



Peggy's Cove.

The few fishing families who live there year round and the thousands of tourists who come to take pictures of the lighthouse have left their marks here and there—the little lighthouse itself, the traps, nets and anchors on the government wharf and fish stages, and the trim, square cottages painted in vivid reds and blues—but the awe-inspiring essence of the place is in the granite boulders and the sea.

Nova Scotia has lots of rocks, but no place is more abundantly supplied than Peggy's Cove. The gigantic boulders are all around and underfoot, 415 million years old, dumped by the last glacier. (One resident artist made a permanent contribution by chiseling a company of fishermen in relief on a huge boulder in his backyard, which gives Peggy's Cove, despite its relatively mild climate, a permanent frieze.) The rocks are interlaced by the surging sea, awesome, unspoilable and dangerous. The Nova Scotia government has posted a sign, asking the world to watch its step.

"We urge extreme caution be taken. Injury and death have rewarded careless visitors to Peggy's Cove. The ocean and rocks are treacherous."

Most of Nova Scotia changes slowly and some doesn't change at all.

Driving north from Peggy's Cove and skirting Halifax for the time being, you arrive at Sherbrooke Village where the past is frozen, deliberately—a small, meticulous, low-key restoration of the town as it was during its golden age more than a century ago, with shops and homes, a school, a barn, a church, a smithy, a pharmacy, a jail and a general store.

Cape Breton

Continue north and you'll get to the Canso Causeway which will take you to Cape Breton, a very large island that forms the northeastern part of the province.

It is a place where chunks of the past survive, alive and kicking and occasionally in Gaelic.

Nova Scotia is surprisingly Scottish—the natives estimate that between 30 and 70 per cent of the population have a recognized ancestral linkage to Scotland, the wide variance reflecting the Scottishness of the estimators. All agree that Cape

Breton is where the linkage is strongest and most apparent. In some villages everyone in the phone book seems to be named Mackenzie.

There are Gaelic singers who work with a responding chorus in the manner of sea chanties. Some of the songs, indeed, are chanties—"O co chureas sinn anns an luing Eireannach?" for example, translates as, "Oh who will we put on the Irish ship?"

The response gives a name, usually of some young fellow who is present at the gathering—John Shaw, for example. The next question is, "Co fear te og a theid a thobh anns an luing Eireannach?"—"Who's the young girl we'll put with him on the ship?" The answer this time is often ribald and intended to irritate the young man—the singers may, for example, put in the name of some lady greatly advanced in years or weight or both.

Cape Breton's big city is Sydney, which has a steel mill that specializes in railway tracks and coal mines that extend out under the sea, but its greatest charm is mainly in its villages, fishing ports and people. Ninety-five per cent of Cape Breton is occupied by farms, forests, lakes and parks. There is water, water everywhere—the island surrounds the huge Bras d'Or Lake (see cover photo), and there seems to be an endless supply of rivers and lesser lakes with a great many species of fish abounding. The mackerel come in April and May, swimming against the wind, and return in the fall. A man with two fish traps and skilled helpers can take 25,000 to 100,000 pounds in a day—the best have taken over a million pounds in June and early July. The fishing techniques are very like those practiced by the fishermen's fathers.

Time moves slowly but it does move and old towns die, though the most impressive of them, Louisbourg at the remote northeast tip of the island, has been brought back to life on a grand scale. It was France's principal fortification in the New World—it had a barracks 363 feet long and three storeys high with 100 rooms, for example—and it took twenty-five years to build. It is now restored in fantastic detail—barracks, town, citadel, streets, chapel, batteries—all complete inside and out with scores of guides and attendants appropriately dressed.

Move northwest, past Sydney, past St. Andrew's Channel and St. Ann's Bay and turn north on the Cabot Trail. Go past the right flank of the huge Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Then detour at Neils Harbour and you will, eventually, arrive at White Point, a village that has not been preserved.

The point juts out into the Atlantic like a finger wrapped around the Bay, and at the very end, far from the nearest house, is an old cemetery with old names and dates carved on unweathered rock. You may wonder why the people of the point buried their dead so far from home. The answer is that once, when there were no autos, few buggies and fewer roads, the people of Cape Breton traveled, almost exclusively, by boat, and