

Some Enchanted Island

Think of Nova Scotia as an enchanted island.

Literally it is attached to the mainland by a land bridge seventeen miles wide, but figuratively it's floating free, over 4,600 miles of indented coast washed by salt water.

Sail to it from Portland, Maine, on the *M/S Caribe* at 9:30 p.m., and you'll get a good night's sleep in a comfortable cabin and roll down the ramp in Yarmouth. There is a shorter ferry ride from Bar Harbor.

Drive by way of New Brunswick and you'll arrive at Amherst, more or less in the middle of Nova Scotia's upper coast.

Come by air and you'll land in either Yarmouth or Halifax.

Right now Nova Scotia has green seas, blue skies, soft breezes and summer flowers. It has a world-famous fisherman's view of the ocean, but it has a rich variety of other things to see too. You might start with farms.

The Valley

The Annapolis Valley has been a rich and fertile place for a long, long time. The French came to Port Royal in 1605, two years before settlers came to Jamestown, Virginia, and fifteen before the Pilgrims came to Plymouth Rock. Their settlement, L'Habitation, stands faithfully reconstructed on the original foundations with wine cellar, bakery, apothecary and Governor's House on display.

The British took over in 1713 and changed Port Royal to Annapolis Royal. Some forty years later they pushed the French farmers out. Grand Pré National Park is the setting of the first stanza of Longfellow's *Evangeline* and the starting point of the long and painful trek that took the Acadians to the bayous of southwest Louisiana. The flat, productive land behind the Grand Pré Dyke is strikingly like the land behind the levees of Louisiana, which may explain why the Acadians stopped traveling when they got there.

The Alisons and the Starrs and other well-connected Britons moved in after the French, and they've left mementoes too. Prescott House at Starr's Point, a handsome two-storey, twin-chimneyed, symmetrical home, was built in 1789 by Charles Ramage, the man who planted the first Gravenstein apple tree. Clifton, the home Thomas Chandler Haliburton built in 1836, is on a hill in Windsor overlooking the Avon River. Haliburton, a judge, a writer and humourist, gave the world such durable snatches of wisdom as, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and "Facts are stranger than fiction."

David Johnson, broad of beam and ruddy-faced, is a modern Valley farmer, and he exudes prosperity, good cheer and local history. He and his wife Emily operate Willowbank, 300 lush acres at Port William, near Wolfville, overlooking the Cornwallis River and saltmarsh, and maintain four children, three dogs, half a dozen horses, a herd of cows, a good many sheep, a barn full of antique sleds and coaches, and some very profitable pick-your-own apple orchards and strawberry beds.



Thomas Haliburton's house.