



# Outdoors

## Point Pleasant Park

"It is true that Walden was not too far from Concord and was hardly a wilderness even in those days." Merton.

by Alexia Barnes and Kevin Moore

It appears that this column could not be used by those who live in residence and are new to Nova Scotia because means to visit or to camp out are left back home. Lack of storage, for equipment plus the lack of time are problems. With this feeling in mind, a second attempt to promote an area close to Halifax. The first explored was Hemlock Ravine in Bedford and now let's look at Point Pleasant Park.

P.P.P. is located at the extreme southern end of peninsular Halifax bordered on three sides by the Harbour, the North West

Arm and the third by "housing". For many Haligonians it has lost much of its romanticism simply because it has always been there. Growing up, we spent at least one day a week in the park if we lived in the far north end of the city and not simply the twenty minute walk from Dalhousie.

The park incorporated in 1866 is 186 acres and is leased to the Directors of Point Pleasant Park by the Crown for 999 years at one shilling a year. Since the federal government will not release any land, it is interesting to speculate on what will happen when the lease expires. But that will be the year 2865 and if the world's lucky, man will no longer be around.

For now, it's a park that is close to Dalhousie and anyone who is stuck in residence shouldn't find

any reason not to enjoy at least one day there, especially if you're in Fenwick Towers, the number nine bus will get you there.

In summer the park is usually crawling with people but winter, as to be expected, drives most people inside so the park is relatively empty. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are easy not only for the gentle topography but also because the forest has been well spaced so that there are only a few areas where natural interference takes place. In many areas it seems as if the undergrowth has actually been removed because few plants are there except moss.

There are many fireplaces and tables along the shore, the best area being up by Point Pleasant Battery. I had some of my best hamburgers there. Other tables are located throughout the park in cleared areas. There is a canteen and dining room in the park by the container pier and a small grocery store at the Tower Road entrance. Purcell's Canteen which once existed in the southern end of the park has closed due to personal reasons and in its place there is an ugly concrete platform with a few benches on it. If you haven't seen it, you're lucky.

Along the roads in the park is a Y.M.C.A. jogging trail which has stops along the way where you are instructed, by posted signs, to conduct various exercises, such as jumping jacks or pushups.

Historically the park contains four main forts and several small shelters. The most visited is a National Historical Site, the Prince of Wales Tower, or more commonly known as Martello Tower. It is the only remaining circular tower built as part of what was ultimately called the Halifax Defense System. This system which also includes Citadel Hill, York Redoubt, the forts on MacNabs and

George's Islands, and several smaller lookouts down the coast, also includes the other three forts in the park.

Fort Ogilvie situated on the hill above Black Rock Beach is called the Cable Fort because a steel cable ran down its wall and the hill and this cable was used by kids to climb up the wall. Some of its old buildings and walls, as well as a storage area on the road leading to it, have been either destroyed or buried in the last ten years, presumably for safety reasons. Point Pleasant Battery is along the shore and is the most commonly visited of the big forts. It is very relaxing to spend several hours sitting on its walls watching the ships enter the harbour. The last fort, a personal favorite of mine, is Cambridge Battery. It is just down the hill from Martello Tower and appears to be the least visited of all the forts.

There are several small lookouts along the shore, the largest being the Old Chain Rock Battery. There is one little lookout embedded in the hill leading up to Fort Ogilvie from Black Point Beach, and it is really neat.

The Nova Scotia Museum established a nature trail in the park with four seasonal changes in the signs. Unfortunately, although a good idea, the signs are rarely changed so that one will be reading Spring signs in Winter. At present this situation will not likely be corrected. There are also two unmaintained squirrel feeders. Outside of the squirrels, there is little visible mammal life in the park. The scat of snowshoe hare can be found and there are various species of small mammals known, but not usually seen. Ice in the North West Arm has on occasion brought deer, bobcat, and fox across to the park.

The vegetation is interesting for not only are there plants but also many

introduced plants such as Austrian or Black Pine *Pinus nigra*, Norway Spruce *Picea abies*, Norway Maple *Acer platanoides*, and of course Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. A friend's inquiry as to where this vegetation occurs in the park is not unusual as many Haligonians pass this Scotland-associated plant without noticing it. Of course without its purple blooms in August, the plant is easily overlooked. The park pamphlet says, "History has it that a Scottish regiment that was stationed in the Park brought with them mattresses filled with heather and in the spring of the year when the mattresses were taken outside for beating some of the Heather seeds came out and took root." Although this Heather may be found from Newfoundland to the States it is not in abundance anywhere. In the park it occurs in its main patch on Heather Road just behind Cambridge Battery but there are other patches where it is spreading, especially along the coast.

Finally it has to be mentioned, or risk the wrath of Geo. 100 students who map it each year, Quarry Pond. Like the name implies, it was quarried and the remains of old bore holes, that were and weren't dynamited, are found. It is dug in the local bedrock of Meguma slate of the Halifax Formation, which underlies the whole park. Besides its geological features such as faults, glacial striations, and ripple marks, there are two biological points of interest, the spring migration of the (yellow) spotted salamander *Ambystoma maculatum* to the pond where it mates and lays its eggs. Plus the presence of the hybrid yellow pond lily *Nuphar rubrodiscum*. This species, rare in Eastern Nova Scotia, was introduced by B.H. because the pond lacked, due to constant removal and a lack of available natural reseeding, vegetation causing a very oligotrophic condition.

And once again folks, keep your garbage to yourself it isn't that hard. Go walk and reminisce.

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