

Our History

Our Maliseet Heritage



The Kennebecasis provided a transportation route from the Saint John River to the villages at the head of the Bay of Fundy. A short portage of a mile and a half at Anagance (near Portage) was required to reach the Petitcodiac River. This was a much less treacherous route than by canoeing along the shores of the Bay.

Until the mid-1800s, the village of Apohaqui along what is now Foster Avenue continued to be a Maliseet community. There is a burial ground on the hill on the south side of Apohaqui.

Our Loyalist History



In the 1700s, the land that is now New Brunswick was included in the province of Nova Scotia. About 1500 people of English heritage lived mostly in Saint John, Maugerville, and Sackville. In addition, there were some Acadians along the North Shore and the head waters of the Saint John River.

A gale on November 3, 1769, blew down swaths of trees. These dried over the following summer, and a great fire resulted. Lots near Apohaqui, Sussex, and Millstream, were described as “burnt land” with blackened stumps of huge pines and other great trees.

Major Studholm, in command of Fort Howe, welcomed the Loyalists in 1783 and helped them settle in Saint John and a tract of land from Fox Hill to approximately a mile above the Riverbank cemetery, on the north side of the Kennebecasis.

The Major later came to this area to live on a grant of land to the northeast of the site of the village. The first pioneers who settled in the area were the Musgrove, Sharp, Johnson, Murray, Fenwick, Ryan, Good, McLeod, Foster, Parlee, Pearson, Burgess, Lyon, Sproule, Belding, Secord, and McDonald families. The current home of the Sharp farm has been their family farm for the last 200 years (they celebrate this anniversary in the summer of 2010).

[Learn more about the Loyalists](#)

Local Folklore



Major Studholm died in 1792 and was buried in an unmarked grave on Fox Hill. He had no heirs and it was believed he was quite wealthy. People thought that his money was buried beside his grave and his ghost guards it safely. Treasure-seekers dug in the dead of the night in search of the major's gold but were frightened by the major carrying his treasure on his ghostly horse. (Also, see below!)

Historic Homes



In our community is a beautiful stone home which was built over a period of three years and completed in 1826 by a Pearson family from Boston. They came with their own stonemason and other skilled tradesmen. The house was built with local field stones and includes six fireplaces. During part of its history, it was used as a stage coach house. It is currently owned by a member of the Rankin family who purchased it from the Pearsons. The home has been known to be haunted -- a knocking can be heard but no one is at the door and occasionally a woman dressed in black and grey will wander about the house.

Another Historic Home

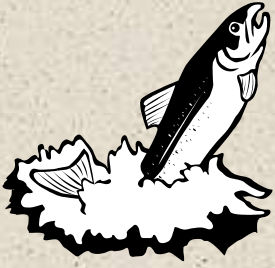


Another wonderful home is pictured to the left. Despite the local folklore involving Mr. McKnight plowing his field and hitting chunks of gold, alas no treasure was found on his farm.

The McKnight home was built between 1904 and 1906. The original house was moved to a nearby side street, Jones Park Road. The McKnight house has 14 rooms all with 10-foot ceilings and hardwood floors. The finish wood came from Boston ("white wood" and oak).

A lovely family story involves a young girl from Jemseg who travelled by the McKnight house with her family. She would often say, "Someday, I am going to live in that castle." Her family moved to the Sussex area in her late teens where she met a young man at the local hockey rink. The rest, as they say, is history. She became Mrs. McKnight and did indeed live in the castle.

Wildlife



This area was abundant in wildlife including moose, salmon, and trout. It was said that the salmon in the Kennebecasis River about two miles from Apohaqui "almost afforded a bridge on their backs across the stream."

The woods were very dense. It was said that cougars jumped from tree to tree while driving through the deeply wooded areas. (The last official sighting in New Brunswick of an eastern cougar was in 1932.)

River Transportation



The Kennebecasis River continued to be a major means of transport for heavy freight. Flat-bottomed boats called Durham boats, about 30 to 40 feet and included masts and oars, long were used. The trip could only be made during the spring and fall and even then a tow rope, pulled by horses, was used in shallow water. These boats were large enough to hold 200 bushels of potatoes. The Millstream had a number of dams in order to move logs and for mills including a grist mill to mill grain.

Road Transportation



As early as the 1760s, a bridle path that eventually became Route 121 meandered from Saint John to "The Bend" (Moncton). It was improved by corduroy (logs) in the swampier areas. There were no bridges but the river could be crossed at several points. As roads improved, stage coaches traveled through this area regularly, eventually from Saint John to Halifax. Horse and wagons in summer and sleighs in winter were used for transportation on the roads.

In the winter, someone would be hired to "snow the bridges." Snow would be shoveled onto the floor of the covered bridges to allow the sleighs to slide smoothly over the boards.

Between 1865 and 1870 a wooden bridge was built across the Kennebecasis River which linked the north side of the Kennebecasis, called Studholm, and the south side of the river, now officially called Apohaqui. It was replaced by a steel bridge in 1908. This bridge was damaged by a large truck and rebuilt in 1993.

The current bridge over the Millstream, under construction in 1937, had the longest concrete arch in the province at that time.

Rail Transportation

In November 1854, the Lower Millstream became obstructed by broken branches and fallen trees after two days of heavy rain. The five dams along the Millstream let go. The water flowed over the meadows and into many homes in the Millstream area.

A railway line had been planned on the north side of the Kennebecasis. Following this freshet, the current rail site on the south side of the River was planned and completed in 1859 including the first building in Apohaqui, the railway station. The station master lived at the station for many years, and it also housed the Post Office. The first station was torn down in 1934 and rebuilt on a smaller scale.

At this time, our village was officially established in 1858 and was named Apohaqui, the traditional Maliseet place name, by the commissioners of the European and North American Railway in 1870.

This train station is now used as an exhibition building at the 8th Hussars arena in Sussex.



Pioneer Life

In 1923, Mrs. Harley S. Jones writes in "The History of Apohaqui" the following about life in the early years of Apohaqui and Lower Millstream: It is interesting to note the changes wrought in this locality within the last century. At that time the early settlers hewed out their homes and for many years after bears were plentiful, the wolves howled at night, and the fires had to be kindled to keep the bears from the sheepfold through the darkened hours. Homemade candles were the only illumination until 1859 when oil lamps were first used. Huge fire places which may be found in some of the ancient homesteads today were the only means of heat and the cooking also was done on a large crane suspended from above the logs.

Several mention that in the winter, the students would walk to the school trustee's house to ask for a half-day holiday to go skating. In the summer, the children would swim in the river.

Telephones became available in 1912 with party lines of 14 to 16 families. Power lines were installed in 1923. Radio, considered unbelievable at the time, brought music and favorite programs as Fibber Magee and Mollie from New York and other faraway places.

[Learn more about our local history](#)



Churches

The Anglican Church records date back to 1828 when the first document states their intent for a “church to be constructed at the wagon road intersection overlooking Apohaqui.” (Wm. M. Jones) The St. John’s church was built in 1840. The first church was torn down in 1871 and replaced by the Church of Ascension. Many came to the consecration day and enjoyed a picnic under the trees surrounding the church. A pipe organ valued at \$2100 in the mid-1800s was imported from England to a church in Fredericton then presented to our Anglican Church. This organ was pumped by hand, like the action of pumping water from a deep well. A hand woven altar rug was also given to the church. It had been a gift to the Bishop by a group of women in English who wished him to “place it before the altar of a church he found to be the most scrupulously clean.”



The first Baptist church as built in the Millstream in 1853. This smaller building was moved to a nearby farm to store farm machinery and a new building was erected in 1882.

In 1881, the Methodist church as built in Apohaqui. In 1937, H.S. Jones writes, “Two churches, Methodist and Baptist in the village and the Anglican Church in the parish of Studholm, across the river, stood pointing their spires heavenward.”

First Schools in our Community

In the early 1800s, Archibald McDonald, a schoolmaster from Scotland, started a school in this area in a room of a house. He opened his school early in the morning and closed it at sundown six days a week.

The first Lower Millstream School was built in 1821. In March of that year, 15 families made an agreement to pay 10 pounds each in cash and equal amounts of labor towards building a school. The building was completed in 85 days. The textbooks used at the first school were a Bible and a spelling book.

In 1892, a second school was built but found to be too small so a new school was built in 1893. A third school was built in 1906 and remained in use until 1985.

The first school in Apohaqui was held in a hotel across from the train station. Previous mention of schools in Apohaqui includes private homes, in halls, or over one of the stores.



More about Schools in our Community

In 1868, a school was built adjacent to the Anglican cemetery. The second on this site was lost to fire in the early 1900s, and a third school was built in 1922. This building is now a private residence.

Travelling to high school in Sussex involved walking to Apohaqui, catching the train to Sussex, arriving for school at 9:00 a.m., catching train again at 5:00 p.m., then walking up to several miles home. Some students boarded in Sussex.

In 1967, school buses transported students to larger schools, and the small one- and two-room schools were brought from the government and converted to homes, halls, or recreation centres.



Apohaqui Elementary School



Our school was built in 1963. The addition was completed in 1987.

Industry

Businesses that thrived in the village of Apohaqui and the Millstream over the years have included stores, shoemakers, photographer (“likeness business” on tin-types), blacksmiths, carriage and wheelwright, sawmills, carding mill, machine shop, grist mills, hotels, and inns.

In April 1893, the village suffered a major fire. It started at night in the rear of Jones store. Many buildings were lost.

Many people worked for Jones’ mill which was built in 1906, rebuilt in 1921, but then burned again in 1950.



Agricultural Heritage



The Millstream Creamery produced cheese and butter first in Lower Millstream then from a larger factory in Sussex. It produced the first pasteurized milk in the Sussex area in 1940.

This area continues to be a thriving agricultural area--from dairy farms to vegetable production.

Sources

- *Reflections of the Past by Horace Macauley*
- *History of the Church of Ascension by Wm. M. Jones*
- *The History of Apohaqui by Mrs. Harley S. Jones*
- *Friends and Family of Apohaqui Elementary School*