



Charles Fenerty
(1821-1892)

CHARLES FENERTY: THE MAN, THE INVENTOR, THE ROMANTIC, THE LEGEND

Charles Fenerty was a native son of Sackville, N.S., born January 1821, on the family homestead, "Springfield," on the Windsor Road.

FENERTY: THE POET

He was a poet who wrote about his beloved forests. He wrote his first poem in 1839, and it was entitled, "The Prince's Lodge." His love of poetry continued throughout his life.

THE LUMBER TRADE

Lumbering was one of the basic industries in the area at the time and he had family members operating three sawmills, which supplied lumber to the dockyard in Halifax.

On his trips to Halifax, Charles often stopped at Holland's paper mill at the head of the Bedford Basin and displayed an inquisitive interest in both the mill and its products. There, he often heard complaints from mill operators on the difficulty of obtaining rags for the rag-paper being produced.

Discover of the Wood Pulp Paper Making Process

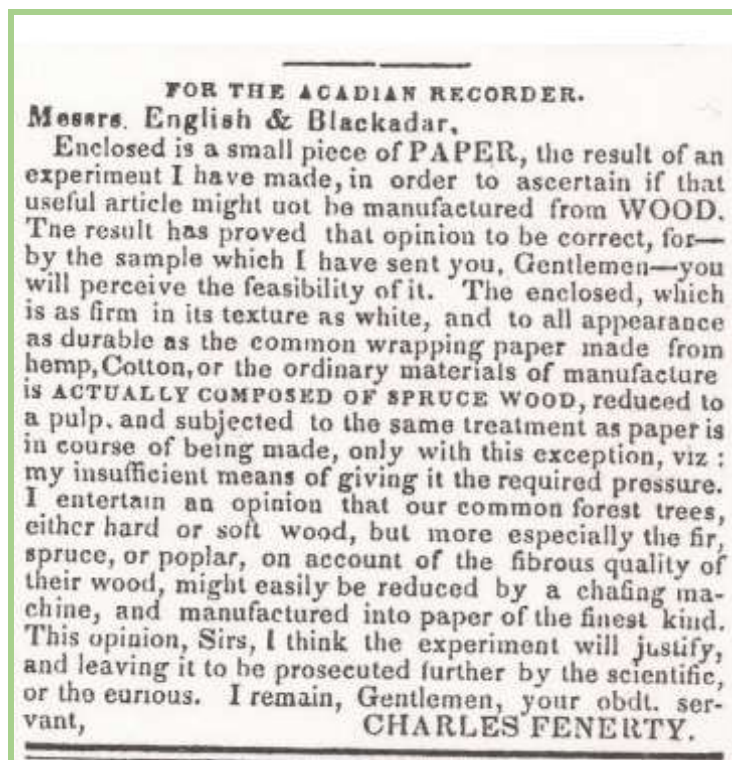
The practicability of using wood fibre in making paper had been recognized by scientists in Europe and America by the early 1800's.

Charles Fenerty began his experiments. There are three theories on how he arrived upon the idea of making paper from ground spruce pulp. They are:

1. Wood was another form of vegetable fibre as his reading had informed him.
2. At the sawmill where he worked, he observed that large wooden gates which moved up and down, produced a fuzzy material from the friction of wood on wood – thus the idea of making paper from ground wood.
3. He carefully observed wasps gathering fuzzy material from small fir poles on which rag streamers were attached to scare birds from the strawberry patch; he followed the wasps to see how they built their nests from this material. He took an abandoned nest and examined it under a magnifying glass.

A combination of the two, or perhaps all three, is likely.

There is evidence he made his discovery as early as 1838 or 1839. The results of his experiments were made known to the *Acadian Recorder*, a Halifax newspaper on October 26th, 1844 in which he enclosed a sample piece of paper as proof.



FOR THE ACADIAN RECORDER.
Messrs. English & Blackadar,
Enclosed is a small piece of PAPER, the result of an experiment I have made, in order to ascertain if that useful article might not be manufactured from WOOD. The result has proved that opinion to be correct, for—by the sample which I have sent you, Gentlemen—you will perceive the feasibility of it. The enclosed, which is as firm in its texture as white, and to all appearance as durable as the common wrapping paper made from hemp, Cotton, or the ordinary materials of manufacture is ACTUALLY COMPOSED OF SPRUCE WOOD, reduced to a pulp, and subjected to the same treatment as paper is in course of being made, only with this exception, viz : my insufficient means of giving it the required pressure. I entertain an opinion that our common forest trees, either hard or soft wood, but more especially the fir, spruce, or poplar, on account of the fibrous quality of their wood, might easily be reduced by a chafing machine, and manufactured into paper of the finest kind. This opinion, Sirs, I think the experiment will justify, and leaving it to be prosecuted further by the scientific, or the curious. I remain, Gentlemen, your obdt. servant,
CHARLES FENERTY.

Unfortunately, lack of vision by North American investors stalled production of Fenerty's new paper product and enabled European investors to gain a foothold in the paper-from-pulp process.

If Fenerty had taken a patent out on his paper discovery in 1844, Friedrich Gottlob Keller (1816-1895) from Germany, would not have been able to get a patent for his wood fiber paper in 1845. Mr. Keller was financed by an investor, and was able to get a patent because of the financing. By many, he is attributed for discovering paper made from wood pulp.

However, Charles' curious mindset, and how he liked to ponder and think out problems, and arrive at solutions through his ingenuity and perseverance, is what led him to be an inventor. Within North America, many credit him with the method of producing paper cheaply from spruce wood pulp (newsprint) - a substantial contribution to the benefit of all.

To pay tribute to his accomplishments, Canada Post released a commemorative stamp of Charles Fenerty in 1987.



HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ST. JOHN THE EVEANGELIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

In addition to writing poetry, attending to family business, and trying his hand at inventing, he was deeply committed to his work in the St. John

the Evangelist Anglican Church. He worked along with Bennett Fultz in collections, and later, Fenerty served on the vestry in 1857.

A ROMANTIC, THE RIDICULE, THE MOVE & FINALLY, SUCCESS AT LOVE

Like most men, in his younger days he fell for the charms of a very attractive young woman, who cared little for the feelings. He was smitten and proposed marriage by letter. Being callous, she not only turned him down, but showed his letter to others and ridiculed him in public. Poor, Mr. Fenerty's heart was broken, and beyond embarrassed.

Afterwards, Charles left for Australia and New Zealand in mid-1858 to discover the new continent, and may also have gotten involved with the gold rush happening there at the time.

While in the Antipodes, he received word that one of his brothers had jilted a sister of the young woman to whom Charles had previously proposed marriage.

Viewing the action of his brother with disapproval, he decided to return to Nova Scotia and see the young woman his brother had rejected and ask her to marry him. He found that this young woman, Anne, was visiting her sister, who had married a farmer of Upper Falmouth.

Not to be deterred, Charles set out on foot for that place, a distance of about 27 miles. He arrived at his destination to find the community in slumber and all the lights out for the night. His only welcome was that of a watch-dog who did his duty both well and willingly. Fortunately, in those days' doors were often left unlocked, and Charles dashed across a lane, with the dog at his heels, to the home of the brother who was head of that household he intended to visit, and there leaped into the porch and slammed the door in the dog's face. Then the dog calmly sat on the door-step all night while Charles, not wishing to advertise his plight, remained behind the closed door. This must have been quite alarming for Charles, as he was known to have a fear of dogs. The chase must have left him a tad bewildered in strange quarters.

Charles' trip was a success. He and Anne Hamilton were married on December 28, 1867 in Kentville, and, as the story goes, they lived happily ever after. Anne's parents were John and Ann Hamilton. Charles and Anne moved to Middle Sackville. Charles returned to farming. Charles and Anne had no children



**The above picture of Charles Fenerty was painted
by Colonel MacLellan.**

Photo courtesy of Darry Spidell.

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT...

Fenerty did live to see two pulp producing mills here in Nova Scotia and even saw paper from pulp used here for 25 years prior to his death on June 10, 1892. Fenerty is buried in St. John's Anglican Church cemetery on the Old Sackville Road.



**Charles Fenerty's gravestone in the St. John
the Evangelist Anglican Church cemetery**

Photo courtesy of Darry Spidell.

The contribution of this visionary is no less valuable for the fact he garnered little wealth or fame for his trouble. The people of Sackville are proud to have such a noble son.



The above picture is of a monument located in Upper Sackville. The monument pays tribute to Fenerty's many accomplishments.