

Author Kathryn Fawcett Lewis speaking at the launch of her book on the history of Upper Sackville, N.B. Saturday March 21, 2026 in the Upper Sackville United Church.

I'm just delighted to see how many people there are here today. So here we are, our project's completed, and our goal of preserving the history of Upper Sackville is achieved. And I must say, it's been a long labor. 18 months of love, sweat and tears. At this point, I'd like to extend a huge thank you to all my team, all of you, instigators, artists, storytellers, contributors, supporters, editors, formatters, printers, and soon-to-be readers. You know who you are.

A special gratitude goes to Sharon Hicks, who kept me afloat with her talent and her friendship. and to my cousin John Carlyle for as many informative, detailed, and humorous stories. If you think the ones in the book are questionable, you should see the ones that we left out. Both of you have made this story come to life, and this manuscript would still be on the USB stick had it not been for the frenzied efforts of my son Michael, who managed to edit my sloppy formatting on the eve of his deployment. Last but not least, I would like to thank my long-suffering husband, Eugene, for his patience and for eating my grade C cooking while I had my nose glued to the computer for 18 months.

Those of us who come from Upper Sackville enjoy a common bond. We come from enduring stock. Our ancestors didn't just come here. They took root in the earth, sprang forth, and multiplied. Begun in 1716 by the Acadians, there followed the New England planters, the Yorkshiremen, the Loyalists, all the random settlers, and then eventually the Acadians once again. By the 1930s, there were more Acadian children in the Upper Sackville School than there were Anglophones.

I was born here and lived most of my first 17 years here, but it was only by writing this book that I learned what the village truly was. A place that you couldn't bear to leave, or a place you couldn't wait to get away from. A society where people were identified by their heritage and by their faith, whereby families intermarried accordingly, and where consequently, almost everyone was related to everyone else, as you will see in Volume 2.

Those of you from outside may well say, well, it's just like every other rural village in the Maritimes, and in some ways you may be right, but in other ways you are mistaken. For it is a village born of the Baptist faith and born of Methodism. A village in close proximity to the location of the first churches of those two religions in Canada. It was born of the world-famous Tantamar Marshes, with its challenges and abundance.

Yes, it was born of successive waves of immigrants who came to then-Nova Scotia in the 18th century, but it was more precisely born of the struggle for Chignecto, and was witness to the nearby battles between Fort Beauséjour and Fort Lawrence, and the subsequent genocide and desecration of 1755. It was at the extreme edge of Nova Scotia civilization before 1784, and at the extreme edge of civilization of the newly established province of New Brunswick after 1784.

And yet we were not uncivilized. We have the advantages of being near the hub of the Maritimes, of being a rich agricultural center, as well as those of being next door to the prestigious Mount Allison University and two notable foundries. We produce everything from world-class hay to senators and beauty queens with a few thieves and murderers thrown in. This history of our village will tell you those tales, how the people came and struggled to gain a foothold, struggled through hard times with the tough land, struggled through epidemics, depressions, and even two wars on their doorstep.

It will tell you who prospered and who helped them prosper, and how these roles in some cases are now reversed. It will tell you how the village itself was murdered, and how it was reborn, how it evolved over the 310 years of its existence. It would tell you how it was transformed from a thriving farming village into the picturesque bedroom community of Sackville it is today. Even its name has come full circle over the centuries, from "Tantama" to "Tantamar," just in a different language.

Despite the many changes over the ages, versions of this church and schoolhouse have stood strong, marking the crossroads and keeping sentinel over generations. Old John Fawcett, who came from Yorkshire in 1774 as a seven-year-old boy, who gave his life to Methodism and who lived next door to this church, died an unhappy man. He felt betrayed when the contingent of town Methodists chose to build the new church at Crane's Corner in Sackville in 1818 without consulting the parishioners of this village. I wonder what he would have said if he had known that 200 years later, the beautiful Sackville Church would be razed to the ground and the little Upper Sackville Church would be left standing. Ah, the vagaries of time.

There aren't many names from the old stand left in Upper Sackville. Estabrooks, George, Hicks, Fawcett, Sears, and Wheaton. But they, and the dozens and dozens of families who followed, each left a mark on the community. Maybe just a name, maybe just a record, or even just a memory. But still, their land sighs, their buildings creak, and those old folks whisper, Remember us. And remember we must, for as the Torah says, you are not truly dead until your name is forgotten.