond the individual home sites, the tenants and the McNab family members participated in an ongoing process of shaping the overall landscape. While the evidence suggests that the island was occupied at the time of Peter McNab's purchase in 1783, the earliest maps depict the area as sparsely populated. Moving forward through the years, the progression of maps show the gradual development and increasing population of the land. Roads branch across the island, the forest recedes and cleared fields appear, some enclosed with stone walls. The artwork of the period also records these changes, albeit with an artistic eye for the picturesque.

The 1808 map, *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax*, shows roadways, running north to south and connecting key areas of occupation.¹⁹⁴ The cartographer does not record any sign of structured fields or field boundaries. Possibly, this omission stems

¹⁹³ LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁹⁴ NSA Toler *Plan of the Peninsula...*

from Toler's lack of interest in documenting this element of life on the island. Alternately, the tenants and the McNab family may not have been involved in large scale farming with regular, demarcated fields and boundaries. Certainly the farms are dispersed widely across the island in this period, negating the necessity of designated boundaries between adjoining holdings. Nonetheless, it seems that some manner of fencing was in use prior to this time. In William's Dyott's 1787 account of the island, he makes reference to a specific style of fence seen during his visit, although he remarks that only a small portion of the island had been cleared as of the date of his visit (Dyott 1907:31). By the 1826, *Chart of the Coast of Nova Scotia* shows a slight increase in settlement across the island, but again, offers no information on land clearance or boundaries.¹⁹⁵

The 1850 map of the estate of Peter III shows a significant portion of the north of the island in detail, including clearance, boundaries, roadways, and even specifics of land and building use. However, as has been suggested earlier, it is possible that aspects of this map represent a desired future landscape rather than an existing reality.¹⁹⁶ Bayfield's 1853 *Halifax Harbour* chart lacks the level of detail of the estate maps but does give a sense of the increasing amounts of settlement, island-wide.¹⁹⁷

The two later Royal Engineer maps, REO A87 and A88, give a highly detailed sense of development in the southern half of the island. The 1865 *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island* map, REO A87, is topographically detailed, with notations indicating areas of woodland and clearance and the presence of some enclosed fields.¹⁹⁸ The

¹⁹⁵ NSA *Chart of Part of the Coast of NS*

¹⁹⁶ NSA *Plan of the Estate of P. McNab*

¹⁹⁷ LAC *Halifax Harbour*

¹⁹⁸ NSA REO A87

mapmaker shows additional road and pathways from the Toler map, as well as a better sense of which areas of the southern island had been cleared, and in the case of the “potato field”, how it was used. The 1867 map, REO 88, *South End of MacNab’s Island*, is also limited in scope to the southern part of the island, but still gives a great deal of information about the development of the landscape.¹⁹⁹ By this date, the land is cross-crossed with roads and pathways, dotted with settlement, and extensively divided into enclosed fields in the central section of the island. The cartographer appears to be representing two types of enclosures, although there is no legend to shed light on the nature of their differences. Presumably the marks surrounding the named “Stone Wall Field” – single lines extending upwards perpendicular to the boundary line – represent a stone built wall. The other field boundary markings show lines zig-zagging across the boundary line and depict some other type of enclosure.

While the preponderance of available maps for the time frame following Peter II’s death show only a portion of the island, some additional information can be gained from the artwork of the period. Captain Westcote Lyttleton’s painting, *View of McNab’s Island with Halifax in Background*, from c. 1860, has already been mentioned for its representation of the original McNab house (see Figure 1).²⁰⁰ This painting offers a view from Brow Hill, across McNabs Cove to Hugonin (formerly Harrigan’s) Point. While Brow Hill, Harrigan’s/Hugonin Point and an area at the end of the cove appear to be cleared, the remainder of the island pictured is still in a heavily wooded state.

¹⁹⁹ NSA REO A88

²⁰⁰ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.179 location 42-12 *View of McNab’s Island with Halifax in the Background* c. 1860

Lyttleton produced two other paintings of McNabs Island, *Halifax from McNab's Island*, c. 1860-1862 and *McNab's Island and the Hugonin Home* c. 1860.²⁰¹ The first

Figure 15 - *Halifax from McNab's Island*, c. 1860-1862



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

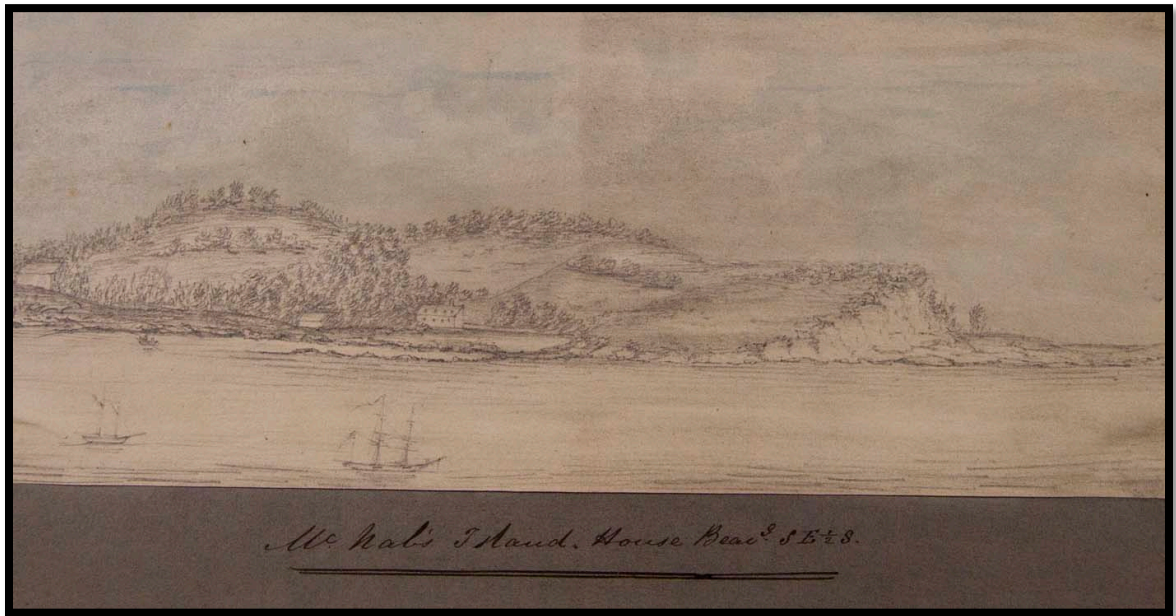
depicts a view of the northern portion of the island, presumably from Jenkins Hill, looking down on the later Hugonin House, home of the artist's brother-in-law. The second, *McNab's Island and the Hugonin House*, shows a different perspective on this scene and the Hugonin House. The second work has been painted from a vantage point on Harrigan's/Hugonin Point, looking back towards the top of McNabs Cove. Usefully, both works seem to have been painted at a later date than the first Lyttleton painting, and offer a sense of the increasing land clearance occurring in the north of the island. *Halifax from McNab's Island* shows a field cleared and enclosed on Jenkins Hill behind the house,

²⁰¹ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.140 location 40-26 *Halifax from McNab's Island* c. 1860 and NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.175 *McNab's Island and the Hugonin Home* c.1860

as well as additional clearance on Harrigan's/Hugonin Point. The artist has also chosen to show a group of cattle in the field, instead of the expected flocks of sheep that various records indicate were the expected stock animal of the time.²⁰² *McNab's Island and the Hugonin House* shows more extensive field clearance on Jenkins Hill behind the house and extending further south along the cove.

Other period depictions of the island include William Eagar's print, *View of Halifax, N. S., from McNab's Island* (1839).²⁰³ This piece shows a small field somewhere in the north of the island, with substantial woodlands surrounding the clearing. It is of interest because this print does depict flocks of sheep, as well as cattle on the island.

Figure 16 - *McNab's Island House* (Detail, with title)



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

²⁰² NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A Narrative re: MacNab's Island 1908

²⁰³ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.856 location 42-13 *View of Halifax, N. S., from McNab's Island* 1939

A 1836 sketch by W. F. R. with the somewhat indecipherable title of *McNab's Island House Bea[r? c?]* followed by a superscript S] *SE ½ S.* shows extensive field clearance and a number of structures, one of which appears to be a large house with multiple windows.²⁰⁴ However, orienting this image on the island has proven challenging. Possibly, this is a view of the south end of McNabs Cove, with the larger house being the McNab homestead, but the actual topography and shoreline do not correspond well to the scene depicted. Alternately, it may be the north end of the island as viewed from the water, but here again the same issues plague this interpretation. The end notation in the work's title, *SE ½ S.*, may suggest a perspective looking to the southeast. This image

Figure 17 - *Halifax from McNab's Island*



Source: Nova Scotia Archives

²⁰⁴ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.877 location 40-29 *McNab's Island* 1836

would benefit from further comparison with historic and modern topographic mapping.

Finally, James C. Cogswell's *Halifax from McNab's Island* from 1850 shows McNabs Cove, as viewed from the southern end of the cove, or perhaps from Maugher's Beach.²⁰⁵ This painting also shows land clearance along the cove's shoreline and on Harrigan's/Hugonin Point. Also present on the foreground wharf is one of the island's few horses.²⁰⁶

Air Photos

As well as the mapping, archaeological reports, and artwork, the collections of the Department of Natural Resources Air Photo Library in Halifax were consulted in an attempt to locate any remnant marks on the landscape that could show early McNab and tenant settlement. To supplement the local information, additional images were ordered from the Ottawa National Air Photo Library. Unfortunately, even the earliest aerial imagery shows an island that has returned to a forested state in the areas known to be occupied by the McNab family and their tenants. As such, any early features, such as foundations and fence lines, are completely obscured by the tree cover in the photographs.

LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) Survey

In an attempt to penetrate the tree cover that obscured the 18th and 19th century farm sites in the aerial photographs, I requested a series of LiDAR images from Greg Baker at the Saint Mary's Geography Department, based on data collected by Laser Map

²⁰⁵ NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.252 location 42.21 *Halifax from McNab's Island* c. 1850

²⁰⁶ NSA RG 1 vol. no. 446 1827 Census accessed at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/census/1827.asp>

Image Plus. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) surveys have proven incredibly valuable in other areas of archaeological inquiry. This form of aerial survey makes use of rapid pulses of infrared laser to penetrate the tree and ground cover on a site and create a bare earth model of the ground surface and features on that surface. These laser pulses result in multiple returns where there is forest cover. Under ideal conditions, the first laser return represents the top of the canopy, and the last reflects from the forest floor (Millard, Burke, Stiff & Redden 2009:581). Through manipulation of the light source and direction, and other key variables, low relief features such as foundations, roads, fences and even remnants of past agricultural plowing can be located through an obscuring tree cover. Additionally, this form of survey allows for a larger scale investigation of cultural landscapes than would be possible with physical reconnaissance (Harmon et al. 2006:649). This technology has been incorporated in the investigation of sites around the globe, particularly in wooded or jungle areas (for example, Evans *et al.* 2013 (Angkor complex, Cambodia), Chase *et al.* 2012 (Mesoamerican sites), Harmon *et al.* 2006 (18th century Maryland plantations). Locally, this technique has been used productively in the location of an 18th century British siege trench at Fort Beauséjour-Fort Cumberland National Historic Site (See Millard, Burke, Stiff & Redden 2009). Unfortunately, the McNabs Island imagery did not produce the conclusive results initially anticipated and no high potential sites were located in the resulting images. This is likely due to a number of factors, including the difference in scale of the surveys, the size of the features sought (smaller foundations on McNabs Island in contrast to large, linear trenching at Fort Beauséjour-Fort Cumberland), and the time of year the survey was conducted (mid-May with little leaf cover in the case of the Fort Beauséjour survey). As well, the overall

density of tree cover, particularly coniferous trees, and post-Hurricane Juan deadfalls may have further obscured the ground features (Millard, Burke, Stiff & Redden 2009:579).

Taken together, the information presented by the historical mapping, the material culture documented in the archaeological reports, and period imagery present an array of valuable details about this period of island history when Peter McNab and his son, Peter II, and their tenants were putting their stamp on the landscape. These sources may also be viewed as documents that highlight the attitudes and aspirations of the landowners, as well as those of the cartographer or artist. Finally, information from the handful of archaeological investigations of the island brings the possibility of physical confirmation of the information represented in the historic sources. While it is always necessary to view maps and artistic representations with an appropriately critical eye, these various records all serve to locate the McNab family and the tenants on the landscape, trace the clearing and development of the land, and suggest how the island was used being used.

CHAPTER FOUR – AN EXPLORATION OF SCOTTISHNESS AND SCOTTISH IDENTITY

Drawn from the folk tradition and family histories, and emphasized in the literary sources, an image emerges of Peter McNab and his family as Highland Scots reproducing the practices, attitudes and traditional roles of the Old World in their new colonial home. However, the question remains: Did Peter McNab and his son, Peter II, after him, look to particularly Scottish systems of farming and tenancy in the creation and management of the island community? In what ways, if any, were the McNabs embodying identities as Scots, particularly as Scottish gentry or lairds?

A previous chapter has examined information on the island's tenants. From the available records, it is clear that the community of farmers, fishers, and labourers residing on McNabs Island under Peter McNab and Peter II was ethnically varied and frequently recruited from settlers already present in the town of Halifax. Notwithstanding some interesting exceptions, such as William MacDonald, Thomas Fraser and the MacLeans/McLains, the average McNab tenant was decidedly not Scottish, nor is there any reason to believe that he or his family had been deliberately brought from Scotland to work as servants or tenants to the McNab family.

While the tenants themselves may not have been predominantly Scottish, the perspective of their Scottish landlord is worth considering. It is unfortunate that none of the tenant leases from this period have been preserved, if indeed such formal documents were even produced. This type of record has the potential to shed light on the McNabs' understanding of the relationship they were entering into with their tenants. Possibly,

these leases might have been drafted in the standard legal language of early colonial Halifax, following an existing, expected formula in the same manner as the deeds of sale and mortgage of the time. Alternatively, they might have illuminated a relationship between landlord and tenant that was based in more traditionally Scottish terms, should Peter McNab have chosen to replicate systems in place in his homeland.

Through the 18th and 19th century, a shift occurred in traditional Highland Scottish social arrangements, with clan chiefs increasingly taking on a role of commercial landlords and their kin and dependents becoming tenant farmers (Parker Pearson et al. 2004:170). Legislation after the Jacobite Rising of 1745 not only proscribed traditional forms of Highland dress and arms, it also ended heritable jurisdictions. Chiefs lost their traditional social responsibilities to members of their clan, and some gained absolute title to their land holdings, positioning them as landlords leasing the land to turn a profit, rather than stewards of the clan's property (Graham 1956:3-4). By 1760, this transition from the older, clan-based system was well underway (Devine 1994:33). Peter McNab, born sometime around 1735, would have grown up in the midst of this transition. Later, his son, Peter II would have spent his formative years in Scotland during its later stages.

In the Scotland of Peter McNab's youth, traditional land tenure included various arrangements, many of them heritable. Wadsetting involved a pledge of lands in security for a debt, and a feu farm was a type of tenancy where the tenant was granted the land for a perpetual set payment as well as other obligations to the landholder (Devine 1994:6). Land was frequently reckoned in measures such as ploughs, horsegangs or marklands, terms relating to the amount of land that could be ploughed by a team of animals in a working year (Farquharson 1936:xxxix). The use of any of these terms in the McNab

leases would have been marked the landlord, either Peter I or Peter II, as working from a particularly Scottish understanding of tenancy. Unfortunately, this information is entirely lacking in the Halifax records.

In addition to these conditions and terminologies, Scottish farmsteads were often held by multiple tenants in the period prior to the Improvement-era reorganization of farming in the later 18th century. For example, the 1769 Survey of Lochtayside, an inspection and valuation of the lands of the Earl of Breadalbane on the north and south sides of Loch Tay, enumerated few farms being held by a single tenant, with some farms held by up to ten tenants (Farquharson 1936: xxxvi). This situation does not appear to be the case on McNabs Island, with tenants sharing their farms with other extended families, not other, unrelated tenants.

In the absence of deeds, the landscape shaped by the McNab influence may also be examined for clues. During Peter McNab's time in Highland Perthshire, he would have seen the fields being cultivated in the distinctive runrig style of field division. Runrig is described a cultural practice where joint tenants cultivated in intermixed strips, with allotments reassigned after a period of a few years (Farquharson 1936:liv). The runrig system remained in place in parts of the Breadalbane estates as late as 1783, and possibly this style of cultivation would have been the farming technique seen by Peter II during his time in Scotland (Farquharson 1936:liv). By the end of the Napoleonic wars, the traditional communal farm communities with multiple tenancies, the *bailtean*, as well as the associated used of runrig cultivation, were at an end in Highland Perthshire (Devine 1994:45).

Another distinctive feature on the Scottish rural landscape was the head dyke, a stone built wall separating arable land, or infield, and the less developed outfield pasture (Farquharson 1936:xxvi). In the Perthshire glens, the farmsteads of the pre-Improvement landscapes were frequently set out near the head dykes at the margin between the infield and the rough hill grazing (RCAHMS 1990:11). Apart from the head dyke, however, stonewalls were uncommon, even as property boundaries between separate land holdings, until the 1760s (Graham 1956:8). In 1770, the Act to encourage the Improvement of Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments was put in place, which encouraged various tenant improvements, including the enclosure of lands (Farquharson 1936:xvii-xviii and xxvi). Improvement leases called for an enclosing stone dyke “six quarters tall” (Farquharson 1936:lxv). At the time of Peter II’s sojourn with his McNab relatives in Scotland, this improving spirit was starting to take hold and the landscape was increasingly bounded with stone field enclosures.

As well as the structuring of the land, the livestock being enclosed by these new walls was also undergoing a shift. While black cattle continued as common stock animals amongst tenant farmers, swiftly expanding flocks of sheep were beginning to compete for pasturage (Graham 1956:36). In the 1769 Survey of Lochtayside, records show that sheep were appearing in increasing numbers, but the value of cattle was, at that date, still ten times that of sheep (Farquharson 1936:lxiii). However, by 1802, large-scale commercial sheep farms and their herds of *Na Caoridh Mora*, the Big Sheep or Blackface and Cheviot breeds, were definitively dominant in Perthshire, as well as other Highland regions (Graham 1956:34).

As an example of the farming communities Peter McNab would have known in his youth and Peter II would have seen during his Scottish visit, the Survey of Loctayside recorded a multiple tenanted croft on the south side of Loch Tay called Dalcroy, Bellina and Croftdow, which was possessed by Archibald Campbell, Duncan Wright, Donald McFarlane, John Thomson, John McNab, Sibbella Campbell, Hugh McKeown, and Malcolm Carmichael. This farmstead owned 21 kine [cattle], 8 horses, 4 harrowers [a young horse used for harrowing] and 48 sheep (Farquharson 1936:97).

The earliest map of the island, *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax* from 1808, unfortunately, does not show any manner of field system or enclosure in use on the island.²⁰⁷ Later mapping of the island, for example REO A87 *Halifax Harbour-MacNab Island* and REO A88 *South End of MacNab's Island*, does show increased numbers of stonewalls and field boundaries.²⁰⁸ Whether the Improvement-era dyke building Peter II would have seen in Perthshire prompted these structures cannot be definitively determined. Nevertheless, it does seem plausible that Peter II's enthusiasm for sheep husbandry and large-scale commercial flocks on the island may have been inspired by his time in Scotland. This keenness for sheep farming might seem to run contrary to the first Peter's vision of the Scotland of his youth, complete with farmlands populated with cattle, not the extensive sheep flocks of the later era. However, Peter II's commitment to this style of farming might be viewed as his own form of nostalgia for the version of Scotland he experienced in his early years as a guest of his Scottish McNab relatives, in addition to the economic motivations for sheep farming he may have harboured.

²⁰⁷ NSA Royal Engineers Dept. Y-26 *Plan of the Peninsula and Harbour of Halifax* 1808

²⁰⁸ NSA Map Collection *Halifax Harbour MacNab Island* Royal Engineers Office 1865 R.E.O. no. A-87 and *South End of MacNab's Isld.* 1867 R.E.O. no. A-88

Turning to possible architectural influences, archaeologists question if any traditional Scottish house styles from this period made the transition from Old World to New. Overall, Parker Pearson et al. (2004) state, “the material elements of traditional lifestyles did not survive [immigration to North America]” (187). The typical stone built, thatched roof black house of Scotland became wood-framed structures, influenced by New England architectural styles and the ready availability of timber (Parker Pearson et al. 2004:187). However, a local archaeologist offers a dissenting perspective. April MacIntyre (2005) writes: “Because the traditional forms of Scottish dwellings such as the blackhouse and sheiling are not believed to have been recreated in Nova Scotia, traditional transference is most often dismissed as a source of architectural form” (MacIntyre 2005:7). She suggests that individual traditional elements of Scottish building styles did transfer from the old country to the new, including aspects such as internal spatial arrangements and roofing methods (MacIntyre 2005:23-24). There is also some suggestion that the houses built by Scottish and Irish labourers working on the construction of the Shubenacadie Canal in the 1820s bear thought-provoking similarities in design and construction to Highland blackhouses (MacIntyre 2005:11).

Parker Pearson et al. (2004) describe the *Airigh Mhullin* blackhouse, typical of farm communities of the 18th century period, as rectangular in shape, thatch-roofed, with thick, often double drystone walls. These structures usually ran on a north-south alignment, with the long axis running downslope. This particular blackhouse, and others, had no chimney (hence the name). The hearth was situated in the middle of the structure, with the upper end used as a family living space and the lower end for housing livestock. Often, a separate byre for animals would be added to the lower section of the house

(Parker Pearson et al. 2004:177-178). The double thickness walls were usually rubble filled with no windows, only small square holes in the walls to give light to the interior spaces (MacIntyre 2005:9). MacIntyre (2005) notes that house size in the later 18th and early 19th century varied with the owner's wealth and status, as well as with geographic location (14). Tenant houses could be as small as four by ten metres, with less specialized use of space, while their wealthier neighbours might have lived in homes as large as six by fourteen metres, with separate bedrooms and more spatial divisions (MacIntyre 2005:14-15).

Parts of Peter McNab's native Perthshire, areas such as the North Lochtayside region, had sufficient woodlands to support some timber construction in the later part of the 17th century. Larger stone structures also employed wooden roof supports, called "crucks", to carry the heavy turf roof. These crucks were seated in slots in the building's stone foundation (MacInnes 1996:28). Farm houses also made use of "creil" construction, a form of wattle and daub (MacInnes 1996:27).

The various archaeological reports recording farm sites on McNabs Island describe dry stone foundations, but none report the presence of any form of standing stone walls. Various paintings from the later period following Peter II's death show what appear to be wood frame, not stone built houses.²⁰⁹ In spite of this, a more detailed investigation of these foundations, including excavation, could result in information that could connect these structures to Scottish styles of construction or use. For example, the presence of slots in the foundations for cruck supports in the large barn foundation near

²⁰⁹ For example: NSA Documentary Art Collection accession no.1979-147.179 location 42-12 *View of McNab's Island with Halifax in the Background* c. 1860

the McNab homestead or the use of a central hearth in one of the smaller tenant homes would be telling.

Taken as a whole, there is very little to support the popular vision of Peter McNab's Scottish community on McNabs Island in the available archival, cartographic, or archaeological records. The fact does remain, however, that Peter McNab was born and raised in Highland Scotland, and his son, Peter II, spent a portion of his formative years in the same area with his Scottish relatives. While these two men, as landholders, do not appear to have intentionally recreated aspects of Scottish social relations or particularly Scottish material culture on the island, to what extent did they embody Scottishness in their personal identities?

The Cook-Cassels letter makes specific reference of the Halifax McNabs' connection to Old World McNabs based in Perthshire, with this claim supported by the series of letter written by Robert McNab to James Colquhoun regarding young Peter II.²¹⁰ While he may not have aspired to the status of "laird", it is apparent that Peter McNab sought a higher social position than he held when he first arrived in Halifax.

In a 1783 letter to William Cornwallis following his purchase of the island, Peter McNab appears to chafe at Governor Parr's lack of respect for him. He writes that he,

... Expected to have found such a reception from him as become a Gentleman, who profes'd him-self a friend to your family, - But the Reverse of this was the case & had not your Letter to me, have been so Explicit in my favour, he would by the most arbitrary Conduct, have prevented my Having it.²¹¹

²¹⁰ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab's Island* 1908 and NSA MG4 Vol. 106 #1 Letter to James Colquhoun Esq

²¹¹ NSA MG 4, Vol. 106 #2 Letter from Peter McNab to William Cornwallis Esq.

In the same letter, McNab invokes his friendship with Mr. James Colhoun as evidence of his status. A notation on the side of this archival record states that James Colquhoun is the son of Sir James and Lady Helen Colquhoun. If this detail is accurate, said James is the son of the chief of clan Colquhoun.²¹² This is likely the same James Colquhoun with whom Robert McNab is corresponding regarding young Peter II in 1782-1783.²¹³ Taken together with Peter McNab's reported close family connection with the chief of his own clan, we find evidence that this new emigrant to Halifax was accustomed to moving in the higher circles of status and power in his homeland, and that he was now attempting to situate himself in the same social position in his new life.

However, this position did not come readily. While McNab experienced success in his business ventures to the extent that he was able to purchase his island and maintain two separate households, the majority of deed transactions simply record him as a cordwainer, including the deed transferring ownership of the island to his son, Peter II.²¹⁴ In a few, later examples he is afforded the title of "gentleman" and even at this stage, the honourific is applied sparingly.²¹⁵

As discussed earlier, there is also evidence that Peter McNab was frequent host to the great and good of Halifax society on the island. William Dyott's journal presents accounts of a chowder party and shooting expedition on the island and the Cook-Cassels

²¹² Clan Colquhoun accessed at <http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/atoc/colquho2.html>

²¹³ NSA MG4 Vol. 106 #1 Letter to James Colquhoun Esq.

²¹⁴ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Peter McNab to Peter McNab Vol 33 p.74, Peter McNab to Philip Marchinton Vol. 23 p. 31 (as well as numerous other deeds)

²¹⁵ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds McNab to Thomas Russell Vol. 27 p.134, McNab to John Allen Vol. 28 p. 96 and McNab to John Holmes Vol. 32 p. 590

letter relates that the McNab family entertained the Duke of Kent in their home.²¹⁶ Dyott, however, fails to acknowledge their host, saying only “It [the island] has been purchased within these few years by a Scotsman” (Dyott 1907:32-33). In another entry, Dyott states that the owner is a “shoemaker of Halifax” (Dyott 1907:31). It seems significant that Dyott twice fails to name Peter McNab, as he is otherwise quite thorough in recording the names of the individuals he encounters.

While Peter McNab may have aspired to a position in the upper levels of Halifax society, he did not attempt to gain this position through marriage into one of the notable Halifax families of the time. Instead, he married Susannah Kuhn (or Koun), the daughter of one of the island’s tenants, Henry Kuhn (Stevens 2002:190). Like Peter himself, Susannah and her family have an unclear lineage. One record suggests that the Kuhn/Koun family were Irish immigrants.²¹⁷ Others state they were Swiss settlers from Zurich (Stevens 2002:190, Bell 1961:60).²¹⁸ Regardless of their ethnic origins, the Kuhn/Koun family does not appear to be on the social radar of Halifax society.

Beyond the sustained ties to the Perthshire McNabs, Peter McNab’s main expression of a particularly Scottish identity is his participation in the North British Society in Halifax. The North British Society was founded as a fraternal organization for Scots and their sons, with the aims of supporting newly arrived countrymen and creating

²¹⁶ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

²¹⁷ Historical Vital Statistics accessed at:
<https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/ItemView.aspx?ImageFile=1908-59100221&Event=birth&ID=211543>

²¹⁸ NSA MG 50 Vol. 27 #9 Rosalind McKee *McNabs of McNabs Island*

community for Scottish citizens of the town.²¹⁹ He joined the recently founded society in 1770 and held a number of positions within its executive, including Moderator from 1772 to 1777. In 1773, the four quarterly meetings of the society were held at his house, although the source does not mention whether this was his house on the island or in town.²²⁰

It is Peter II, more than his father, who appears to have cultivated a particularly Scottish identity for himself, if not his community of tenants on McNabs Island. As a young boy, Peter II was sent to Scotland for his education and to stay with his Perthshire McNab relatives, as well as with the “old laird” and chief of the clan.²²¹ The series of letters written by Robert MacNab to James Colquhoun, Esquire, in London is particularly illuminating of this early time in Peter II’s life.²²² Robert MacNab is identified in a family history as Captain Robert MacNab, brother to the then MacNab clan chief.²²³ James Colquhoun, himself possibly son of another clan chief, appears to be acting as attorney on behalf of the Halifax McNab family and managing young Peter II’s financial needs while he is resident in Scotland and England. A telling passage in the March 19th, 1783 letter gives insight into Peter II’s youthful interest in presenting a Scottish identity. The letter states, “the Boy had a desire of Having the Highland dress with him...” Further, an account included in the letter details Peter II’s earlier purchases from 1778-1779, including “2 Tartan kilts”, “1 pair Brogs [brogue shoes]”, “5 pair Tartan hose”, “3 yds

²¹⁹ Internet Archive Annals of the North British Society 1768-1903 accessed at: <https://archive.org/details/annalsnorthbriti00nortuoft>

²²⁰ Internet Archive Annals of the North British Society 1768-1903 accessed at: <https://archive.org/stream/annalsnorthbriti00nortuoft#page/16/mode/2up>

²²¹ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

²²² NSA MG4 Vol. 106 #1 “Letter to James Colquhoun Esquire”

²²³ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

Tartan for a kilt”, and “1 bonnet & ribbon, 2 pair gartures 1 pen knife [this entry could describe a Balmoral bonnet or Glengarry style hat, flashes, and a *sgian dubh*, [the small knife worn in the sock]”.²²⁴ It is relevant that young Peter was acquiring his Highland garb in 1778.²²⁵ Following the failed Jacobite Rising in 1745, the Disarming Act of 1746 proscribed the carrying weapons, and forbade anyone not in military service from wearing Highland dress or to even use “plaid, philibeg, trews, shoulder-belts...tartans or parti-coloured plaid”. On paper, the Act remained in force for 35 years, although enforcement relaxed in 1760s and it was repealed in 1781 (Devine 1994:86). In the same year as Peter II made his technically prohibited purchases, the Highland Society formed in London for the express purpose of the “preservation of ancient Highland tradition” and repeal of the law barring Highland dress (Devine 1994:87). Devine notes that at the time of the repeal, the wearing of this style of attire became fashionable, not only amongst the traditionally Gaelic speaking Highlanders, but also with the middle and upper classes of the Lowland Scots. He identifies this enthusiasm as “Highlandism” and wryly comments that this zeal came from a group traditionally disdainful of Highland Gaelic culture and at a time when this same culture was being dismantled by commercially driven landlords and the beginnings of the Highland Clearances (Devine 1994:86-87).

After returning to Halifax, Peter II, like his father, also appears to have involved himself in the North British Society. However, it is somewhat challenging to determine if the references to Peter McNab in the society’s annals following the death of the first

²²⁴ NSA MG4 Vol. 106 #1 “Letter to James Colquhoun, Esquire”

²²⁵ While the letter itself was written in 1783, the accounts date from 1778 to 1781, with the purchase of the mentioned items occurring in 1778 and 1779.

Peter McNab relate to Peter II or one of the Eastern Passage Peter McNabs, or perhaps both.

While no correspondence could be located between Peter II and his Perthshire relatives following his return to Halifax, it seems that the two families remained in contact. Margaret Cook recalls that Peter II brought a cousin of the old McNab chief, named Frances MacNab, to the island to tutor his female children.²²⁶

In contrast to his predecessor, Peter II made further inroads into the upper levels of Halifax society. He is frequently referred to as a gentleman or as Peter McNab, Esquire.²²⁷ In 1814, a letter from Lawrence Hartshorne to Governor Sherbrooke praises Peter II and suggests he receive a commission of the peace.²²⁸ In addition, his service on the Legislative Council in 1838 also earned him the title of “Honourable”.²²⁹

Peter II’s interest in Scottish connections may have inspired his son, James. A James McNab joined the North British Society in 1814 and remained as member until at least 1841.²³⁰ James McNab was also instrumental in forming a local branch of the Highland Society in Halifax in June of 1838 and served as one of the new society’s vice president. Amongst the stated goals of the local society was “...the preservation of the language, music, and costume of the highland.” Officers of the society were expected to

²²⁶ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

²²⁷ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Peter McNab to Peter McNab Vol.33 p.74, S. Prescott to Peter McNab Vol.39 p.88, NSA RG 48 Wills and Probate Peter McNab

²²⁸ NSA RG 1 Vol. 227 Doc. 4 Letter praising Peter McNab

²²⁹ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

²³⁰ Internet Archive Annals of the North British Society 1768-1903 accessed at:
<http://archive.org/stream/annalsnorthbriti00nortuoft#page/678/mode/2up/search/%22james+mcnab%22> and
<https://archive.org/stream/annalsnorthbriti00nortuoft#page/232/mode/2up>

identify themselves by wearing tartan scarves on all public occasions.²³¹ In 1870, the Highland Society held its meetings on McNabs Island and even hosted a Highland Games there in the same year. This event featured Highland dance, races, heavy events and a gathering of the clans.²³²

A final thought on Scottishness and identity in the early history of the McNab family: Although Scottish Gaelic was still in use in Perthshire in the 18th century, and entrenched in the place-names of the area (see the 1767 *Survey of Lochtayside*), there is no evidence in the archival sources that the first Peter McNab or his son knew or made use of the language in their personal or public lives. This suggests that Scottish identity was likely more of an external presentation to a public audience, or an expression of family ties, than a connection to traditional Highland culture.

Kealhofer (1999) has remarked that while many colonial settings initially replicated the traditional community ways of the Old World, they moved away from these patterns within a short span of years, in favour of newer structures (69). While she was speaking specifically of the translation of English community to Tidewater, Virginia, this statement could equally apply to the McNabs' transition from Scottish immigrants to Nova Scotian. All aspects of material culture have the potential to indicate the conscious and unconscious choices Peter McNab and Peter II made to actively construct their place in Halifax society. In this deliberation, it is essential to bear in mind the multi-faceted and overlapping nature of identity (Jones 2007:51). Both men may, at various times and in particular contexts, have considered themselves Scots. But in other situations, they may

²³¹ NSA Newspaper Collection *Novascotian* June 7, 1838 p. 184 col.1&2

²³² NSA Newspaper Collection *Acadian Recorder* Sept. 9, 1870 p. 2 col. 6

equally have been residents of the town of Halifax, well-connected businessmen, Presbyterian churchgoers, husbands, fathers, and simple merchants. Moreover, “ethnicity is manipulated and mobilized, on an individual and group level, in the pursuit of economic and political interests” (Jones 2007:48). Peter McNab and Peter II’s public displays of Scottishness through their participation in the North British Society would seem to have resonance with this statement, as they used the fraternal organization to foster the business and elite class connections that would move them into the higher levels of local society. Various authors have commented on the relationships between identity formation and display, often as situated in a cultural landscape (Kealhofer 1999, Ashmore & Knapp 1999, Darby 2000, Jones 2007) and while a deeper discussion of their ideas is beyond the scope of this work, it would be a topic worth returning to in future research.

At this point, references to a Scottish lifestyle on the island dwindle, with little evidence that the later generations possessed a strong identification with Scotland or forms of Scottish identity. However, family tradition preserved a belief in the McNabs’ original ties to a Highland identity. The Cook-Cassels letter makes an intriguing reference to this background. After recounting a tale of Peter II’s premonition about a death, the author says, “on the strength of this tale you may claim that the Highland gift of second-sight was transported to Canada.”²³³ Another distant relation of the Halifax McNabs recalled in 1953 that her father always referred to Ellen McNab, the first Peter’s great great granddaughter and last McNab to reside on the island, as “the Chief”, a term

²³³ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #32A *Narrative re: MacNab’s Island* 1908

which “pleased her greatly”.²³⁴ By this date, the expression Scottish identity appears to have moved from an active performance into the realm of nostalgia, influenced, perhaps in part by an emerging influence of tartanism in 20th century Nova Scotia, which we turn to in the next chapter.

²³⁴ NSA MG 100 Vol. 184 #29 *Ebenezer Macnab's Family*

CHAPTER FIVE – HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE CREATION OF THE FOLK TRADITION

Following a review of the available evidence, it seems apparent that neither Peter McNab nor his son following after him, were “playing the laird”. While much is yet unclear about the community of island tenants and their landlords, nothing in the various primary and secondary sources supports this romantic vision. While both men do appear to have retained connections to their family roots in Highland Perthshire and retained elements of “Scottishness” in their public identities, particularly in the case of Peter II, this tendency is plainly not manifested in the island’s development and management.

This leads to the question: If these activities and intentions cannot be traced to historical facts, what is their source? The folk tradition and romantic view of the McNabs has a number of potential sources, foremost among them the 20th century literary representations of the family and their time period. Of these, the 1966 novel, *Hangman’s Beach*, by Nova Scotian historian and author, Thomas H. Raddall, is critical to understanding the historiography of the popular vision.

Raddall’s research notes for this work reveal that he relied heavily on the Cook-Cassels letter, and also viewed the letters from Robert McNab to James Colquhoun regarding Peter II, and Peter McNab’s letter to Edward Cornwallis following the 1783 purchase. Raddall was also aware of Dyott’s journal but his notes scornfully assert that the diarist knew little of the island and “hence his error about the owner being a ‘shoemaker of Halifax’ ... clearly a cant phrase of his army companions, with their

customary snobbery towards anyone ‘in trade’.²³⁵ Unquestionably, Raddall saw Peter McNab as something more than a simple cordwainer. A great part of the persuasive influence of the book on the popular perception of Peter McNab comes from Raddall’s intermingling of known historical fact acquired during his research with his own romanticizing improvements on the original material. As well, Raddall was a popular and prolific favourite author in the province and “... no one could rival Raddall when it came to explaining Nova Scotians to themselves...” (McKay and Bates 2010:203).

The passage from *Hangman’s Beach* that opens this thesis characterizes Raddall’s depiction of Peter McNab throughout the early chapters of the novel. Raddall writes that the first Peter had an overseas agent who, “... recruited Scots and Irish tenant farmers and sent them to be housed in the neat cottages on McNab’s Island where they would plant crops for themselves and tend the laird’s sheep...” and, later “For the ‘muckle hoose’ and its own fields and gardens came servants from Scotland, including a bagpiper” (Raddall 1966:13-14). On a number of occasions in the storyline, Raddall suggests both Peters, father and son, as well as some of the household servants, spoke Gaelic. Peter II, though an older man by the end of the book, frequently speaks in the author’s of approximation of a Scottish accent: “Ay, nae doot... But we’d hae to go canny about it, verra canny indeed. I’d hae tae see the Governor fairst, and get him tae talk to the Admiral...” (Raddall 1996:41). Peter II also attires his own sons in traditional Scottish fashion: “shirt and kilt, stockings and brogues, the rig that McNab ordained for wear at home” (Raddall 1966:22). Throughout the book, Raddall calls both Peter McNab and his son Peter II, “the

²³⁵ Dalhousie Archives 20.5 Hangman’s Beach – Research Materials, Thomas H. Raddall collection

laird”, continually constructing this role and attitude for both men, although, as I have argued, there is nothing in the material culture evidence or archival sources, including Raddall’s research notes, to support this representation.

A second work of fiction has also played a role in furthering the folk tradition. The 1943 historical romance, *Grand Parade*, written by G. B. Lancaster, depicts the McNab family, albeit thinly disguised with the fictional family name of Cochrane in the book. *Grand Parade* portrays the lives and loves of the Cochrane family in early colonial Halifax. The family patriarch, presumably representing either Peter McNab or Peter II, is called “The Laird” throughout the book. Lancaster’s Cochrane family appears dressed in kilts and surrounded by tenant farmers brought from Scotland (Lancaster 1943:10 & 16). In comparison to *Hangman’s Beach*, *Grand Parade* is not as widely known in Nova Scotia and, therefore, should be considered less influential on the overall McNab folk tradition. However, it is noteworthy that G. B. Lancaster is the *nom de plume* for New Zealand author Edith Joan Lyttleton. Lyttleton is the daughter of Westcote McNab Lyttleton, and a descendant of the McNabs through the intermarriage of the McNab and Lyttleton families.²³⁶ Her fictional characterization of her ancestors speaks to an enduring family tradition of the family’s inherently Scottish nature.

Both authors were researching and writing their novels during a period of history when Nova Scotia’s political interests were actively creating and promoting a version of the province as particularly Scottish. This worldview, dubbed “tartanism” by later writers, was the brainchild of a group of prominent Nova Scotians, chief amongst them, Premier

²³⁶ The Encyclopedia of New Zealand: Edith Joan Lyttleton
<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3118/lyttleton-edith-joan>

Angus L. MacDonald (see McKay and Bates 2010, McKay 1992). McKay and Bates (2010) identify the phenomenon of tartanism as “a matrix of ideas about and images of nature, history, and race, all testifying to the Scottishness of Nova Scotia” (254). This romantic, antimodern take on Nova Scotia’s history emphasized and embellished the province’s ties with the old country and fostered “warm memories of gallant lairds, colourful tartans, and stout-hearted crofters” (McKay & Bates 2010:268). Raddall’s version of Peter McNab and Lancaster’s Cochrane would seem to be very much products of this tide of tartanism.

As well as these evocative works, the folk tradition appears to have been fueled by an ongoing confusion and conflation of the McNabs living on the island with their Eastern Passage relatives. Of the two groups, the Eastern Passage McNabs appear to have more fully retained their Scottish identities. While Peter McNab of the island quickly became identified as a resident of the town, the various Eastern Passage McNabs, through deeds, as well as death certificates, continue to identify themselves (and be identified by relevant authorities) as Scottish: “from Stair, Scotland” or “from Perthshire”.²³⁷

I have also noted one piece of the folk tradition that, while frequently repeated, seems to stem exclusively from an article, “MacNab’s Island: Halifax’s Almost Deserted Island,” by Sheri Aikenhead, written in 1984 (Aikenhead 1984:18-20). This article reportedly states that Peter McNab purchased the island from the Cornwallis family on December 25th, 1782 and this date is reiterated in an array of later sources, most prominently in Kinsman’s work on McNabs Island (1995) and in the Friends of McNabs

²³⁷ see for example NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Bulkeley to McNab Vol. 28 p. 78, Historical Vital Statistics records (various), NSA Stayner Collection MG 1 Vol. 1649 #N12208, N10946, NSA Deaths, Burials and Probates 1749-1799 L-Z (Marble)

Island Society's publication, *Discover McNabs Island*. The deed of sale, however, clearly shows that the island was not purchased on this date.²³⁸ To make matters worse, I noted that the source publication for Aikenhead's article, *Commercial News*, was not a local newspaper, but the mouthpiece of the Halifax Board of Trade. The article itself focused primarily on tourism business on the island, with the recounting of island history occupying only a minor portion of the overall piece. In the article, Aikenhead (1984) misnames the buyer as a "Captain John McNab" and not Peter McNab at all, as well as incorrectly stating that the island was purchased on Christmas Day in 1782 (18). This inaccuracy couples with the confusion already noted in the article series by H. W. Hewitt to further obscure the history of Peter McNab and his family.

Finally, the documented activities of another Scottish McNab may have provided inspiration for understanding Peter McNab's motivations and worldview. Archibald McNab was the 17th chief of clan McNab, and successor to the old laird that Peter McNab and his son would have known. In 1822, Archibald fled Scotland to escape his creditors and settled in the Ottawa Valley, on a grant of land that would come to be named McNab for him. He is notable for a scheme to bring settlers from Scotland as indentured tenants. This McNab definitely styled himself as laird to his tenants and continued to assert his Scottish identity in the New World. His contemporaries described him as "dressed always in full Highland costume, the piper going before."²³⁹

²³⁸ NSA RG 47 Halifax County Deeds Peter McNab to Peter McNab Vol.33 p.74

²³⁹ Alan Cameron and Julian Gwyn, "McNAB, ARCHIBALD, 17th Chief of Clan MACNAB," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcnab_archibald_8E.html

Together, these diverse but compelling images have helped to shape a popular, romantic image of the McNabs and their island community, embellishing on historically known framework with fanciful, and sometimes borrowed trappings.

CHAPTER SIX – DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While this thesis has thoroughly explored various local archival resources, further research has the potential to shed light on this early period of settlement on McNabs Island. This could be achieved through a variety of projects. Certainly, one possible avenue for further research would be to conduct archaeological work at key sites on McNabs Island itself. Originally, the research plan for this thesis had included an on-site survey of notable farm sites, under the auspices of a Category A Heritage Research Permit. Due to time limitations and as well as the lack of “stand out” sites for investigation from the LiDAR results, this physical reconnaissance was omitted from the research work. At the conclusion of this thesis, it seems relevant to revisit this venture, in light of a completed body of research and analysis. From this vantage point, a number of sites now present themselves as prime candidates for further investigation.

The first area for further work would be the site of the original McNab family homestead on McNabs Cove. Previous archaeological work in the area located and mapped a number of stone foundations in the vicinity, as well as a series of post-Hurricane Juan tree throws that yielded datable artifacts (see Schwarz & Schwarz 2004, Munro 2011). These structures are visible on various historic maps (for example, Toler 1808, REO A87 and REO A88) and seem to date to Peter McNab and Peter II’s time period in the 18th and 19th century.

Of particular interest is the location of the original McNab homestead itself. There is some debate amongst McNabs Island historians and enthusiasts over the exact location of this structure and additional work in the area could confirm a definite location (or rule

out possible structures as barns or outbuildings). If this structure could be located, it has the potential to be a bit of a time capsule. The house itself is said to have burned in 1866 and no new structure was constructed to replace it (Kinsman 1995:25). Shortly thereafter, the occupying family of McNab descendants left for England and sold their portion of the island to the military. This aspect of the site formation process becomes especially interesting in light of recent archaeological excavation conducted in Beechville by Dr. Jonathan Fowler (Fowler 2013; Fowler 2014). In the course of this work, archaeologists excavated a house that had burned completely to the ground and had been abandoned by its owners. A wealth of artifacts was recovered from the site. Had the house been abandoned as an intact structure, these items might well have been transported away from the site when the owners departed. Because the artifacts were damaged or rendered useless by the fire, they remained with the site for later discovery. Possibly, a similar situation might be found at the McNab homestead.

Another potentially productive area for additional study would be the area of the former Culliton farm/Mary Roubalet's Mansion House in the south of the island. A previous archaeological survey of the area states that this site was "the single most significant of the civilian sites recorded [during their assessment]" due to its extent and level of preservation (Schwarz & Schwartz 2004:49). A structure in this area is shown on the 1808 Toler map but the buildings were apparently abandoned in the early 19th century. While some later military development in this area may have disturbed the earlier structures, previous work indicates that one of the earlier period foundations appears largely unaffected (Schwarz & Schwartz 2004:49). This investigation is suggested for its potential to shed light on the early period of European occupation broadly and to offer

added information about the Culliton family and their connections to the original McNabs. As well, more information about the activities associated with Mary Roubalet's business as well as a clearer picture of the structure called "The Mansion House" itself would be highly informative.

Finally, further archaeological work could be conducted at one of the many sites running from Ives Cove to Indian Point. Some of these are identified with the Fraser's Farm site shown on the Toler map, as well as with other early tenants, such as the Kuhn family.

These sites would benefit from a more directed and detailed physical reconnaissance. Foundations could be investigated more fully and recorded with greater detail and any surface artifacts or artifacts still present in the tree falls collected and identified. Ideally, further research would also include eventual excavation around these foundations, which would require a category B Heritage Research Permit (as well as a team with greater archaeological expertise and experience than this researcher holds). Certainly, targeted test pits could uncover artifacts that would help confirm the site's chronology. Larger scale excavation around the foundations might reveal aspects of their construction or uncover items dropped or discarded during the construction process.

As well as this archaeological investigation, further archival and genealogical work could be conducted on both the island McNabs and the separate McNab line, who settled in Eastern Passage. While I feel I have exhausted the resources of the Nova Scotia Archives, further investigation of both families through the collections of the Perth and

Kinross Archives in Scotland and the Scottish Genealogical Society might resolve outstanding questions about both families and their possible relationships.

Another archival line of inquiry would be a search to discover if the other half of the letters between Robert McNab and James Colquhoun regarding Peter II could be found, i.e. the letters in response to McNab from Colquhoun. At present, we have only one half of the conversation between the two gentlemen and we are left to wonder what response, if any, the English writer made to the Scottish missives. In searching for these documents, additional letters or archival material about Peter II's time in Scotland and England might be uncovered.

While a distinctly Scottish style of community seems to be purely a product of later romantic imaginings, the aspirations and activities of the original McNabs and their tenants remains largely obscured in the historical record. Ultimately, these various directions could offer a more comprehensive picture of the settlement and development of McNabs Island under Peter McNab and Peter II, with the input of the various tenants on the land.

CONCLUSION

His father – that was old Peter – this un’s young Peter, though he’s in his forties now and got a boy Peter of his own – old Peter McNab bought that there island for a hatful o’ gold guineas, so I’ve heard... Built a stone house on it and cleared most of the woods for sheep pasture. Wanted to live like a Highland lord; and so he did, with bagpipers and all the rest of it. And so does young Peter now... (Raddall 1966:171)

And so to conclude as we began, with Thomas H. Raddall’s literary vision of the supposed lairds of McNabs Island, Peter McNab the elder, with his son, Peter II, following close in his father’s footsteps, acting out a fabricated version of Scottish identity. This fictional depiction of actual historical personages brought together elements of the prevailing folk tradition, recorded most completely in H. W. Hewitt’s 1901 articles for the *Dartmouth Patriot*, as well as in McNab family history, particularly those recollections set down in Margaret Cook’s letter to her niece, Chelsea Cassels, about their mutual McNab ancestors. Mixed with this, Raddall added his own elaborations and imaginings, possibly drawing on knowledge of other Scottish emigrants, such as the Eastern Passage McNabs or Archibald McNab in Ontario. Notwithstanding the author’s literary prerogative to generate engaging characters, Raddall was also clearly steeped in the prevailing enthusiasm of the time for things Scottish, called “tartanism” by later commentators and best exemplified in Premier Angus L. McDonald’s tourist promotions of the early 20th century.

As persuasive and popular as these accounts – from Raddall, Hewitt, Cook, and others - of the early McNabs and their Scottish tendencies might be, the question of historical veracity soon arises. Through consideration of a range of historical and archival sources, including maps, period newspapers, journals, letters, property transactions, vital

statistics and census records, paintings and images from the time, as well as valuable secondary histories, archaeological investigations of the area and other modern sources of information, such as aerial photography and LiDAR survey, this thesis centered on determining if there was any factual basis for these perceptions and understandings of the Scottishness of the McNab family. After exhaustive review of the array of available resources, it seems clear that, while the McNabs were Scottish and both Peter McNab and Peter II seem to have expressed this ancestry in their personal and public lives, there is no evidence that this connection to the Old World and Highland Perthshire was ever a framework for the development of the community on McNabs Island. In truth, the characters of Peter McNab, Peter II, and the various tenants who shared the island with the McNab family present a much more subtle story of emigration, community and identity than the decidedly two-dimensional portrayals of the folk or literary traditions can ever offer.

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APPENDIX A – FRIENDS OF MCNABS ISLAND SOCIETY MAP (2000)

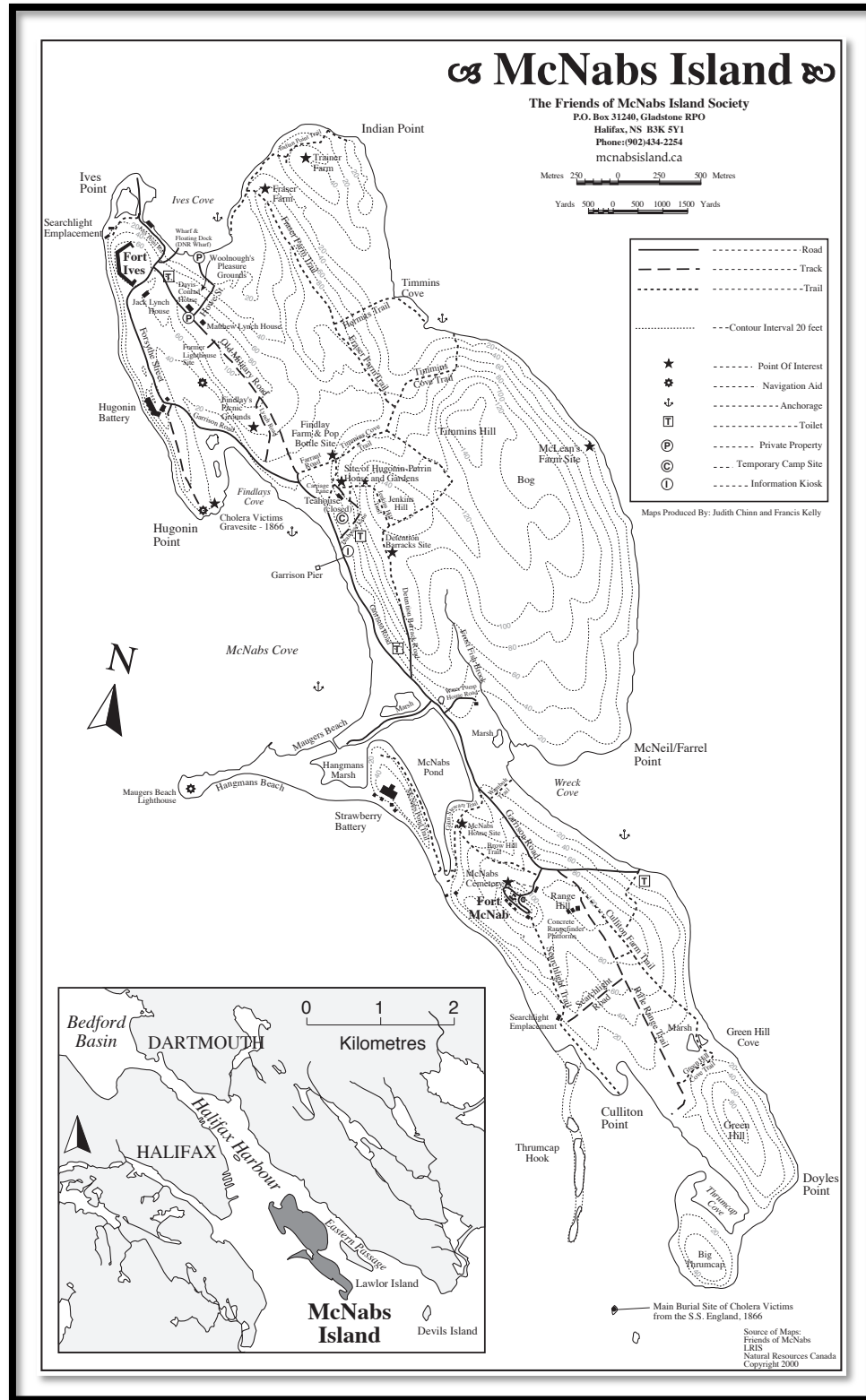


Image courtesy of The Friends of McNabs Island Society

APPENDIX B – PLAN OF THE PENINSULA AND HARBOUR OF HALIFAX 1808



Image courtesy of the Nova Scotia Archives

APPENDIX C – CHART OF THE COAST OF NOVA SCOTIA -1826 (DETAIL)



Image courtesy of the Nova Scotia Archives

APPENDIX D – HALIFAX HARBOUR (DETAIL)



Image courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/jp010694082

APPENDIX E – PLAN OF THE ESTATE OF PETER MCNAB, ESQUIRE



Image courtesy of the Nova Scotia Archives

(photographic reproduction of this map was problematic due to its size.
This composite image is provided for basic reference only)

APPENDIX F - REO A87 HALIFAX HARBOUR MACNAB ISLAND



Image courtesy of the Nova Scotia Archives

(photographic reproduction of this map was problematic due to its size.
This composite image is provided for basic reference only)

APPENDIX G – REO A88 SOUTH END OF MACNAB’S ISLD

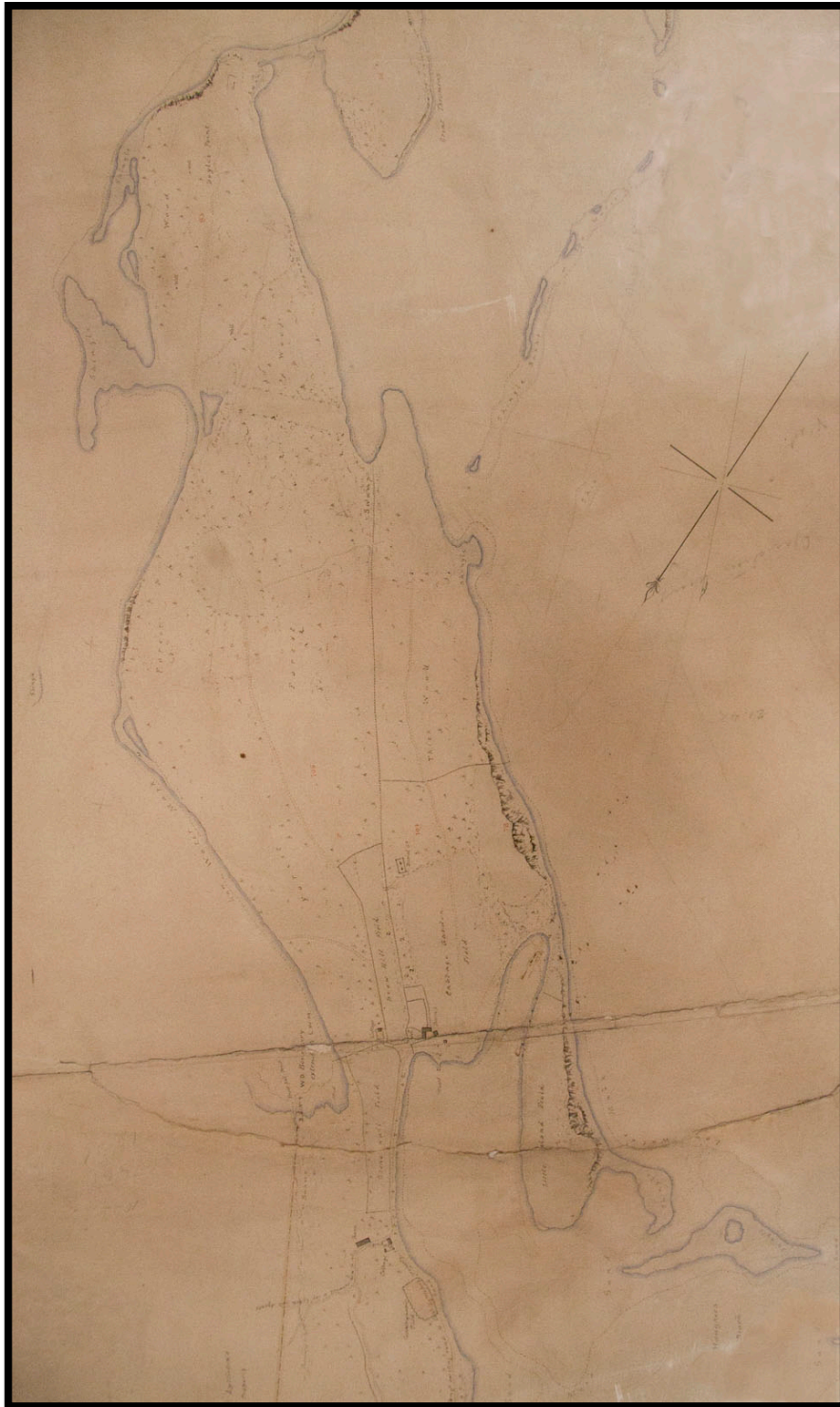
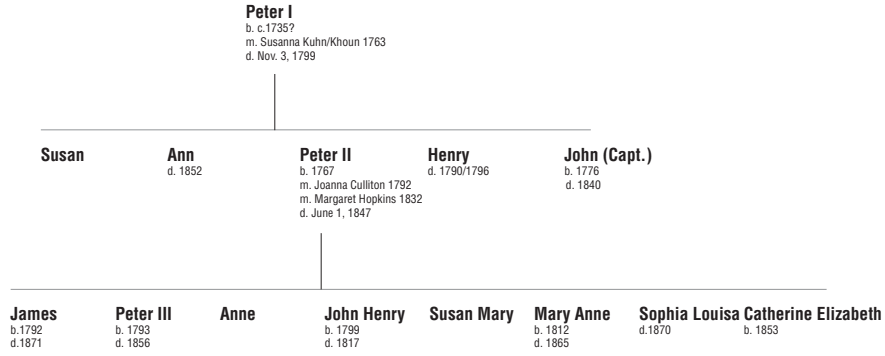


Image courtesy of the Nova Scotia Archives

APPENDIX H – ISLAND MCNAB FAMILY

McNabs Island McNab Family

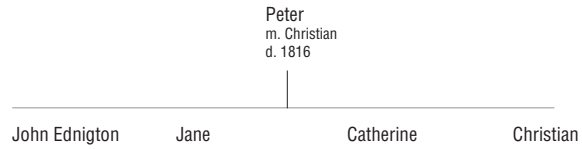
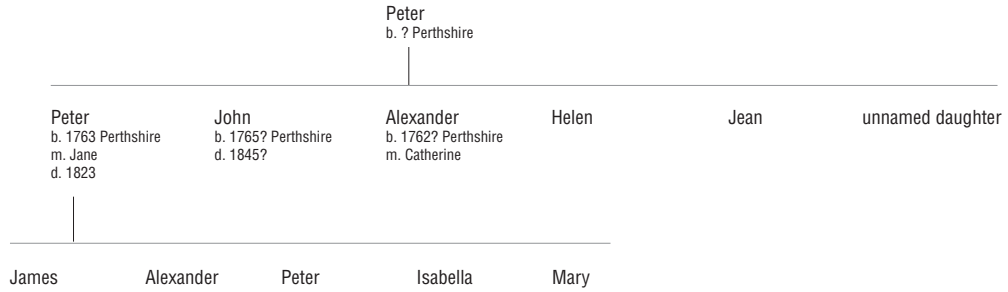


APPENDIX I – EASTERN PASSAGE MCNAB FAMILY

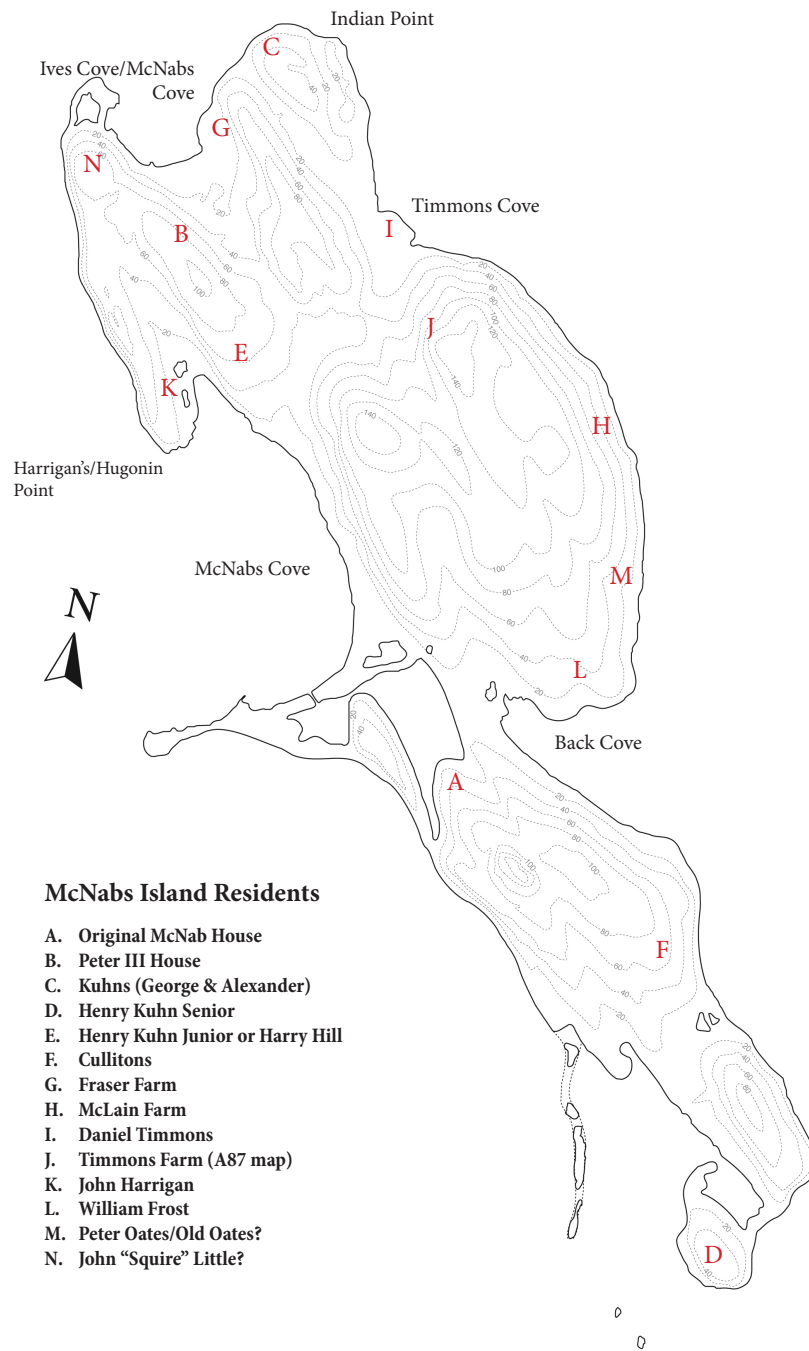
Eastern Passage McNab Family

based on will and probate records, deed records, Stayner collection, H. W. Hewitt articles and *Pioneers of Malagash*

(two independent family trees, unclear how or if they intersect)



APPENDIX J – MAP OF TENANT LOCATIONS ACROSS THE ISLAND





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