

Sackville Centennial Monument

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A significant historical monument in Sackville, N.B. has acquired a new lease of life this summer by the construction of a new access path.

The “Sackville Centennial Monument,” located in downtown Sackville at 120 Main Street, adjacent to the Mount Allison University “Swan Pond” and directly across Main Street from St. Paul’s Anglican Church, was commissioned by the Town to commemorate its incorporation in February 1903. Incorporation meant the town became self-governing with the right to elect a Mayor and Town Council.

In 2002 the Tantramar Historic Sites Committee was asked to erect a suitable monument to commemorate the centennial of the 1903 incorporation. A sub-committee chaired by Paul Bogaard commissioned local artist Peter Manchester to design the monument. Arrangements were made for the Town to lease the site of the proposed monument from Sackville United Church which owned the property at that time.

Various delays were encountered and the monument was finally unveiled on 24 September 2004.

A decision was made to have the monument commemorate not just the 1903 incorporation but also the much earlier history of the community and specifically the “Five Founding Peoples” of Sackville in the 1700s. Thus one part of the monument consists of five square stone blocks, each topped with black polished marble, and bearing the names of the five founding peoples: MI’KMAQ, ACADIAN, PLANTER, YORKSHIRE AND LOYALIST.

Tantramar’s first people, the MI’KMAQ, were here long before the arrival of the first Europeans. French settlers, the ACADIANS, lived in the area from the early 1700s until the tragic events of the Deportation in 1755. They were replaced by the PLANTERS from New England in the 1760s. Settlers from YORKSHIRE, England came in the 1770s, followed by LOYALISTS from the new United States in the 1780s.

The other part of the monument consists of two slender, square, stone pillars with four rectangular, bronze, historical plaques on each, containing information about the monument and what it commemorates. The full text of these eight plaques is available online on the Tantramar Heritage Trust website under “Tantramar Historic Sites” ; to access, Google “Sackville Centennial Monument.”

In 2004 the monument was largely surrounded by birch trees so that it was not readily visible from the road. The original intention was to have a path run from the Rotary Millennial Bridge (constructed in 2001), swinging round between the two pillars, and ending in a circle around the monument. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, this was not done at the time and the monument remained somewhat neglected because of problems of visibility and accessibility.

In 2012 most of the United Church property was acquired by Lafford Realty and in 2018-2019 a 35 unit seniors’ apartment building, “The Maples,” was erected on the site. This left the Centennial Monument in the area between the new apartment block and Main Street. Lafford

agreed to landscape this area, and to construct the path originally planned to run from the Rotary Bridge to the monument.

At this point the Rotary Club of Sackville stepped in and offered to fund the construction of a path from Main Street to the north side of the Bridge. This was done in co-operation with Mount Allison University which owns that piece of property.

Work on the new paths was undertaken in June and July 2020. The removal of trees on the site means that the monument is now clearly visible, while the new paths make it readily accessible.

Local residents and visitors alike now have an excellent opportunity to learn more of Sackville's long and distinguished history.

Additional Information

The twin pillars of the Sackville Centennial Monument each have four bronze historical plaques on them (a total of eight) with information on the town's incorporation and on its founding peoples in the 1700s.

1. The first plaque refers to the 1903 incorporation and recalls the unveiling of the monument on 24 September 2004 by Tantramar MLA Peter Mesheau, Sackville Mayor Jamie Smith, and the monument designer Peter Manchester.
2. A second plaque outlines the history of **Sackville** in the century leading up to incorporation (the 1800s). Highlights include the shipbuilding industry, the coming of the railroad, and the development of Mount Allison University.

The remaining six plaques are devoted to the five Founding Peoples.

3. Artifacts have been found in this area from at least 4,000 years ago testifying to the presence of "**Tantramar's First People**." The Mi'kmaq had seasonal encampments throughout the area. The Isthmus of Chignecto was an important crossroads long before European fishermen and traders arrived in the 1600s.

- 4, 5. Two plaques, one in English and one in French, cover the first Europeans to arrive – the French "**Acadians**." The nearby Acadian settlement at Beaubassin was established in 1672, and in the early 1700s settlers from there established villages at Veskak (Westcock), Prés des Bourg (Sackville), Prés des Richard (Middle Sackville) and Tintamarre (Upper Sackville). Following the British capture of Fort Beauséjour in 1755, most of the Acadians were deported and their farms burned.

6. To replace the Acadians the British authorities offered free land grants to settlers from New England, known as "**Planters**." In 1762 a "township" was established and named "Sackville." By 1767 the township had a population of about 350.

7. After a few years some of the Planters opted to return to New England. In order to ensure a population loyal to Britain, over 1000 settlers from Yorkshire, England were encouraged to come

to the area during the period 1772-1775. These **Yorkshire settlers** brought with them their Methodist faith, and went on to make a valuable contribution to the area.

8. The last plaque commemorates the **Loyalists** who moved here after the American Revolution. To accommodate them, in 1784 a new province named “New Brunswick” was carved out from the former Nova Scotia. Sackville found itself in the south east corner of the new province.

People are encouraged to visit the monument and/or access the web site (https://tantramarheritage.ca/archive/historicsites/hs17_1600.php) and read the information provided on the early history of Sackville, the oldest town in New Brunswick.

Charlie Scobie

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