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‘It is an end of an era’

Historic Christ Church in Guysborough deconsecrated

By Corey LeBlanc



Bishop Sandra Fyfe of the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and P.E.I. presides over the deconsecration of the historic Christ Church in Guysborough on Sunday afternoon. The landmark’s transition from sacred to secular use ends an era that began in 1826. Hilary Hendsbee

GUYSBOROUGH — Evelyne Jamieson has celebrated many milestones in her life while sitting in the pews of her beloved Christ Church, with the most recent – one more bittersweet – coming on Sunday afternoon in the historic landmark.

“It is an end of an era,” she said in a phone interview with *The Journal*, a couple of hours after a deconsecration service led by Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and P.E.I. Bishop Sandra Fyfe.

Jamieson’s family roots run deeply in Christ Church. She was baptized and married there; her three children received the baptismal rite as well.

She offered that the transition didn’t develop overnight, considering there has been a “small congregation for a long time.” Like many churches, of all faiths and denominations, Christ Church has faced not only the challenges of dwindling numbers, but also an aging building and increasing costs.

“It is a sign of the times,” Jamieson said, adding that the church had been “rarely used” over the past couple of decades.

She noted, in reflecting on the declining worshipper numbers, “I am probably the only one left,” explaining that many from her age group no longer live in the area, while older parishioners have passed away.

“It is a relief, in a way,” Jamieson said of the transition, describing it as a “sense of closure.”

The deconsecration service – carrying out the transition of the historic building from

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Mi’kmaw group, Whale Sanctuary Project pursuing formal agreement

MOU would strengthen collaboration on Port Hilford refuge for whales

By Joanne Jordan, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

PORT HILFORD — A rights-based organization representing the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaw Chiefs is seeking a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Whale Sanctuary Project (WSP) to strengthen collaboration on plans to relocate beluga whales – and potentially orcas – to a proposed sanctuary at Port Hilford.

Kwilmu’kw Maw-klusuaqn (KMK), which has been consulting with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (NSDNRR) since 2021, has worked directly with WSP in a “technical capacity” since 2023. “The consultation table seeks to address any impacts and outline accommodations for the Mi’kmaq Nation,” KMK

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Moments in time: Rare photos of old Guysborough revealed

Nearly forgotten trove of images sparks remarkable discovery

By Alec Bruce

GUYSBOROUGH — I know a good story when I hear one, but this one began when I saw a face. Actually, two faces – sepia-toned, frozen in time, radiating a quiet, unintentional dignity. They were among dozens in a trove of photographs that had surfaced from a cardboard box in Vancouver, B.C. They were faces I couldn’t place yet couldn’t shake.

I am a Bruce. Not just in name, but by blood and by region. My family roots run deep into Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, through generations of farmers, rumrunners teachers and journalists. So, when the photographs landed in the inbox of The *Guysborough Journal*, where I am editor, I felt an immediate tug –

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Rare photos of old Guysborough revealed

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not merely professional, but personal.

The images had come through Terry MacIsaac, a veteran Global TV producer. He, too, is a Bruce by birthright. "My mother," he said in one of his emails, "was Betty MacIsaac (Bessie Swan Bruce) who was born and raised in Boylston," before eventually moving west.

"She passed in 2015 but recently I have begun digitizing many of her old photo negatives," he explained. "There are many gems from Guysborough County I had never seen before. Some people and places I recognize. Many I don't. Most are from the 1930s, 40s and 50s ... but I've been sort of triangulating the dates on the envelopes ... trying to put together the puzzle of who these people were ... I thought I would check to see if you had any interest in some of them to share with your readers."

Interested? He didn't have to ask.

"Some may even be able to identify the people and places," he added.

We arranged to meet via Zoom to discuss the remarkable photo archive.

Terry, it seems, had gone to a great deal of trouble. He'd known about the collection for some time but, he said, "It was a format that doesn't ... it was like 120 or whatever ... they don't develop those anymore." His home tech couldn't handle the obsolete negatives either. "So, I found out the Vancouver Public Library had a scanner that would scan these older, rare formats or black and white, mostly negatives."

That became his routine. Starting in early February, he visited the library, spending hours carefully digitizing the fragile images. "Finally, I had over 1,000 negatives scanned."

What he found amazed him. More than scenery and staged portraits, the photos revealed real people living ordinary lives: leaning against fenceposts, smoking cigarettes on stoops, grinning shyly at the camera in high-button collars and Sunday best. "I was just blown away by the clarity and just the settings and just capturing that moment in time from decades ago," he said.

So was I. Those half-smiles. Those heavy-lidded eyes. The way they held themselves – like men and women carved by wind, work and worry. "I don't know these people, but ... well ... I know these people ... you know?" I said, half-laughing, half-stunned.

Terry and I didn't know each other either. We'd never met. But by the end of the Zoom call, we had become something more than just strangers united by journalism. We had, quite possibly, become family.

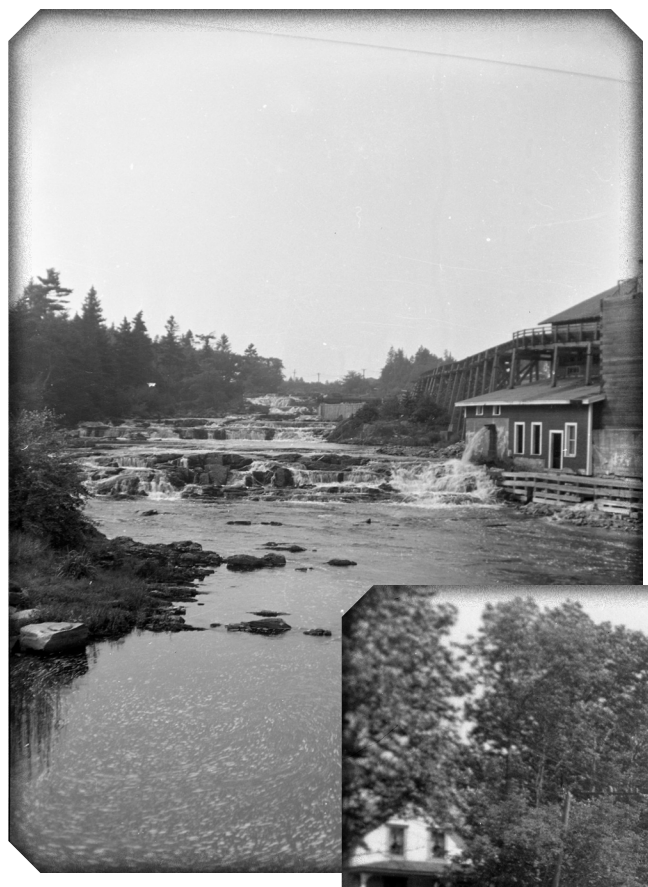
Parallel paths

Our backgrounds run almost parallel. Both of us are 65, raised on opposite ends of the country. He spent his childhood in Vancouver, while I grew up near Halifax and spent my early journalism career hopping newsrooms across Canada.

During our interview, Terry began reading from handwritten family records, names that resonated instantly: Alexander John Bruce (Bessie Swan's father), William Bruce, Eldridge Bruce. The brothers formed the spine of his mother's generation. A certain "William" – known in my family as Will – from that same cohort of Guysborough County folk was my great-grandfather. Could it be? Terry's mom, after all, had him later in her life; his brother and sister were half-a-generation older. Was it possible that his grandfather and my great-grandfather were brothers?

"I don't know," Terry said.

I grinned. "Rumour has it that my great-grandfather was a rumrunner."





But our stories converged in curious ways. Both of us had complicated family histories with roots in Guysborough. Both of us had spent years in journalism, a calling passed down from forebears who saw the world as something worth capturing in words.

In my case, my grandfather Charlie Bruce, born and raised in Port Shoreham, became number two at Canadian Press and co-authored its legendary style guide. Journalism wasn't just a job. It was, as Terry put it later, "in the blood."

For him it wasn't much different. His mother left Guysborough after World War II and landed in Vancouver. Though she had siblings and deep family ties back east, much of her past remained opaque, even to Terry.

He chuckled. "Funny you say that. My grandfather ran a fox ranch in Boylston but was also said to be a rumrunner. Sold whiskey down to Boston."

It didn't take long before we both sat back and simply marvelled. If we weren't simply imagining things, here we were: two men from opposite coasts, both descended from Bruce men of Guysborough who did more than just raise families. They built things, bent rules and survived the Great Depression's ruinous crash. Their lives were vivid, ambitious and not without scandal. According to photographs, at least one of them wore a tie to chop wood.

"It remains a mystery," he said. "But I think it's way too much of a coincidence that we cannot be related, being from such a small community, and have the name of Bruce.

I agreed. Second cousins? Possibly. Close enough for some other kind of kinship? Certainly.

Journey of discovery

For Terry, "all this is a journey of discovery ... For me, these photos are an element of that. It's fun go down that path and try to find out ... what? How did we get here? Where is the connection? What is is my history?"

One of his favourite photos, and mine too, depicts two women sitting on a store stoop in Boylston. One smokes a cigarette; both are relaxed and timeless. I recognized that concrete block instantly. Growing up, spending good chunks of my summers here, I'd seen that step, chipped in precisely the same spots, dozens of times.

"I see those faces in Vancouver's hipster cafés, today," Terry joked. "Same expressions. Same sense of belonging to their moment ... But this is what your town looked like, 50, 60, 70, years ago. They're all vibrant people ... Maybe some of these kids in the photos will be alive today. Who knows? Wouldn't that be something?

That photograph, like so many others, is more than an image. These are not merely nostalgic curiosities. They are connective tissue across generations. They are evidence. They tell us that communities – even those in remote, rugged corners of the world – are places of ambition, joy, sorrow and survival. People lived richly here. They raised families, built fortunes, lost them, dressed for dinner even when the menu was meagre. They once stood where strangers now pass by. The photos say, "We were here. We mattered."

Starting this week, The *Guysborough Journal* will begin publishing Terry's images as part of an ongoing feature: one or a few photos per issue, inviting readers to identify faces, share memories and reconnect with their histories.

We're calling it "Time Unveiled: Glimpses of Guysborough." It's not just a nod to the past. It's a living dialogue with the present – and, perhaps, the future.

I have no doubt the letters and emails will pour in. Nothing stirs the soul of a small community like the chance to rediscover itself.

As for Terry and me? We may never fully untangle every branch of the family tree. But that hardly matters now. In an era of remote work, Zoom interviews and sprawling diasporas, it's enough to know that somehow – across time, across distance – a shoebox of negatives found its way home.

Some stories, it turns out, were always meant to be told.

And some cousins, however unlikely, were always meant to meet.



Vancouver-based Terry MacIssac was amazed by the pictures his Boylston-raised mom, Betty, had left him before she passed a few years ago. He's been busy getting them digitized and ready for public display. *The Journal* will publish several in its new weekly feature, "Time Unveiled: Glimpses of Guysborough" starting this week. Contributed

