TRAVELLING IN THE EARLY DAYS

INTRODUCING ROAD TRAVEL AND WAGONS

Some early European settlers in North America brought horse and oxen with them. Once here, the animals were then bred and soon populated the land. Settlers became dependent on the animals to transport their belongings and to clear their land and fields. It was a more common sight to see two oxen pulling a wagon because wagons were used more often for work rather than transporting people. Two horses would pull a carriage which was much lighter and had a comfortable seat because its sole purpose was to carry people.

**The Davis farm oxen in front of Elijah Thomas Store,
which was located next to Acadia School (Sackville Library today).**

The European settlers needed to search inland for more room to farm and build housing. Since the trails leading to these newly built villages were so small and sometimes steep, wagons and carriages could not make the trip, so a road was built. Trees were cut down and then split in half to be laid sideways to form a road. This type of road was very bumpy and horses

would frequently injure their legs due to their hoof slipping between two logs.

THE BEGINNING OF STAGECOACH TRAVEL

First introduced in England during the 16th century and spread to North America by the late 1700s, stagecoaches were the most common form of transportation in the United States and Canada before the advent of the railroad in the mid-1800s. Stagecoaches were commonly defined as 4-wheeled vehicles drawn by two or more horses, with its cargo carried in the coach itself and the driver sitting on an exposed platform in the front. What separated stagecoaches from earlier carriages was their communal nature: similar to buses today, stagecoaches would have a fixed route with many stops (the distance between two stops known as a “stage”).

By the mid 1700’s, stagecoaches were a common part of everyday travel. They were used to transport people from town to town, paying a set fee to wherever they wanted to go. The term “stagecoach” was used because the distance between stops was known as a “stage” of the journey.

To travel in a stagecoach resulted in a bumpy ride. Some passengers would ride upfront with the coachman, while others would sit inside the stagecoach. Others even crawled on top of the stagecoach for the journey!

Unlike most vehicles today, stagecoaches were very unstable and tipped over easily. To avoid crashing the stagecoach, passengers leaned from side to side to help balance out the stagecoach.

Some coachmen were careless drivers. They would push the horses to run as quick as possible, taking corners too quick just to get to the destination faster. It was because of incidents like these that stagecoaches crashed so often. The coachman's reason for getting to the destination quickly was because the sooner one passenger reached their destination, the sooner they could start a new journey and make more money. A traditional stopping place for a stagecoach was an inn like the Twelve Mile House operated by the Fultz family of Sackville.

The above pictorial is of Fultz Corner in 1871. To the left of it is the large two-and-a-half story inn of William Fultz. The Fultz family inn was known as the Twelve Mile House and was frequented by the travelling public. It was a recurrent breakfast stop for travellers who left Halifax. It was also a popular gathering spot for Halifax society. A frequent early patron of this landmark was the Earl of Dalhousie, who was the lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia from 1816 to 1820. Many Fultz family members were skilled in the trades of the day to assist in any roadside dilemma, which proved resourceful for the many travellers who passed by and frequented the Twelve Mile House.

THE STAGECOACH HISTORY OF NOVA SCOTIA

Unlike in Britain where the practice had been common since the early 18th century, the use of stagecoaches did not become widespread in Nova Scotia until nearly a century later. In 1816, a Halifax man named Isaiah

Smith formed the first stagecoach line in Nova Scotia: a route running from Halifax to Windsor that cost $6 per person. Smith's operation was subsidized by the government of the colony, as administrators wished to improve the postal service from the growing capital to the rich agricultural region of the Annapolis Valley.

Between 1816 and 1848, more and more lines sprung up in Nova Scotia, including what would become the most popular route from Halifax to Truro and New Brunswick. However, this route could not run in the winter, due to the heavy snowfall in the Cobequid Mountains, so in the cold months of the year passengers were forced to find an alternate route. As stagecoaches were the fastest and safest mode of travel, however, any alternate journeys were long and expensive. Stagecoaches would remain the most efficient and popular source of transportation in the province until 1868, when the first railroad was opened and stagecoaches began to lose popularity against this faster, cheaper mode of transportation.

FULTZ CORNER AND STAGECOACH TRAVEL

Fultz Corner was a strategic position, being the intersection between the "two great roads of Nova Scotia" - the Cobequid Road to Truro and the old road to Windsor, what is now called the Old Sackville Road. The Fultz family was quick to capitalize on the important position of their land, with William Fultz opening the Twelve Mile House inn on the intersection as early as 1814.

Because of the importance of the Sackville area to the stagecoach trade, the Fultz House Museum has been dedicated to educating the public about

its era. In 1988, the Fultz House Museum was able to acquire a stagecoach replica from the Joseph Howe festival. Unfortunately, in 1998 vandals set fire to the stagecoach. Repairs were made, but in 2006 it had to be destroyed due to the rotten state of its carriage and wheels.

The painting seen above is of Fultz Corner. To the left of the painting is the Twelve Mile House. It was a traditional stopping place for stagecoach routes. It was painted by artist Jean MacKaracher-Watson.

A COMMUNICATION LIFELINE

Apart from its role as a transportation system, the stagecoach was also a vital part of the communication network that connected far-flung communities. As Halifax was a major port for the British navy, it was often the first city in North America to receive news from Europe.

In order to learn the European news before their competitors, in February 1849, a group of six rival New York newspapers banded together to form the Associated Press, with the goal of establishing a line to quickly gain news from Europe via the British ships entering the port of Halifax. At this time, the telegraph route from New York ended at the city of Saint John, New Brunswick, so plans had to be made to connect Saint John to Nova Scotia by ferry, and then establish a route carrying the news from Halifax.

This was done by a “pony express” – a stagecoach line not dedicated to carrying passengers but rather carrying news and mail by the fastest speed their horses could muster. While this service was incredibly vital for the papers in the ruthless New York news business, it did not last the year: for the papers finally decided to invest in extending the telegraph line to Halifax itself, which was completed by November of 1849.

THE HAZARDS OF WINTER TRAVEL

Winter travel also brought many dangers. Any coachmen that drove a sleigh quickly would often lose control of their sleigh. Sleighs would also get stuck in large drifts of snow or overturn because the snow was too deep or high.

The worst nightmare for a traveller was to have to travel through a snowstorm. Snowstorms were so harsh that anyone out in one could freeze to death very quickly. Snowstorms would also cause travellers to get lost and then they would become stranded, with no idea of which way to go. When travellers were stranded, their safest bet was to huddle close together with their animal in hopes that the storm passed quickly.

Other dangers that occurred while travelling were: travelling over thin ice, a carriage crashing with an oncoming train, stagecoach’s tipping over, trains intercepting each other, any weather that occurred such as wind or rain, poor trails and roads, and when a woman’s skirt was caught under a wheel.

RULES FOR RIDING THE STAGECOACH

There were many different stagecoach operators in Atlantic Canada. Like their Canadian counterparts, there were a number of rules to be obeyed. Many operators adhered to the same rules. Among the common stipulations and understandings to travel via stagecoach, were:

1) It was not recommended for passengers to drink alcohol. However, passengers knew not to be greedy if they decided to indulge in a beverage and to share their refreshments.

2) Gentlemen were requested not to smoke tobacco if ladies were present on the trip, but chewing tobacco was allowed.

3) Men were requested to refrain from cursing or rough language when in the presence of women and children.

4) Buffalo robes were provided to keep passengers warm in cold weather. Anyone who would not share the robe was forced to ride in the cold with the driver.

5) Passengers were not to snore loudly or rest their head on a fellow passenger.

6) Firearms were allowed on the stagecoach for use in emergencies, but were not allowed to shoot at nearby wildlife, as the sound scared the horses.

7) In the event of runaway horses, passengers were encouraged not to panic and attempt to jump from the coach, as they could be seriously hurt.

8) Any men who participated in offensive conduct towards ladies would be thrown off of the coach.

THE RAILWAY'S IMPACT ON STAGECOACHES

The introduction of railroads in the mid 1800s ended the use of stagecoaches for long distance transportation, but stagecoaches continued

playing an important role in connecting smaller communities until the introduction of the automobile in the early 1900s.

TRAVEL TRADESPEOPLE

Wagons and carriages were the main way to transport people and to ship goods from town to town. Sometimes, these journeys could be long and hard on the wagon or carriage. Most coachmen and travellers were not skilled in any of the trades that were needed to repair a wagon or carriage, or to take care of the horses. Among the tradespeople were: the blacksmith, the harness maker, the farrier and the wheelwright.

THE COMMUNITY BLACKSMITH

The term “blacksmith” comes from the colour of the metal they used. They used iron and steel, forging horseshoes, gates, fences, utensils and parts of machinery.

A popular blacksmith in the early 1900s was A.J. (Bert) Smeltzer. He most likely learned his trade from John Robert Ellis (1843-1916), a local blacksmith. A.J.’s blacksmith shop was centrally located in Sackville (located where Disco Deli is today), and was a popular place for young and old alike as they watched Mr. Smeltzer work the forge and strike the red-hot metal with his hammer, creating many useful items for the home, field and forest.

Pictured above is local smithy
A.J. Smeltzer (on left) outside his shop.

THE TOOLS & COSTS OF THE BLACKSMITH SHOP

The blacksmith would have made many of his own tools, but his most important tool would have been his forge. The forge would have been made from brick or stone, and was usually approximately 30 inches tall and 20-40 inches across. The forge was often square, but could also be rectangular and rarely circular. The forge would usually have been as deep as it was wide, as the oxygen would have stayed away from the metal, making it smoother.

The blacksmith had many tools, all surrounding his forge, anvil and slack tub. For instance, the blacksmith must have tools for his forge, including shovels and pokers. On his anvil (much like a workbench), the blacksmith would have a set of “anvil tools” used for shaping, cutting and molding the iron. The most important tool among the anvil tools is the “cutter” much like a chisel, which allowed the blacksmith to cut without any help.

Above is the anvil and a hammer located in the Fultz House Museum blacksmith shop.

On average, the price for giving a horse new shoes and putting them on, would have cost 80 cents. If the owner wanted to take the old shoes off, caulk the hooves, and put the old shoes back on, it would cost approximately 40 cents. If you wanted to get your pot repaired, it would cost you 20 cents, and it would have cost around 65 cents to fix your buggy.

THE HARNESS MAKER

Horses were depended on by people for aid while working and travelling. Work horses that would pull wagons over crops, needed harnesses to attach them to the wagon. Horses used for travelling needed both a harness and a saddle. The craftsman who made the harness and saddle was known as a harness maker.

Both saddles and harnesses were made from leather. Each item was carefully stitched together to ensure that it would not fall apart after its first use. A harness maker would work with leather that was thick and heavy. This type of leather came from a large animal, normally a cow or buffalo.

During a journey, if any of this equipment was damaged, a harness maker would be called upon to repair it.

Pictured above is an advertisement for a harness and saddle company.

A FARRIER

A farrier attached horseshoes, made by the blacksmith, to the hooves of the animals. Some blacksmiths were also skilled as a farrier. To begin the job of replacing the horseshoe, first it would be taken off of the animal's hoof, and then using metal tools, he would clean all the dirt from the bottom of the animal's hoof. The hoof was then filed smooth, helping the new horseshoe fit snugly.

To attach the horseshoe to the hoof, the farrier would hammer it onto the animal's hoof. Small nails would hold the horseshoe in place, without hurting the animal. A farrier did not just replace animal's horseshoes, they were also trained to help and treat wounded or sick horses.

A WHEELWRIGHT

Once a mainstay of the community, a wheelwright was a trade involved with the construction of wheels for diverse types of wagons and carriages. Often known as a local carpenter, the wheelwright would perform jobs with precise expertise at various locations throughout the community involving woodworking. Working without the assistance of drawings, these tradesmen developed great expertise at their craft.

A wheelwright shop was normally situated near a blacksmith's shop because most jobs requiring wheelwright and carpentry expertise also needed a blacksmith's knowledge. Some wheelwright shops had a

blacksmith and forge in the shop while others were skilled enough in both trades to complete all the work themselves.

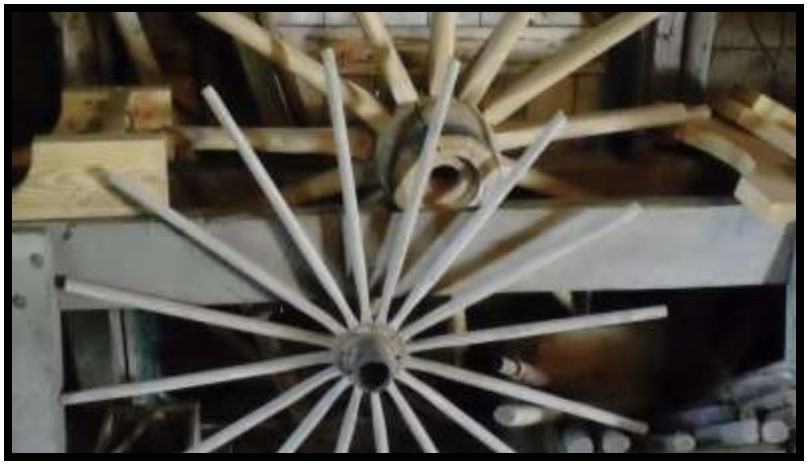
THE WHEELWRIGHT TRADE IN SACKVILLE

Being a wheelwright was a traditional family trade and a very common job choice for early Sackville settlers. Bennett Fultz, an early settler in Sackville, worked as a wheelwright for a time, but did not pursue the career after that. His father, Anthony Fultz, operated a wheelwright shop across from Bennett's home (now the Fultz House Museum) on the road to Windsor. Halifax County census records show that Anthony Fultz (as shown below) operated as a wheelwright in the Sackville community in 1838.

THE WHEEL…

In the 1800's, most of the axels on a wheel were made out of hickory with the wheel hub made out of Osage orange, a wiry and deep wood. The wheel rims and spokes were normally made out of a hard wood such as white oak, and each spoke would have been made to flare out from the hub to make the wheel look like a saucer. A tapered end of the axel would be placed into the hubs to help keep the wheels parallel. The iron tire was six inches wide and always no smaller than an inch thick. This was tightly secured over the wheel rims so it would not fall off.

Sackville area riders were very fortunate with their experience with the wheel rims on carriages. Out West, the wheel rims would shrink because of the dry climate. There were times when Westerners would get so fed up with the wheel that they would throw it in the bed of a creek in hopes that the water might expand the wood again.



Above are wheels without rims on display in the W.J. Grace Cooperage on the grounds of the Fultz House Museum.

A LOOK AT RAILWAY HERITAGE

The term railway was first used in the 1770s. The idea of moving goods by wagons running on a set of rails goes back to the sixteenth century. The early routes operated on wooden or stone rails. They were called wagonways or tramways. The shift in emphasis to the word rail came partly in the late eighteenth century when iron rails were introduced.

The word train has a long history. It derives from French words that mean to drag or to pull. It came into English use in the fourteenth century. The use and meaning of the word eventually applied to something that was dragged along. It originally would have referred to an extended part of a robe or skirt trailing on the ground. The term eventually applied to the artillery and wagons that followed an army, which led to phrases like train of artillery, and much later, wagon train. Out of this came the idea of a person or things travelling behind another. When the railways were constructed, the phrases train of wagons and train of carriages were utilized and have since been modernized to the term used today.

Before the use of the word car was used to describe railway vehicles, they were referred to as carriages. The design of early railway carriages looked exactly like stagecoaches on rail. The photograph below is of an old passenger train located in White Sulphur Springs, Montana.

The term railway station has been used since the early days of passenger transportation on rails. The first citation of the term appeared eight years after the world's first passenger station was opened in Manchester, England on September 15, 1830.

FULL STEAM AHEAD: A CHALLENGING ROAD

Constructing a railway was a long, backbreaking process. To begin, logs, known as "ties", were laid on the ground and then heavy iron placed on top of them. After that, the iron and wood were pounded into the ground with large spikes to hold the rails in place. It was common to have to build tracks through mountains and to do so, the mountain would first be blasted with dynamite to carve a hole in the side and then the railway was built in the tunnel left over by the blast. Many railway constructors risked their lives when blasting through the mountain because they were compromising the structure of the mountain.

THE ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL IMPACT OF THE RAILWAY

During the 19th century, considerable economic power in Canada was bestowed upon the banks and railway companies of Canada. From the years of 1863 to 1935, the Bank of Montreal acted as the government's sole bank until the creation of the Bank of Canada in 1935. For the most part, the Bank of Montreal invested itself in the creation of railways.

People were not the only ones to profit from the creation of railways. Railways also helped the Canadian economy with growing business opportunities to the United States, the Orient, and Europe. As new markets were created, the opportunity for employment expanded.

Cities such as Halifax, St. John, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver were able to help develop their surrounding towns. As these major cities expanded, the urban landscape around them had the chance to evolve. Many other industries and businesses were attracted to these up-and-coming towns which helped them become more economically stable and home to many new families. In some situations smaller communities were force fed change.

The railway allowed commerce to thrive much more quickly, as goods were no longer carted by wagon. Locomotives moved much faster and ran through the darkest and dreariest of storms.

RAILWAYS IN NOVA SCOTIA

On June 13th, 1854, the first railway was built in Richmond, Nova Scotia. Four years later, on June 3rd, 1858, Nova Scotia's first ever passenger train took its maiden voyage from Halifax to Windsor.

Nova Scotia was home to one of the earliest railways in Canada that used steam locomotives. This took place in 1839 at Albion Mines located in Pictou County. Rail routes in the Sydney and Louisburg areas were at one time some of the busiest for shipping coal in North America.

"The Ocean Limited" was introduced by the Intercolonial Railway in Nova Scotia in 1904. This train was to provide first class passenger service from Halifax to Montreal.

Railway stations once located in Wolfville, Bridgetown and Middleton have been utilized in new ways. These buildings are used for a variety of purposes, such as a library, museum, and restaurant.

THE BEAVER BANK STATION

One of the passengers aboard the maiden trip of the first passenger train in Nova Scotia was a man named Daniel Hallisey. Later on, he became the station agent for Beaver Bank Station. His daughter, Mary Hopkins, succeeded him. The station was run by three generations of the Hallisey family.

The above picture is of Daniel Hallisey (seen on the left) and his family. Mr. Hallisey was the station agent for the Beaver Bank Station for some time.

In 1886, the station accommodation that was put in 1858 was replaced with a comfortable waiting room. Other renovations to the station included a bay window that was installed in the office, a freight shed built at the west end of the station and on both east and west sides of the station, the words “Beaver Bank” were painted on (see picture at the top of the next page).

Pictured above is the Beaver Bank Station.

Beaver Bank Station was officially closed on March 31st, 1956. By 1959, the Dominion Atlantic Railway had introduced diesel engines to all their stations causing the Beaver Bank Station to no longer be needed. Since the station was no longer being used as a railway station, it was put up for sale to be removed from the property. Mark Murphy bought the station house and moved it to the Beaver Bank Crossroads. He then renovated the house but it was sadly lost to fire in November of 1967.

Above is a picture of the Beaver Bank Station and the Hallisey Hotel building.