

Historic Buildings of The Miramichi



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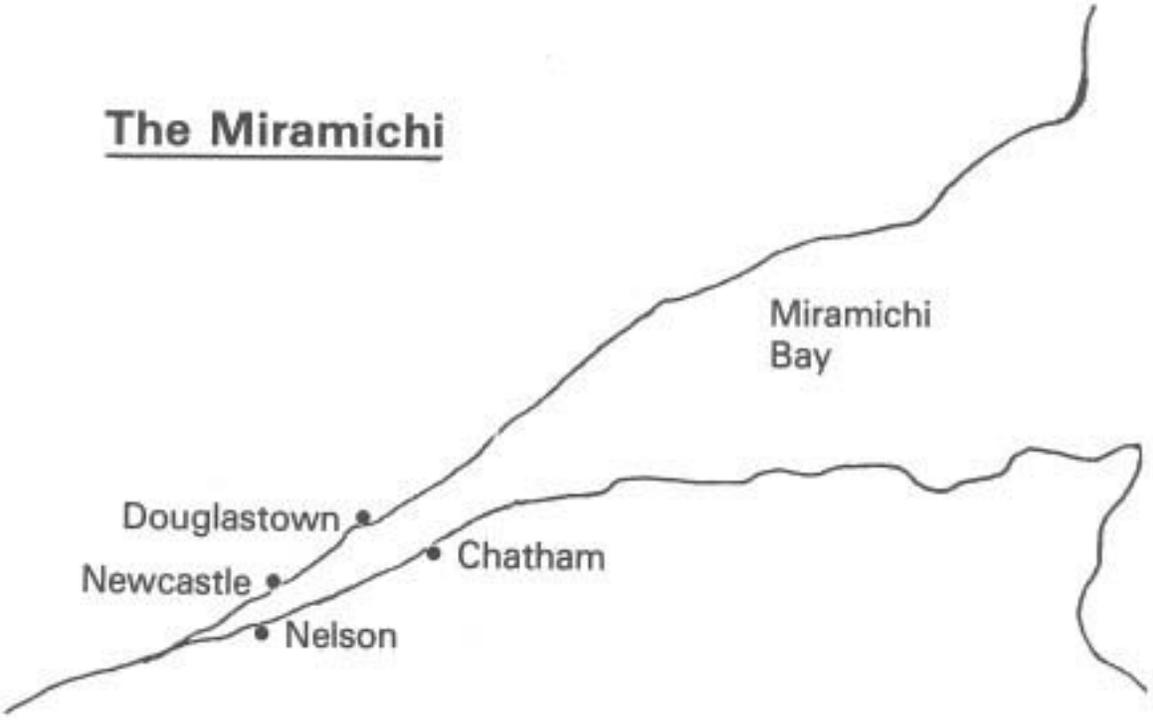
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Old Manse Library

HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF THE MIRAMICHI

The Miramichi has many lovely old houses. In this book we will tell you about the history of several of these buildings.



Map of the Miramichi

THE WILLISTON HOUSE



The Williston House is a stone building that was built in 1820. It is believed to be the oldest building in Chatham. Many homes were built of stone then so they would last a long time. It was built by Andrew Currie. He was a well-known builder at that time. The building was made of Scottish Stone.

The first owner of this stone building was J.T. Williston. He had studied law. Mr. Williston was also important in New Brunswick political life. He was elected to the House of Assembly in Fredericton in 1842 and again in 1850.

After Williston's death the large stone house was bought in 1956 by William Muirhead. Muirhead later sold the building to the Canadian Government. The government spent about twelve thousand dollars to change it from a home into public offices. The building housed the Chatham Post Office, the Customs Office, and the Dominion Savings Bank from 1874 to 1891.

Williston House was damaged in a fire in 1891. It was at this time that the Canadian Government decided to build a new Chatham Post Office on Water Street. This building now houses the Motor Vehicle Branch.

For a few years starting in 1900, the Miramichi Natural History Association rented the Williston House. In 1908, the Miramichi Lumber Company bought the building. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch Number Three used the Williston House for several years after World War II. They were the last group to make repairs to the downstairs part of the house. Then Ben O'Reilley bought the building and had several apartments made upstairs. Many stores have since been housed on the main floor of the Williston House.

By the 1970's, the Williston House was very run down. People feared it would be destroyed. But then in 1982, the Town of Chatham and the New Brunswick Government each gave \$15,000 to buy the building. Soon after, the Canadian Government gave \$100,000 to restore Williston House. The building is now being used as offices by the New Brunswick Government.

Behind the Williston House a beautiful courtyard has been built. The money to build the courtyard came from the Canadian Government. The work was begun in May, 1984, and was finished in September, 1984. In this courtyard can be found places to sit and rest and a place to get a drink. At night the courtyard is lighted by beautiful, old streetlights. A lovely wooden fence encloses the courtyard.

THE LOGGIE HOUSE



The Loggie House is another lovely period house. It is found on Wellington Street in Chatham. The Loggie House was built in 1879 for William Stewart Loggie. W.S. Loggie was one of the main businessmen in Chatham for years. The house was owned by the Loggie family for one hundred years. It was built by George Cassidy, a builder of many fine Miramichi homes.

The Loggie House has three stories. It is made of wood and is painted yellow. The inside of the house is very beautiful. Many of the rooms have pretty wallpaper. As well, the grounds around the house are well looked after.

Mr. Loggie ran the W.S. Loggie Grocery Store. It was an important business in downtown Chatham until the late 1970's. By 1886 Loggie also had many other branch stores in other towns and villages on the Miramichi. He also had many canning factories in Prince Edward Island, Quebec and New Brunswick. These factories canned seasonal products like fish. The stores and factories were joined in 1894 to form the W.S. Loggie Company.

W.S. Loggie became the President of the Maritime Board of Trade in 1900. He also was the Mayor of Chatham from 1900 to 1901. Later, he was elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa where he served for seventeen years. He died in 1944.

Kerr Loggie, his son, then took over the family business. But he had to retire in 1946 from poor health. Leigh Loggie, another son, returned home from Alberta to take over the company. Leigh lived in the Loggie House until 1977 when he died. Leigh was a great lover of horses and kept some on the grounds near the home.

In 1979, the Loggie House was bought by the Town of Chatham, for \$50,000. Two acres of land and five outbuildings were also sold to the town. The house and some of the buildings have since been restored.

The house is now called "The W.S. Loggie Cultural Center." Special meetings and get-togethers are held there. People from out of town often like to see the Loggie House because it is an important part of Miramichi History.

THE RANKIN HOUSE



The Rankin House is found in the center of the village of Douglstown. It was built in 1837 by Alexander Rankin. Rankin's first home had burned down in 1837 and he decided to rebuild at the same place.

Alexander Rankin was the founder of Douglstown. He arrived on the Miramichi in 1812 and soon became powerful in business. Rankin's first home was one of the few that did not burn in the Great Miramichi Fire in 1825. The Indians on the Miramichi believed that because Rankin was so fair and kind to everyone, his home did not burn.

The second Rankin House was built facing the Miramichi River. This was because most trade and travel was by waterway in those days. There were many parties held at the Rankin House in the 1840's and 1850's. Important people visiting the Miramichi often stayed there overnight.

The main entry of the Rankin House was very beautiful. This entry was later removed when the Rankin House became the Douglstown Elementary School. This entry was replaced when the building was restored in the 1980's.

The stone gate at the back of the grounds faced the main road through Douglstown. It was made by John Norman of Douglstown. This gate is now at the entryway to the Enclosure. The Enclosure is a park found a few miles outside Newcastle.

There were fourteen fireplaces in the Rankin House. These were boarded up when it became a school. Many of these beautiful old fireplaces can now be seen again.

An underground passage led from the house to the river. This passage let light into the basement of the house. Food was brought directly from ships on the river to the house along the passage. When Rankin House became a school, the passage was filled in for safety reasons. When the Rankin House was restored, they did not dig out the passage.

In the 1970's, Douglastown had a new school built. Rankin House was boarded up and left empty. It soon became run down. The Miramichi Historical Society feared the building would be destroyed. With money from the New Brunswick and Canadian Governments, Rankin House is now being restored. Like the Loggie House in Chatham, it will be used for special meetings and get-togethers. Rankin House will add much to the improved look of the fast-growing village of Douglastown.

WELLINGTON VILLA



"Wellington Villa" is found at the corner of Wellington and King Streets in Chatham. It was built in the 1860's by J.B. Snowball.

Snowball's home is a good example of buildings of the Gothic Age. It has tall windows. The window frames are high and pointed. They reach above the top of the house. The front door is a beautiful piece of handwork. It has colored glass on each side of the entry.

At one time there was a very nice fence around the grounds to the house. This fence was brought from England. Only part of it remains today.

J.B. Snowball was a very important businessman in Chatham from the 1890's to the 1920's. He owned stores, sawmills, and land. Snowball also made a lot of money from the Chatham Railway which he owned. He was the founder of both the Chatham Electric Light Company and the Miramichi Telephone Exchange. The telephone company was founded in 1888. "Wellington Villa" was the first home in Chatham to have a telephone. Also, it was one of the first to have electric lights.

Many garden parties were held on the grounds to raise money for a new St. Luke's Church. This church was built in Chatham, but is no longer standing today.

In 1930, a small building on the grounds behind the Snowball House was turned around to face King Street. The home itself was bought by the Calvin Presbyterian Church in 1933. It was used as a home by the minister of this church for many year. Then a new minister's house was built. "Wellington Villa" became an apartment house, but is still in good repair.

THE ARMOURY



The Armoury in Chatham was built in 1887. It was first built as a school. Later, the Miramichi Natural History Association used it as a museum. In 1906 it was sold to the Federal Government and became known as the “Armoury.” During this time the building was used mainly by the Army for training. Many Miramichi men remember the Armoury well.

There was an apartment on the second floor of the building. People who took care of the building lived there. One family who lived here was the family of Captain W.J. Duncan. Captain Duncan taught the Cadet Corps. In 1966, the town of Chatham bought the “Armoury.”

At this time a new part was added on to the building. It was called the John J. Duffy Memorial Gymnasium. It was named for Mr. Duffy, who was a Town Clerk and later Town Manager for many years. The Chatham Recreation Center was open May 31, 1968.

By 1981, the Armoury itself was in bad repair. It was torn down because it was thought to be unsafe.

GOVERNOR'S MANSION



The Governor's Mansion is a period house which can be seen in Nelson. It is not known for sure when this house was built. Father Mersereau, the present owner believes it was built around 1850.

The Honorable J. Leonard O'Brien (1895-1973) lived in the Governor's Mansion. He was the Lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick from 1956 to 1966. Many important people stayed here during this time. Such people as Canada's Governor-general and Lord Beaverbrook were guests there.

The O'Brien House was bought by Father Mersereau in 1974. There were a number of antiques in the house. These antiques were bought by Historical Resources. Some of the antiques can now be seen at the W.S. Loggie Cultural Center in Chatham. Others were taken to Government House in Fredericton.

Father Mersereau put his own antiques in the house. The house is now open for people to see. It has an English Country Inn and a museum.

Most of Father Mersereau's antiques were sold in 1978. Many of these antiques were of Canadian historical importance. Because of this, the sale was a great loss to the Miramichi.

The Governor's Mansion has large beautiful grounds. It has a frontage of one thousand feet on the river. The house has nine bedrooms. It also has five fireplaces and several windows with colored glass.

OLD MANSE LIBRARY



The Old Manse Library is housed in a beautiful home built in 18n. It was first owned by William Watt. In 1879, it was sold to the Presbyterian Church as a home for the minister. In March of 1880, Reverend William Aitken, his wife and six children came to live there. One of these children grew up to become Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook.

In 1902, Rev. Aitken retired and the family moved. Over the years people from the Aitken family lived in the house. Lord Beaverbrook sold the house in 1950.

The house opened as “The Old Manse Library” in 1953. It has been restored under the direction of Miss Louise Manny. Care was taken to see that the house was changed as little as possible. Lord Beaverbrook sent many books from England.

The Old Manse Library still stands today. Its many rooms are filled with books. The beauty of the old house has been kept for all to see. It is a good place to spend a pleasant afternoon reading.

These are just a few examples of the fine buildings still to be found on the Miramichi. It is important that our history be kept alive through these buildings and homes.

WORD LIST

stone

passage

antiques

courtyard

Acknowledgement:

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