

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
*A PROSPECT CHILDHOOD***

**Part I: Interviews
Part II: Project Final Report**



Researcher/Interviewer: Emily Burton

**Interviewees: Clarissa LeBlanc, Ellen Ryan,
Michael Duggan, Bernadine MacMillan**

**Supervisor: James Morrison,
History Department, Saint Mary's University**

**Prospect, Nova Scotia
September, 2004**

*Cover photo: Children at Merlin's Bank, Prospect. Front Row (L-R) Richard Duggan, Joe Duggan.
Back Row (L-R) Regina Coolen, Michael Duggan, Clarissa Coolen, John Christian, Ellen White, Joe
Christian. Photo courtesy of Michael Duggan.*

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: *A PROSPECT CHILDHOOD*

Part I: Interviews

In the spring and summer of 2004, four interviews were carried out and transcribed that examine the experiences of growing up in the small coastal community of Prospect, Nova Scotia, in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

Clarissa LeBlanc, Ellen Ryan, Michael Duggan and Bernadine MacMillan, current and former (childhood) residents of Prospect all graciously agreed to participate in the project by being interviewed.

The interviews were carried out by Emily Burton, a current Prospect resident, as a component of graduate studies in history at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. The project was supervised by Dr. James Morrison, History Department, Saint Mary's University.

Each interview was recorded and is available in cassette tapes. The following pages contain the full transcription of the interviews. It should be noted that oral communication differs substantially from formal writing. The interviews were transcribed as literally as possible in order to do justice to the meandering poetry and creativity of the spoken word. At the same time, some repetitive words, such as "and," "okay," "well," and "you know" have been used with less frequency in the transcription in order to make the interviews more readable.

Many thanks to Clarissa, Ellen, Michael and Bernadine for contributing their time, photos and stories to this project. Thank-you also to various people who expressed an interest in the project, helped set up the interviews and shared resources, information or expertise, including Sean Kelly, Tressa Kiley, Janet Monckton, Ellen Ryan and Nathaniel Smith (all Prospect people) and Patti Bannister, Congregational Archivist of the Sisters of Charity, Halifax. Finally, thank-you to James Morrison for his support and, especially, patience with the shifting project timelines.

Enjoy the walk through Prospect past!

Emily Burton
Prospect, N.S.
September, 2004

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
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Part II: Project Final Report

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**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
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Part I: Interview Transcripts



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INTRODUCTION

Oh, it was so cold. Even the water in the water buckets would freeze solid. You'd have to break the water in the bucket with a dipper to get enough water out to put in the kettle to heat it up on the stove so you could get washed, get ready for school. I always remember my mother, she loved flowers – and geraniums – and she had all the windows full of geraniums, even in the winter. So every evening after supper she'd gather them all up, put them on the kitchen table, and wrap newspapers – pin newspapers – all around them to keep them from freezing so they would survive for another year... Unwrap them in the morning and put them back in the windows for the sun. One time a few of them froze, and I can remember her crying over her beautiful geraniums... they were all hanging down.

Michael Duggan

Every Sunday, we had either chicken or roast beef and with that, mum always made jello for dessert. She wasn't a big dessert maker because... well, she used to make molasses cakes and white cakes and whatever. There was nothing fancy. Very seldom it ever had any icing on it, it was just plain. She was lucky to get the cake made, without putting the icing on it. But we always had great meals... We were poor, we never had any money, but we always were well fed. We came home from school and had our meals at lunch and there was always macaroni and tomatoes or home-made tomatoe soup. Baked beans. There was always fish cakes, something.

Clarissa LeBlanc

Hobin's was probably the smallest shop, and I remember John and Nell Hobin being very elderly. I was sent there often, because my father would send me for a plug of chewing tobacco. Because in the boat, he wouldn't roll cigarettes. Rolling cigarettes was real, oh, it took ages. You had to roll it just so. My father was slow about everything that he did, and that was a whole process, rolling a cigarette. You couldn't possibly do it in the boat, so he chewed tobacco there. He often chewed at home too. So I'd be sent over to Hobin's to get the chewing tobacco, and it was not wrapped. It was a thing about this big and that thick and it was not wrapped. One day, I was going home with it and I thought, "This must be really good stuff. My father really likes it." So I took a good gnaw off the end of it. Well! I came in to the house spitting and splattering and I ran for the water bucket to get my mouth washed out. And my father – whenever my father laughed, he'd hit his knees and his legs would jump up off the floor – he laughed and he laughed, and he said, "Mary, look at her. I always wondered how long it would be before she'd try it."

Ellen Ryan

There's another thing that we did too as kids. This Mr. Hardiman that lived up here where Patsy Coolen lives, at Indian Point Road? He said to Sister Ellen Vincent – she was just a darling, very, very strict but a darling. He said, “How many berries do you think you could pick up there?” – because he had a cranberry field up there on the shore. She said, “Oh ... Mr. Hardiman, I think that we could pick them all,” she said. “The children are probably great pickers.” He said, “Well, you go up and all the berries you pick,” he said. “You bring them down to me and I'll sell them for you.” So we went up, the sister in her habit – two or three sisters. We took our lunch and I think she probably had some little treats for us. We went up the shore and we picked berries. We picked them and picked them and picked them. We came down that day and he said, “How did you do Sister?” She said, “Well, we picked it nearly clean, but there's still some.” We went up the next day and finished picking them. With the money that she got – I forget what money she got – we bought desks for the school. Single desks that you sit in. When the school closed down here, all those desks went up to Atlantic Memorial. So the kids up at Atlantic Memorial are using the desks that we bought through picking cranberries.

Bernadine MacMillan¹

Each of the above vignettes reveal the potential in all of us to narrate our life experiences. They entail descriptions and stories that are vivid, detailed, poignant, humorous and informative. They give us a glimpse into family, school and community life and provide specific information on eating habits, economics and the environment. The above passages were recorded as part of the oral history project *A Prospect Childhood*. The project explores the childhood experiences of growing up in Prospect, Nova Scotia, during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, when Prospect was a small coastal fishing community. The main objective of the project is to create archival documents regarding childhood experiences of growing up in Prospect that will be available as a community resource for present inhabitants as well as future generations.

¹ Oral History Project *A Prospect Childhood*, Interview Number 3, Michael Duggan, June 29, 2004 (hereafter M.D.), p. 78; Interview Number 1, Clarissa LeBlanc, March 01, 2004 (hereafter C.L.), p. 7; Interview Number 2, Ellen Ryan, April 22, 2004 (hereafter E.R.), p. 59 & Interview Number 4, Bernadine MacMillan, May 28, 2004 (hereafter B.M.), p. 138.

The first three quotes focus on an aspect of family or home life. Sheltering geraniums from cold winter nights at Michael Duggan's home, molasses cakes and macaroni at Clarissa LeBlanc's house and Ellen Ryan's experiment with chewing tobacco. These stories are personal in nature. They portray experiences not necessarily shared by other community members. They represent a rich historical resource, and yet at the same time constitute historical sources that are unlikely to be corroborated by other sources, particularly written, archival sources. The final vignette – the trip “up the shore” to pick cranberries described by Bernadine MacMillan – focuses on a school activity that involves many people. It is more likely to be corroborated by other people who were also school children at the time and remember the expedition, by personal journals of the sisters or by documents which report on school activities. As such, the final quote represents a historical source that differs somewhat from the other three.

Is oral history only relevant when the information it generates can be corroborated through written sources of historical evidence? Conversely, is oral history useful precisely because it can provide information that is not contained in other sources? A secondary objective of the project *A Prospect Childhood* is to explore these questions by examining the process itself. That is, to examine oral history as a means of generating historical evidence. As such, attention will be given in the project report to both methodological considerations related to the process of doing oral history and substantive questions regarding childhood experiences in Prospect.

The report begins with a methodological overview of the project which includes general considerations as well as specific details regarding the interview and transcription processes. The second part of the report examines selected primary materials – such as

newspaper articles, church and school documents, and genealogy and digital history websites – as well as secondary articles and books, which provide information and analysis regarding Prospect, and Nova Scotia generally, during the time period in question. The report’s final section involves an interpretation and analysis of sources – principally the newly generated oral history interviews but also the primary and secondary sources consulted – and attempts to paint a portrait of childhood experiences in Prospect.

METHODOLOGY

Oral history is both old and new. Paul Thompson asserts that it is “as old as history itself” and that “it is only quite recently that skill in handling oral evidence has ceased to be one of the marks of the great historian.”² The use of the term *oral history*, however, tends to be associated with its more recent incarnation in the mid-twentieth century. In 1948, the Columbia University Oral History project was established by Allan Nevins to “collect the reminiscences of major figures in contemporary American public life” and with the project, oral history in its more recent incarnation was born.³ The information gathered was meant to serve as an “oral appendix to the published memoirs” of these people.⁴ Beginning in the 1960s, however, oral history began to move away from political history and focus on the “historically disenfranchised.”⁵ In North America, for instance, social historians concerned with aboriginal and African American history in the 1970s, and women’s history in the 1980s, began to employ the techniques

² Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Third edition (Oxford: Oxford UP), p.25. Thompson notes, for instance, that the first written histories “probably go back 3,000 years” and constituted the setting down of “existing oral tradition about the past.” Prior to this, “all history was oral history.” Historical inquiry gradually relied more and more on the written word and the development of the “documentary method” in the nineteenth century definitively equated historical research with documentary research. See Thompson, pp. 26, 30-1, 55-6.

³ David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (New York, Longman, 1985), p. 107. See also David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1987), p. 68 and Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 65. It is interesting to note that although several authors pinpoint Nevins and the Columbia University project as the starting point for oral history, Nevins himself attempts to counter the claim that he “had anything to do with the founding of oral history.” He notes: “It founded itself. It had become a patent necessity, and would have sprung into life in a dozen places, under any circumstances.” The necessity of oral history, according to Nevins, was related to a decrease in “methodical, reflective writing” on the part of notable public figures due to greater efficiency in modern communication. See Allan Nevins, “Oral History: How and Why it was Born, The Uses of Oral History,” in Dunaway and Baum, pp.28, 31.

⁴ Henige, *Oral Historiography*, p. 107. Henige also notes that the transcripts, rather than tapes, were retained by the project.

⁵ Dunaway and Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, p. xiii. David Henige, writing in the early 1980s, also notes that the “more orthodox current view... is that oral history provides an opportunity to explore and record the views of...those who by virtue of being historically inarticulate, have been overlooked in most studies of the past.” Henige, *Oral Historiography*, p.107.

of oral history.⁶ Oral history involving studies of “farmers, miners, and members of the urban working class” also emerged during this period.⁷ As the use of oral history expanded, its methods were also systematized and scrutinized.⁸

What, then, is oral history? It is the collecting through a recorded interview – usually using analogue cassette tapes but more recently with digital disks as well – of “reminiscences, accounts, and interpretations of events from the recent past which are of historical significance.”⁹ The recording itself becomes an archival document. Oral history interviews are also often transcribed in full or in part (summary transcriptions) but it is the oral recording that constitutes an archival document rather than the written transcriptions. As an archival document, oral recordings are subject to the “general rules in examining evidence” that would be applied to other historical sources. Namely; to look for authenticity and internal consistency, “to seek confirmation in other sources” and “to be aware of potential bias.”¹⁰ Oral history has an advantage over other forms of historical evidence in that the interviewee is likely to be known. In addition, the oral nature of the interview means that “the exact words used are there as they were spoken; and added to them are social clues, the nuances of uncertainty, humour, or pretence, as well as the texture of the dialect.”¹¹ Oral history also presents unique challenges to historians in terms of the reliability and validity of evidence obtained through oral interviews. These challenges are discussed below as they pertain to the objectives of the interview process.

⁶ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 65.

⁷ Henige, *Oral Historiography*, p. 107.

⁸ This can be seen in the emergence of various oral history associations and journals. In Canada, the Canadian Oral History Association – with its own journal – was formed in 1974. See Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 65.

⁹ Hoffman, in Dunaway and Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, p. 68.

¹⁰ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 118-9.

¹¹ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 126.

There were three phases to the oral history project *A Prospect Childhood*: archival research, interviewing and interpretation. The purpose of the archival research was two-fold. Firstly, it provided historical context for the interviews and as such could be used as a potential aid to the interview process. Having some background knowledge of the community during the time period in question could prove useful in seeking clarification on information presented or in pursuing aspects of community life in Prospect that may not have been included in the original set of interview questions. Secondly, the information obtained by consulting primary (and secondary) written sources could be used to corroborate information presented in the interviews (and vice versa) and as such was useful in the interpretation phase of the project.

The second phase of the project involved the setting up, carrying out and transcription of the interviews. This process is discussed in detail below. As was mentioned in the introduction, the creation of the interviews was the main objective of the project. The interviews constitute a historical resource available to present and future Prospect residents, community and academic historians and other individuals who may be interested in the history of coastal communities, childhood experiences, the role of the Catholic Church and the Sisters of Charity in rural communities or other themes. In this regard, the taped interviews constitute historical documents which exist independently of the project *A Prospect Childhood*.

The project, however, was concerned not only with the creation of archival documents, but also with the interpretation of these documents. The interpretation provided in the report emerges from a desire on my part to examine childhood experiences in Prospect in the mid-twentieth century primarily through the lens of the

people who lived the experiences. The personal reminiscences that reveal information, anecdotes and stories about growing up in Prospect may not otherwise exist in written form. The interpretive stage involved placing the interviews in a broader comparative and analytical context. In so doing, I was hesitant about taking the interviewee's words out of context and ascribing to them a meaning that may not have been foreseen or intended by the people interviewed.¹² And yet, it is the role of the historian to attempt to situate individual experiences and reminiscences in a broader context.¹³ Thus, while the generation of historical documents through the interview process was a collaborative process, the historical interpretation of the documents was one in which I alone was involved and one for which, by extension, I am solely responsible.

The interpretive phase attempted to strike a balance between two approaches to interpretation, one more descriptive and thematic and the other more analytical. In the first, the interviews can be seen as a collection of stories and the historical interpretation as a comparison of the narratives which revolves around selected themes. In the second approach, the interviews are seen as data from which an analysis regarding "patterns of behaviour or events in the past" can be undertaken.¹⁴

The people interviewed for the project would have been children in Prospect in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The year 1960 provides an approximate cut-off for the project because the village school, run by the Sisters of Charity, was closed in the late 1950s. Four people were interviewed in total: Clarissa LeBlanc, Ellen Ryan, Michael Duggan and Bernadine MacMillan. They were born between 1930 and 1940 and all grew

¹² Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.271.

¹³ Thompson notes the tension between "biography and cross-analysis" felt by oral historians. "The elegance of historical generalization, of sociological theory, flies high above the ordinary life experience in

up in the village and attended the local school. In the initial project proposal, it was stated that eight to ten people would be interviewed and that summary transcriptions, rather than full transcriptions of the interviews, would be made. It proved more difficult than initially anticipated, however, to find the desired number of interviewees. As such, the decision was made to interview a smaller number of people, but to provide full transcriptions of the interviews (transcribing being one of the more time-consuming aspects of the project).

The first step in seeking potential interviewees was to consult with a person in the community known to the interviewer – Tressa Kiley – who, although not a potential interviewee, was very active in the community and had expressed an interest in the project.¹⁵ A list of approximately ten people was compiled as a result of this consultation, two of whom were out of the country at the time. The first person contacted on this list (a person known to me) agreed to be interviewed. It is interesting to note that a certain reservation was expressed in the sense that she felt she might not have “anything to say.” Another person (also known to me) that was contacted directly also agreed to be interviewed without reservation. Two additional people that were contacted declined (politely and indirectly) to be interviewed. At this point, the logic of contacting people “out of the blue” that were not known to the interviewer was called into question. Some awareness of the project within the community and/or having the project introduced to potential interviewees through people they already knew seemed to be possible ways to avoid this problem.

which oral history is rooted. The tension which the oral historian feels is that of the mainspring: between history and real life.” Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 272.

¹⁴ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 270-2.

During the same time period, Tressa contacted me to see if I would be interested in doing a presentation on *A Prospect Childhood* during the official opening of the Prospect Community Library.¹⁶ The presentation was made on April 3, 2004 in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church hall (on the second floor, where the school operated from the early 1930s to the late 1950s.)¹⁷ The oral history presentation included a review of archival documents on Prospect obtained through the Nova Scotia Public Archives and Records Management as well as an overview of the interview process. A hand-out was distributed which outlined the project and its objectives (see Appendix).

It was hoped that, in addition to generating awareness of the project within the community, people willing to be interviewed might be identified following the presentation. One person (again, someone I already knew) agreed to be interviewed following the presentation, and she was also very helpful in contacting people I did not know, informing them about the project, and asking if they would be interested in participating. One additional person was interviewed as a result of this contact.

The library presentation did help establish a profile for the project in the community. Several people, for instance, have asked about the project since then and have expressed an interest in seeing the results. It is interesting to note that most of the people who have expressed this interest are not people who grew up in Prospect, but are people who have moved here as adults. Given that the main objective of the project is to

¹⁵ Tressa Kiley grew up in Prospect in the 1970s and 1980s. She currently lives in Prospect Bay and is the chairperson of the Prospect Peninsula Resident's Association (PPRA), a grassroots organization which draws membership from residents of the Prospect Bay Road and surrounding area.

¹⁶ The Prospect Community Library was the result of a partnership between Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church Committee and the PPRA. The library is located in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church Hall. See "Prospect Peninsula Residents Association" pamphlet, 2004. (Appendix)

¹⁷ The presentation followed another presentation by Barb Allen and Kim Slaunwhite from the Resource Opportunities Centre in Terrence Bay regarding the Digital Histories Project. See www.chebucto.ns.ca/terencebayarea/history.

generate historical information that will be useful to the community of Prospect, it is a positive sign that people who do not have family roots in the community are interested in learning more about its history.

In the end, three of the four people interviewed for the project were people I already knew and the fourth person was introduced to the project by someone she knew who had already been interviewed. This attests to the fact that personal contacts can be extremely important in a project such as this. It also points to the reality that time can be a key factor in an oral history project. That is, it can take a lot of time to develop a profile of the project in the community and to establish the contacts necessary to identify people willing to participate in the project. Due to time limitations, however, the interview stage of the project lasted only three months. It is likely that additional people would have agreed to be interviewed if the timelines of the project had been different.¹⁸ In this regard, this project (optimistically?) could be considered the first phase of a larger Prospect Oral History Project involving additional volunteer interviewers as well as interviewees.

The interviews themselves took place between March 1 and June 29, 2004.¹⁹ All interviews took place in the home of the interviewee and were approximately one and a half hours in length. Immediately prior to the interview, each interviewee was asked to sign a release form and was given an information sheet outlining the purpose and nature of the study as well as the potential uses of the project results (see Appendix). The latter included pointing out that the interviews would be made available to the public.²⁰

¹⁸ In fact, an additional person who had been away for much of the winter did agree – through the intermediary mentioned above – to be interviewed.

¹⁹ The last interview date should have been May 28, 2004. Due to technical difficulties, however, a May 26 interview had to be redone in June.

²⁰ Paul Thompson notes the importance of “explaining the project” and making clear the use and potential value of the information collected in terms of respecting and acknowledging the rights of interviewees. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 253.

A SONY stereo recording portable cassette player with a small two-way microphone was used. The microphone was clipped to a cup or the case of the cassette case and placed between the interviewer and the interviewee. Some consideration was given to using a recorder with a digital disk, but it was decided in the end to use a cassette recorder.²¹ The interviews were not being created for internet or radio broadcast, so the quality of the recording was not a key issue. It was felt that cassette tapes would be more accessible to community members who might want to listen to the interviews rather than – or in addition to – reading the written transcripts.²² Although the use of 60 minute tapes is generally advised, 90 minute tapes were used because that was the approximate length of each interview and as such there was less probability of having to interrupt the interview to change the tape (only one interview used two tapes). The original master copy of the interview was immediately copied (and the tape tabs broken to prevent accidental recording) and a copy of each interview was used for the transcription of the interviews.

A specific set of questions was formulated for the interview process.²³ The questions were divided into five categories: (1) Family and Home Life, (2) School Experience, (3) Community Involvement, (4) Childhood Leisure, and (5) General. The last category included questions on growing up in Prospect during the years of the Second World War as well as a final set of questions on the childhood experiences of

²¹ Barb Allen, then Managing Director of the Resources Opportunity Centre, graciously offered the use of the centre's digital recorder.

²² In addition, it was pointed out by Dr. James Morrison, project Supervisor, that digital cds can be damaged more easily than cassette tapes. In retrospect, the optimal approach – given time, resources and technical expertise – would have been to digitally record the interviews, and then immediately create cassette copies for the library as well as for transcribing purposes. This would have left open the possibility of using the recorded interviews in ways and venues unplanned or unforeseen at the time.

growing up in Prospect of subsequent generations (see Appendix for the full set of questions). The questions were intended to be an interview guide rather than a strictly adhered to questionnaire. As such, the interview format was open-ended. It was not essential to have the interviewees respond to each and every question, or to respond to questions in strict order. Deviations from the pre-established list of questions that involved anecdotes and stories were welcomed. Each interview began with an introduction approximately based on the following:

I am going to ask a number of questions that relate to what life was like at home – your parents and siblings, – what life was like in the community and at school and the leisure activities you engaged in. The idea is to get you thinking about your childhood in Prospect, so if at any time you want to deviate from the questions to tell stories or say things that I haven't included in the questions, please feel free.

The goal of the interviews, thus, was two-fold: (1) to generate comparable information in each of the five categories, and (2) to generate personal stories about growing up in Prospect. The comparable information generated in an interview could be confirmed, or corroborated, not only with other interviews, but also potentially with written sources, such as the archival and secondary sources consulted. The second objective, the generation of personal stories, was likely to generate information that was more subjective in nature and also more difficult, if not impossible, to corroborate.

There has been much discussion among oral historians regarding the question of oral history evidence. William Cutler III, one of the first historians to critique the interview process in oral history, has stated that a project should, ideally, be pursued only “when there are knowledgeable people to interview as well as existing manuscripts or

²³ The interview questions were adapted from the questions provided by Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), pp. 296-306 and third edition (Oxford:

corroborating witnesses to provide checks on what respondents say.”²⁴ On the other hand, as was noted previously, oral history arose in part as a response to the omission in historical accounts of perspectives and experiences not considered to be relevant subjects of historical inquiry. The information gathered through oral history interviews, thus, is not necessarily present in other sources. Personal stories and anecdotes, in particular, can often make a piece of historical writing original in that it is “different from previously published sources.”²⁵ Donald Ritchie – writing more recently than William Cutler – applies less absolute standards, stating that personal descriptions, colourful anecdotes and the expression of opinions would all “permit citation of the interview as the single source.”²⁶

Another response to the dilemma regarding highly subjective sources has been to make a distinction between the “oral historian” and the “oral archivist.” In the case of the latter, the oral record can be seen as a “memory claim.” In other words, it is the claim of one person, based on his or her memory, of “what happened.” As such, the claim becomes a primary source which future historians will be able to assess and evaluate in terms of its historical significance.²⁷ Finally, evidence which is not confirmed through other sources can be examined for authenticity, internal consistency and potential bias.

Oxford UP, 2000), pp. 309-323.

²⁴ William Cutler III, “Accuracy in Oral History Interviewing,” in Dunaway and Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, p. 83.

²⁵ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, second edition (New York: Oxford UP), p. 121.

²⁶ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, p. 120.

²⁷ Hoffman, “Reliability and Validity in Oral History,” in Dunaway and Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, p.71. It is interesting to note that not all oral historians share the same concerns regarding evidence. In a recent internet discussion regarding the difference between approaching oral history from an ethnographic perspective and approaching it from the perspective of historians, Andy Kolovos of the Vermont Folklife Centre notes that oral history that is “from an ethnographic perspective” is more concerned with “how narratives about the past relate to individual and community identity in the present” than it is with “historical veracity.” See www2.h-net.org.msu.edu. July 11 and July 15, 2004.

In addition to the potentially subjective nature of an interviewee's narrative, an interviewee's responses may be influenced by various factors present during the interview process. The location of the interview – workplace, home, public venue, etc. – the presence of additional people during the interview or the way in which questions are posed by the interviewer can all have an impact on responses given by interviewees. In addition, the identities – age, gender, ethnicity, social background, personality and so on – of both the interviewer and interviewee are all factors which can impact upon the course of the interview.²⁸

One example of the subjective nature of the interview is a project carried out by the Federal Writers Project in the United States in the 1930s. In the project, an African-American woman was interviewed, first by a non-African American woman and then by an African-American man, regarding her memories of slavery. The interviewee's responses to the questions were "starkly different," with a "much harsher" account given to the latter interviewer.²⁹ Although this represents an extreme example of difference between an interviewer and an interviewee, it serves to highlight how differences can influence the nature of the response given by interviewees. One might conclude from this example that an interviewer who shares a social bond with an interviewee (for instance related to age, gender, ethnicity, social class, religion or community ties) may be able to obtain more accurate information than an interviewer whose relationship with the interviewee is marked by differences. Interviews that are based on a social relationship

²⁸ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 226, 228-9, 234 and Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp. 61-2, 92-3, 100.

²⁹ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, p. 100. See also Henige, *Oral Historiography*, pp. 116-8. Henige notes that Blacks "conducted fewer than one-fifth of the interviews" in the project and concludes that the "racial etiquette that governed relations between blacks and whites in the American South during the 1930s inhibited, indeed prevented, frank and honest communication between the two groups on any subject as sensitive as that of slavery." (p.116)

that is a social bond, however, are not without potential pitfalls, as they have the danger of tending towards “social conformity.”³⁰ In addition, the existence of a social bond does not necessarily create less inhibition. In fact, the opposite can be true.³¹

In the case of *A Prospect Childhood*, it was useful to be aware of the subjective elements that can be present in the interview process related to differences in identity. For instance, the fact that I was a Prospect resident, but a newcomer as opposed to someone who grew up in the village or had family members who grew up in the village. In addition, the fact that I was younger than all of the interviewees and was known to three of the interviewees and unknown to a fourth interviewee were factors which could have impacted upon the interview process. An awareness of this dynamic did not, unfortunately, automatically lead to an understanding of its potential impact.³² The same people would have to have been interviewed by someone else – a Prospect resident belonging to the same generation with family ties in the village, for instance – to see if the interview results varied. This would, however, simply replace one set of potential biases with another. In other words, it is not possible for an interview context to establish an objective “control” from which to measure deviation.

An open-ended interview format that allowed interviewees to have greater control over the interview process – if they so desired – was one way of attempting to diminish the role of the interviewer. That having been said, an attempt was made during each interview to ensure that comparable information was obtained by covering material in

³⁰ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, third edition, p. 140.

³¹ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, third edition, p. 140.

³² Ritchie notes that there are “no set prescriptions” to overcome differences in race, gender or age but does make some suggestions. The “interviewers might reveal a little of themselves,” he notes to “establish points of commonality. Researching the subject and “being familiar with names, dates and events long past” may also prove beneficial. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, pp.100-1.

each of the five categories, although the order in which the material was covered was not important.

In addition to establishing a flexible interview process, an attempt was made to be aware of certain communication dynamics during the course of the interview. The main dynamic in this regard was a reminder to myself, as the interviewer, that the purpose of the interview was for the informant to speak about his or her childhood experiences rather than for the two of us to engage in a dialogue on the history of Prospect. Some deviations from the main topic was acceptable – even welcomed – as long as it did not compromise the overall direction of the interview. This was particularly relevant because I am a Prospect resident and have an interest in other aspects of the history of the community. In this regard, the interview was not a dialogue. The reason for doing the interview was “to get the informant to speak” and my role was “above all to listen.”³³

In keeping with the “listening” role of the interviewer, an attempt was also made to not rush the interviews. Small pauses during the interviews – rather than immediately moving from one question to the next – allowed for the telling of stories, providing of information not directly related to the question or expansion of the question.³⁴ Finally, an attempt was made to use body language rather than verbal interjections such as “okay” or “really?” while listening to the interviewer. Despite a mental note regarding this prior to each interview, the transcription process revealed that these efforts had been relatively

³³ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, third edition, p. 238. This view is not held by all oral historians. Allan W. Futrell and Charles A. Willard, for instance, state that the interview should be seen as a “dialogue between interviewer and narrator” in which “participants exchange messages, negotiate meanings, and try to achieve a degree of agreement on what they are doing and why.” Allan W. Futrell and Charles A. Willard, “Intersubjectivity and Interviewing,” in *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, edited by Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), p. 85.

³⁴ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, third edition, p. 238.

unsuccessful. The imperative to interact with and acknowledge the interviewee appeared to outweigh other considerations.

The next stage in the project was the transcribing of the interviews. This stage overlapped with the carrying out of the interviews, although the bulk of the transcribing was done in June and July. Transcription appears to be a straight-forward process of writing down the contents of the recorded oral interview. And yet, transcription is one of the “thorniest questions surrounding oral history interviews.”³⁵ This is partly due to the time – and potential cost – involved in transcribing. It can take up to ten hours to transcribe one hour of recorded interview, not to mention the time involved in seeking clarification from interviewees as needed and other editing tasks.³⁶ The availability of a written transcript can also be seen as a disincentive for researchers and other interested individuals to listen to the original oral interview.³⁷ This is significant because the written version of an interview cannot be a true substitute for the oral version due to differences inherent in written and spoken discourse.

The written word contains a formality that is not present in speaking. While writing tends to be more organized and concentrated and “both demands and permits reprocessing and reflection,” the spoken word tends to be more loosely organized, with frequent repetition and repair.”³⁸ In addition, a taped interview loses the visual aspect of communication that involves the body, but retains aural aspects of communication such as pauses, intonation, exclamation and laughter.

³⁵ Derek Reimer, ed. *Voices: A Guide to Oral History* (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1988), p. 47.

³⁶ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 257-8, 263.

³⁷ Reimer, *Voices: A Guide to Oral History*, p. 47.

³⁸ Keith Johnson and Helen Johnson, eds., *Applied Linguistics* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p. 301.

Despite the limitations of the transcript, it also has significant advantages. Many people who may be interested in a project may read – or flip through – the transcribed interviews but not take the time to listen to the recorded tapes. This may be especially true for researchers, who might want to use the full transcripts as a guide prior to listening to relevant sections of the tapes.³⁹

In the process of deciding whether to transcribe a taped, oral interview, the advantages and disadvantages must be weighed. In *A Prospect Childhood*, the decision was made to create transcriptions of the interviews. Initially, as was mentioned, only summary transcriptions were to be included but in the end there were less interviews but full transcriptions of each one. The decision was made in the hope that the transcripts would make the project accessible to a wider audience.⁴⁰ Having the full transcription of the interviews was also very helpful in the interpretation phase of the project. For instance, I was able to informally index the interviews (with annotations in the margins) and use this as a base from which to extract and organize information. The transcripts may likewise be helpful to future researchers.

Choosing to fully transcribe an interview does require a series of decisions in terms of how to best represent the fluidity and nuances of oral communication in a written form, which is silent and governed by rules of syntax. Recognizing that a certain distortion is inevitable in the transcription process, an attempt was made in *A Prospect Childhood* to be as literal as possible in committing to written form the oral discourse of the interviewees. Maintaining the fluidity and originality of the original communication was seen as more significant than eliminating awkwardness in the written form. On the

³⁹ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 258.

other hand, the formality of written discourse was acknowledged by editing to reduce the frequency – rather than the occurrence – of words and phrases such as “okay,” “and,” “so,” “anyway,” “but,” “because,” “you know,” “I guess,” “that’s interesting,” “really?” and “is that right?” In addition, the words “yeah” and “yep” were generally changed to “yes.” It is hoped that these changes made the transcripts more readable while still being true to the original communication. The only oral nuance that was included, in square brackets, was an indication of laughter. Pauses and word either left out or not understood were expressed through a dotted line. Finally, the interview transcripts include reference to the cassette tapes – for instance, [Tape1, Side B] – as well as a numerical reference to the tape counter at intervals of approximately 50. The latter provides only a rough link between the transcript and the tape, as different recorders have different counter speeds.⁴¹

The final phase of the interview and transcription process involved follow-up meetings with each of the people interviewed. Ambiguities that arose from the transcription process – such as the spelling of names and places or phrases that were not understood – were cleared up. Also, short biographies and photographs of each interviewee were collected for inclusion in the transcripts. The biographies contained brief information on the adult identity of each person and the photographs were childhood portraits of the interviewees with family members, friends or school mates.

⁴⁰ In addition to being available through the Prospect Community Library, copies of the transcripts (and report) will be given to the Sisters of Charity Archives and Saint Mary’s University in Halifax.

⁴¹ An advantage of digital recordings is that “they can be structured to make the shift between sound and text easy.” Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 259.

INTERPRETATION

What kind of portrait of the village of Prospect in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s – and in particular what portrait of childhood in Prospect – is conveyed through the oral history interviews? This question forms the main focus of the interpretation phase of the project and is addressed by combining and comparing the information presented in the four interviews. The information, experiences, stories and opinions portrayed through the interviews are also contrasted – and in some cases, corroborated – with written archival sources of Prospect that cover the same time period. The question of oral history interviews as evidence will be considered as it arises in the interpretation process.

Prospect was a relatively isolated, close-knit Catholic coastal community during the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Contact with other communities was along waterways and unpaved roads, with few residents owning vehicles. Streetlights were first introduced in the village in the late 1940s and the road to Halifax was paved in the early 1950s. There were very few houses – and most of these seasonal dwellings – beyond Indian Point Road during the time period in question. Ellen Ryan, whose family home was close to Indian Point Road – just before “Hardiman’s Bridge”— notes for instance that up to the late 1950s there wasn’t “a light above our house.”⁴²

The inshore fishery – lobster, salmon, cod, mackerel and herring – was the economic backbone of the community, although the interviews reveal a great deal of diversity, both in terms of remunerated occupations and subsistence-oriented or barter activities, among the village’s inhabitants. Ellen’s father, for instance, “took his place in his father’s boat when he was about ten years old. He really didn’t know anything except

⁴² E.R., p.61.

fishing.” Lee White, however, also had cattle, pigs and hens and cultivated hay for feed, planted potatoes and “cut all his own wood for the winter.” Ellen describes her father as “his own boss.”

Several people in the village had cows, chickens and pigs which provided fresh milk, eggs and salt pork in the fall and winter.⁴³ People also hunted rabbits, deer and ducks, and picked wild berries – mainly cranberries but also blueberries and strawberries.⁴⁴ Some families grew potatoes, carrots, cabbages, beets and cucumbers in family gardens and cut firewood from family owned wood lots in the surrounding area.⁴⁵ In addition to hunting, animal husbandry and horticulture, people operated outside a cash economy through a village barter system. Blanche Christian, Bernadine’s mother, for instance, was a seamstress who might receive eggs in return for making someone a coat.⁴⁶ A nurse – Stase [Anastasia] Doherty, “everyone called her Aunt Stase” – also lived in the village and would attend to people when they were sick, often without payment and sometimes receiving “fish, or something like that.”⁴⁷ Other occupations mentioned during the course of the interviews included boat builder (flats), beer seller, blacksmith, midwife, post mistress, shoe maker and yeast maker. These people may have received money or goods, or in some cases both, for their services.

There were three stores in the village during the 1940s, owned by Alice Christian, John and Nell (Elle?) Hobin and Bill and Mary Hardiman. The stores were “very different than shops are today,” selling big “rounds of cheese” and “kegs of molasses that

⁴³ B.M., p. 126, M.D., pp. 80, 97 & C.L., p. 8.

⁴⁴ C.L., p. 10 & M.D., p. 80.

⁴⁵ M.D., pp. 73, 80 & B.M., p. 122.

⁴⁶ B.M., p. 121. She would receive 50 cents, or 75 cents or “maybe a dollar” if she was paid for her work in cash.

⁴⁷ M.D., p. 105.

you ran off” with your own container.⁴⁸ In addition to cheese and molasses, the stores sold everything from jam to jaw-breakers, chewing tobacco, radios and, occasionally, bananas.⁴⁹ There was also a tuna cannery in the village during the 1940s, owned by Herb Christian.⁵⁰ Along with Prospect residents, women from Terrence Bay worked in the factory.⁵¹

Prospect also provided a market for people who came into the village selling their wares. “Peddlars” would sell clothing, fresh meat or barrels of Annapolis valley apples from their trucks. Sauerkraut, carrots, turnip and beets could be purchased from *The Tancooker*, a man from Tancook Island who “would go all along the shore with a boat” in the fall.⁵² On weekends, a man from town would bring a projector and a movie in his truck and Prospect residents could view westerns and other movies in the community hall.⁵³

Conversely, some Prospect people – mostly male heads of households – spent time working elsewhere. Some were ship’s Captains, sailing to Halifax, Boston and elsewhere.⁵⁴ Others were longshoremen or hospital workers. Many worked both as fishermen in Prospect and in other occupations over the course of their working lives. Russel Christian, Bernadine’s father, “had to go out fishing to bring money home” when he was 14 but later worked at the Nova Scotia hospital and then at the Halifax waterfront. Bernadine’s father and other village men working in Halifax would return to Prospect periodically. Bernadine tells the “amazing” story of the men walking from Halifax to

⁴⁸ E.R., p. 59.

⁴⁹ C.L., p. 8, E.R., p. 59, M.D., p. 81 & B.M., pp. 130, 134.

⁵⁰ Clarissa thought that they canned lobster, rabbit and herring. C.L., p. 22. Michael remembers that “they were salting fish” after the cannery closed. M.D., p. 108.

⁵¹ M.D., p. 108, B.M., p. 125 & E.R., p. 49.

⁵² M.D., p. 80.

⁵³ According to Clarissa, the man was from Spryfield. C.L., p. 30.

Prospect, stopping at Yeadon's in Brookside for a drink and a meal.⁵⁵ The *Carmelita*, *Annals of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish School* also make note of six men returning to the village in May, 1941, after having spent the winter working in the city.⁵⁶ George Coolen, Clarissa's father, first worked at the Nova Scotia hospital, and then returned to the village to fish salmon and lobster. He then worked for several years as the lighthouse keeper on Betty Island, then at a car business in Halifax, and then back again to Prospect where he ran a store. Richard (Dick) Duggan, Michael's father "always fished," except for the years during World War II, when he worked at the dockyards and on ships laying anti-submarine cables.⁵⁷ Thus, while all three were self-employed as fishermen, they were also – by choice or necessity – engaged in other occupations, including those that involved working for an employer.

As with Ellen's father cutting wood and tending to livestock, men in the village also worked in and around their homes, carrying coal, cutting wood, clearing snow or mending nets. In the winter, for instance, when it was too cold to work at his fishing stage, Michael's father would bring his nets into the house. "In one corner of the kitchen behind the stove, he would hang them up and they would mend all their nets there in the winter."⁵⁸

Women focused primarily on the household in their (mostly unpaid) contribution to the family and village economy. They were involved in the preparation and preservation of food and household cleaning as well as sewing, knitting and hooking everything from clothes and quilts to lobster mitts and rugs. Mary White ("Molly") –

⁵⁴ B.M., p. 146.

⁵⁵ B.M., p. 124.

⁵⁶ Vaughan, ed. *Carmelita*, 1941, p.7. The six men were William Beck, Percival Beck, Owen Duggan, Earl Duggan, Charles Hardiman and Gyrth Kiley.

Ellen's mother – used to prepare “two great big cooked meals a day” and made coats for the children by cutting down “an adult's coat.” She also “sat up at night in bed knitting lobster mitts.” They worked, Ellen notes, “dawn ‘till dark.”⁵⁹ Bernadine's mother “always had an apron on.” She would “bake and she'd cook the meals and wash the clothes” with “the round wash tub and the wash board.”⁶⁰ Bernadine remembers that her mother used to hook rugs. She “would draw her own patterns, on a piece of brown paper, and then she'd print them.” Most women, Bernadine notes, hooked mats. “I don't know how they did all these things, because they didn't have lights.”⁶¹ Francis Duggan, Michael's mother, used to make bread “maybe every second night, nine loaves at a time” and, on Saturdays, she made pies – “6 or 7 apple pies or whatever was available.”⁶² Michael remembers how happy his mother was when she got her first electric washing machine, a “wringer washer, with a copper tub on it,” when he was 5 or 6-years-old, because prior to that she did the laundry by hand.⁶³ Clarissa's mother “loved to cook and loved to do washing” and Clarissa's fondest memories are of being around her mother at home. “Smelling the bread baking and the cakes, you know. We spent a lot of time just being around the house.”⁶⁴

Women at times deviated from what might have been considered typical tasks or behaviours, either due to circumstances or by choice. Blanche Christian would “have to

⁵⁷ M.D., pp. 73-4.

⁵⁸ M.D., p. 75.

⁵⁹ E.R., pp. 40, 46.

⁶⁰ B.M., p. 122.

⁶¹ B.M., p. 155.

⁶² M.D., pp. 72, 79. Michael also remembers his mother knitting mitts and socks and caps and hooking “10 to 15 mats in the winter.” However, he remembers these activities as leisure activities rather than work. M.D., p. 83.

⁶³ M.D., pp. 71-2.

⁶⁴ C.L., pp. 3, 32. Clarissa's mother also used to knit and sew, although Blanche Christian, Bernadine's mother, used to make their clothes.

go out and cut all the wood” when her husband was not around. He worked in Halifax so she was often alone with the four children and Bernadine’s brother was “too young at the time to help.”⁶⁵ Mary White ran a grocery store in the United States before moving to Prospect and marrying at the age of 29. Ellen describes her as a “liberated woman” who wouldn’t “wear a brassière” and who taught children in the village to swim, an activity not indulged in by many mothers. “Women didn’t swim then. If there were other women who swam, I don’t remember ever seeing them... They probably all stayed home and worked really hard. But mom had a different head space.”⁶⁶

Children also contributed to the household economy through chores and, in some cases remunerated labour, in ways that seemed to echo their parents’ gendered division of labour. Bernadine had a garden at Kelly’s Point at one time, where she grew potatoes that were consumed in the home. She – along with her brother – also worked at the tuna cannery when she was 14 or 15.⁶⁷ Clarissa helped her mother with the cooking and housecleaning when she was older and her brother used to make the kindling and bring it into the house.⁶⁸ One of the cows in the village was owned by the White family. They sold milk to the convent, and one of the things Ellen was “expected to do” was take the milk to the convent.⁶⁹ In general, however, Ellen did not help out in the home a great deal. She was “not ever really made to do anything” and her mother did not teach her to cook, stating; “Don’t learn and you’ll never have to,” according to Ellen. Her brothers, on the other hand, helped her father, planting potatoes, cutting wood for the winter and

⁶⁵ B.M., p. 122.

⁶⁶ E.R., p. 37, 47. Clarissa also remembers going swimming with “Aunt Molly.” C.L., p. 15.

⁶⁷ B.M., pp. 125, 129.

⁶⁸ C.L., p. 6.

⁶⁹ E.R., p. 42.

cutting the hay.⁷⁰ Her oldest brother stopped attending school as a teenager in order to work. “They took Clem out of school when he was 14 and put him in the boat, so he was a man then.”⁷¹

Although Michael was never taken out of school to work, he did engage in various activities – both paid and unpaid – that contributed to the family income and economy or provided him with personal spending money. Michael and his siblings would help his mother in the house, drying dishes and sweeping the floor. He also remembers carrying coal in from their store, “an old building on the property” that was his grandfather’s boat building workshop, and having to knit lobster nets. It “was just expected.”⁷² He would also cut wood in an area around The Barachois Pond (towards Kelly’s Point) where his family owned woodland. “We would go over there and cut the wood, throw it down over the cliff from the Barachois Pond, then haul it out to the shore and bring it back on the sleds in the winter, before the ice would break up.” When he was 7-or-8 years old, Michael spent a summer working at the tuna cannery. He was paid 15 cents an hour and the money earned “went home.” A few years latter, he worked again at the factory for 30 cents an hour, which by this time was salting, rather than canning, fish. “All one summer, on my vacation, I salted codfish.”⁷³

Michael also carried groceries, water and wood for “about 5 different families” in the village. He did this all year round and would usually be paid 50 cents a week and would give the money to his parents. He “was allowed to keep a little bit,” which he used to purchase new fenders, a seat and blue paint for his bicycle. He also painted a

⁷⁰ E.R., pp. 44-5.

⁷¹ E.R., p. 48.

⁷² M.D., pp. 72-3, 75, 77.

⁷³ M.D., pp. 108-9.

neighbours house when he was 12-years-old. He was paid 30 dollars – after some nerve-wracking negotiations with the owner – and gave “about 20 of it” to his parents. He bought a summer jacket and a pair of sneakers with part of the remaining money. “The rest went down to the tea room for hamburgers and hot dogs.”⁷⁴ Michael’s older brothers also worked. They had lobster traps when they were teenagers, which they would look after before or after school. “That would just help out with the income for the family.”⁷⁵

Although four families are not necessarily representative of the entire village, it seems that – with the exception of Bernadine who worked in the tuna cannery one summer – boys were more likely to contribute to the family income through monetary payments received in return for their labour. Girls, on the other hand, helped out in the home. They often learned skills such as rug hooking, sewing and cooking informally from their mothers or other female family members. Clarissa’s Aunt Rebecca (Reebe), for instance, “always had a rug up in her kitchen” and Clarissa “used to fool around with it.”⁷⁶ Ellen probably learned to sew from “being around” Reebe, who was also her aunt, and was taught to knit by her mother. “I remember one time picking up my mother’s knitting and starting to knit on it and not doing it correctly and she just said, ‘This is the way,’ and now I can knit.”⁷⁷

It is difficult to determine the extent to which there might have been people in the village who were unable or unwilling to work. There were people that, according to Clarissa, would be considered “street people” today. Although they “always found a

⁷⁴ M.D., pp. 103.

⁷⁵ M.D., pp. 101-2. Like Michael, his brothers also kept part of the money for themselves. They bought clothes and bicycles as well.

⁷⁶ C.L., p. 3.

⁷⁷ E.R., p. 46.

place to live,” they were “sort-of...drinkers, and they didn’t have any money.”⁷⁸

Clarissa’s father had people in this category accompany him during the winter when he was the lighthouse keeper on Betty Island. They were paid to go out, “just to have somebody else with you.” On the other hand, Michael did not remember there being people in the village that did not work or could not work. He notes that “everyone worked, they all fished. They would just keep fishing until they had a heart attack or a stroke or just got too old to go in the boat anymore.”⁷⁹ He also notes that people were able to live with little income if necessary because all the homes in the village were 100 to 150 years old and had no mortgages. “I imagine the maintenance was very low on them. They didn’t have the money to paint them or anything like that.”⁸⁰

Other examples from the interviews give further indication of the existence of relative poverty or wealth and of social classes in the village. People who were better off might be better educated – in one family the “girls had been educated at schools in Halifax” – or have nicer clothes, nicer furniture or perhaps a car.⁸¹ Michael felt that one family was respected more due to their wealth. “I remember when they would come to church on Sunday. They were always...the last ones to come in.” No one would sit in their seat at the front of the church. “They would walk up with all their finery. Everyone had a respect for them.”⁸² According to Clarissa, some people, for instance store owners, were better off than others. She felt, however, that her family was “probably about the same” as other families in the village in terms of wealth or poverty, thus revealing a sense that income disparities were not generally significant in the village. Bernadine – whose

⁷⁸ C.L., p. 12

⁷⁹ M.D., p. 107.

⁸⁰ M.D., pp. 107-8.

⁸¹ M.D., p. 106.

family was poor as the result of a house fire when she was a child – remembers that she did not receive a basket at Easter as other children did, and that her family never bought apples from the apple truck in the fall.⁸³ “If someone bought a barrel of apples, well you knew that there was money there.”⁸⁴ She also remembers that, although other people had more money, they “never bragged about it.”

As hinted at by Bernadine, the differences in income levels were not necessarily perceived as a divisive social class issue. “It wasn’t anything about social class,” Ellen also observes. Although her family was “cash poor,” they owned their own home and had plenty to eat. “We never felt like poor people.” This sentiment is echoed by the other people interviewed. Clarissa, for instance, observes that her family was poor and never had any money, but they were always well fed. Michael also felt that his family “always seemed to eat well” and points out that they “always had dessert, every meal.” Bernadine also states that, although her family was financially poor, they had “lots of love” and “food enough to eat.”⁸⁵

Just as the people interviewed emphasized plenty over poverty within their own families, they also did not define Prospect as a poor community. Bernadine in fact, describes Prospect in opposite terms, as a “vibrant” and “thriving” community, both economically and in terms of leisure activities. She notes the presence at different times of a dance hall (The Bowery), a bowling alley and a tea room. Her parents “loved to dance” and would go to the Bowery, where local fiddlers and other musicians provided

⁸² M.D., p. 106.

⁸³ Ellen also remembers “people with big Easter baskets full of all kinds of things,” but reflects that “she didn’t think anything” of not receiving one. She connects her not receiving a basket to her mother’s feeling that children should not be spoiled. E.R., p. 58.

⁸⁴ B.M., p. 146.

⁸⁵ E.R., p. 58. C.L., p. 7, M.D., p. 78, B.M., p. 126.

live music.⁸⁶ Michael's mother also loved dancing, and his uncle was a "great dancer" who would "call the square dances, the sets," at dances in the community hall.⁸⁷ People also socialized more informally. Ellen's mother played penny poker in the summer with seasonal residents and her father gathered with other men in the evenings on a neighbours bench or bought beer for ten cents a glass from Ellen's Aunt Nenna.⁸⁸ Clarissa's father played the juke harp and her brother played banjo and guitar and they would have jam sessions in people's houses. "There was always lots of music around."⁸⁹

Bernadine also describes the villagers as resourceful people – if they didn't have something they needed, they would invent it or build it – who helped one another. "The whole village, actually, was just nothing but love. Love and helping one another. It was a marvelous place."⁹⁰ Unlike Bernadine, however, who emphasized people helping one another, Michael saw families as being independent, noting that at home, "everyone was quite independent" and "would look after their own household." He did, however, state that if someone was sick, "they would cook something for them and send it," or if "someone did need help, with their fishing boats or anything like that, then they would help."⁹¹ It is difficult to assess the extent to which the difference between Michael and Bernadine is one of perception or actual experience. For instance, due to her social standing, gender or personality, Bernadine might perceive the same activities (giving meals to a sick neighbour, for instance) as more of an indication of inter-dependence in the community than Michael. Conversely, Michael's actual family experience might have been one of greater independence.

⁸⁶ B.M., p. 130.

⁸⁷ M.D., p. 86.

⁸⁸ E.R., p. 47. Adults also read and listened to the radio for enjoyment.

⁸⁹ C.L., p. 11.

Illness did appear to be a matter that required both self-sufficiency and the help and support of neighbours. Michael's mother, Francis, used to mix together "molasses and ginger and dry mustard and onion" for a sore throat. "It cured the throat because it tasted so bad I think that you willed your throat to be better..."⁹² For more serious health matters, people often relied on "Aunt Stase," who would do everything from making mustard poultices and bandaging up cuts to delivering babies.⁹³ Nurses and doctors, probably from the Department of Health, would also go to the school periodically to vaccinate the children.⁹⁴

Going to Halifax to see a doctor, however, was "about the last resort."⁹⁵ Clarissa remembers playing with mercury in the lighthouse on Betty Island. The mercury, used to float the light, was kept in a supply room in the lighthouse. Sometimes a bit of mercury would spill and Clarissa and her siblings would "gather it all up into big jelly things, that's what it looked like," or "separate it, and it would all go to beads." She became very ill and all the skin peeled off her hands as a result of poisoning from the mercury. "I got so sick that they brought me in off the island. I mean, you had to be sick for them to do that." She wasn't, however, considered to be sick enough to be taken to the hospital. "They didn't take you to hospital in those days. They just crossed their fingers and hoped for the best."⁹⁶

⁹⁰ B.M., pp. 139-140.

⁹¹ M.D., pp.104-5.

⁹² M.D., p. 72.

⁹³ M.D., p. 105 & C.L., p, 31.

⁹⁴ C.L., p. 31 & E.R., p. 43. The *Carmelita* also makes note of a September 16, 1941 visit from Doctor Morton of Halifax – accompanied by "Miss Wade, the county nurse, and her mother" – in which both children and adults were "inoculated." *Carmelita* 1941/2, p. 7.

⁹⁵ M.D., p. 105.

⁹⁶ C.L., p. 31.

The fear of fire was also a concern to Prospect residents. Houses were made of wood and there was no Fire Station up the road to help out in an emergency. Ellen's father "never went to bed with a fire on the stove" unless it was a "very, very cold night." Then, he would sit up and keep the fire going.⁹⁷ Michael also remembers it being cold – with single pane windows and no insulation in the house. "But my father would never go to bed at night in the winter if there was any – even grey coals – left in the stove...He would sit up until they just burnt out and then there would be no heat at all in the house. Until the next morning when he would get up early and start the fire."⁹⁸

For Bernadine's family, the threat of fire became a reality. Her house burned down on Christmas Eve when she was only four-years-old. Bernadine remembers her brother lamenting the loss of "all those cakes and pies" that her mother had made for Christmas.⁹⁹ All of her family members escaped after being alerted by the family dog, but their home and all its contents were destroyed. "We were very poor, because of the fire...we lost everything. We had a lovely house, and nice furniture...The money was gone, everything was gone. We had to start from scratch."¹⁰⁰

Another cause of concern for children growing up in Prospect – and their parents – was the Second World War. For Ellen, Clarissa and Michael, the war would have been among their earliest memories. Ellen remembers "people being quiet and worried about it" and following the war on a map in the kitchen and on the radio.¹⁰¹ She also remembers having nightmares about the war. "The Germans were landing on the Government Wharf

⁹⁷ E.R., p. 39.

⁹⁸ M.D., p. 78.

⁹⁹ B.M., p. 119.

¹⁰⁰ B.M., p. 126.

¹⁰¹ E.R., p. 40.

and coming up in the village.”¹⁰² Michael also recalls feeling afraid and feeling that the war was very close. “I was terrified. Every evening when it was time for me to go to bed, the war news would come on. The announcer, his name was Gabriel Heater...had such a serious voice.” As a young child of four or five, he didn’t “understand how far away” the war was and he used to think – like Ellen – that the Germans were going to land and shoot at them.¹⁰³

Michael and Ellen’s fears about Germans being on their doorstep were not entirely unfounded. German U-boats patrolled the waters off North America from North Carolina to Newfoundland during the Second World War – in particular after the United States entered the war at the end of 1941 – and would attack merchant ships carrying supplies. The war did in fact reach Prospect when rations from torpedoed supply ships leaving Halifax Harbour washed ashore. “We thought it was great fun to get them, but we didn’t realize that people were dying,” Ellen recalls. Bernadine notes that “it was sort-of good for us, because there were rations for us too,” and Michael remembers that people around the village “lived better than they ever lived.”¹⁰⁴ The cargo consisted of rations of “breakfast, dinner and supper done up in little packages.” The packages included loose tea, ovaltine, jelly beans, a chocolate bar, “little cans with beans and weiners...gallon cans with egg powder” and “two cigarettes for each daily ration.”¹⁰⁵ There was also jam and “great big blocks of lard” that people would use to make dough-nuts.¹⁰⁶

The wreckage would result in oil spills, making the lard black, covering rocks with oil and killing seabirds. “The rocks up along the shore, they were black for 20 years

¹⁰² E.R., p. 40.

¹⁰³ M.D., p. 89.

¹⁰⁴ E.R., p. 41. , B.M, p. 150 & M.D., p. 89.

¹⁰⁵ M.D., p. 89.

after. The oil, it was just like tar. It coated everything.”¹⁰⁷ The fish were also affected by the spills, which in turn affected the village economically. “My dad was an inshore fisherman like everyone else and lobster catches were completely ruined sometimes because they were covered in oil.”¹⁰⁸

In a trunk belonging to her mother, Ellen recently found a deteriorated can of plum jam with the year 1942 marked on it.¹⁰⁹ The *Carmelita* also makes one reference to men from Prospect “hooking in lumps of lard” from the ocean from “remnants of a wreck” in March, 1942.¹¹⁰ Although U-boat attacks occurred from 1942 to the end of the war, it is interesting to note that the height of this activity (“Operation Drumbeat”) was in 1942.¹¹¹ Bernadine’s – who would have been about 12-years-old that year, also spoke of the lard coming ashore. Clarissa, Michael and Ellen, however, would have been very young in 1942 (2 or 3-years-old). Given the dramatic nature of the event, it is possible that they remember it. It seems more likely, however, that rations washed ashore in Prospect more than once, which would mean that their memories of the rations were from the final years of the war.¹¹²

The impact of the oil spills on the local fishery is just one – albeit a devastating one – example of the many ways in which village inhabitants interacted with their

¹⁰⁶ E.R., p. 41 & B.M., p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ M.D., p. 89 & E.R., p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ E.R., p. 41.

¹⁰⁹ E.R., p. 41.

¹¹⁰ *Carmelita*, 1941/42, p. 11.

¹¹¹ By January of 1942, for instance, there was a “heavy concentration” of U-boats” off the North American seaboard from New York to Cape Race. One month later, most of the 154 ships lost by Allied forces had been attacked in the Western Atlantic. See Andrew Williams, *The Battle of the Atlantic: Hitler’s Gray Wolves of the Sea and the Allies’ Desperate Struggle to Defeat Them* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), pp. 164, 174.

¹¹² In December, 1944, for instance, a freighter and a minesweeper were sunken by a U-boat “in the approaches to Halifax” and five freighters were sunken “in the same area” in January, 1945 by a different U-boat. See Werner Hirschmann, with Donald E. Graves, *Another Place, Another Time: A U-Boat Officer’s Wartime Album* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2004), p. 164.

environment. Although, as we have seen, Prospect was primarily a fishing community, people also had woodlots, kept livestock, cultivated hay and grew potatoes and other vegetables, thus altering the physical landscape. They also picked berries and banked ponds for skating and cut stones from the granite barrens to use as foundations for their homes.¹¹³ There were houses, not only in the present-day village of Prospect, but also in Kelly's Point, with trails connecting the two. People lived close to both land and sea, interacting extensively with, and in some cases modifying, their environment. That having been said, the human interaction with the environment appears to have been relatively harmonious and sustainable. While the landscape was affected, it was not completely or drastically altered.

The close relationship to the natural surroundings of Prospect is reflected in the variety of place names used by village residents in their reference to hills, coves, fields, ponds, beaches, banks and bridges. Many of these – such as Merlin's Bank, Hardiman's Bridge, Arthur's Field, Tobin's Field, White's Fields, Coolen's Hill, Kiley's Hill, Kelly's Point, Mason's Point, Benny's Pond, Hardiman's Pond and Sister's Pond – have their origins in individual or family names. The later, Sister's Pond, refers to the pond beside the original residence of the Sister's of Charity, presently a Bed and Breakfast. Others – such as Sandy Cove, Back Beach, Birchy Hill, Milestump Hill and Clothes Bushes – are more descriptive in nature. Clothes Bushes, for instance, literally refers to a place where people used to hang their clothes to dry.¹¹⁴

Children had room to roam in the village, and many of the above places were venues for favourite games and pastimes. They used to play baseball “up the shore” in

¹¹³ M.D., pp., 74, 82 & E.R., p. 60.

Arthur's Field and at the other end of the village – past Kiley's Hill – in Tobin's Field, as well as in people's yards. They swam in a swimming hole “sort-of on the way to the Barachois” and at Sandy Cove, up Birchy Hill (“now they call it Indian Point Road”).¹¹⁵ They also played games like Hide-and-Seek, Hoist-the-Sail, Red-Rover, Kick-the-Can, Pussy-in-the-Corner and Tiddly at Merlin's Bank and throughout the village during lunch hour and in the evenings after school.¹¹⁶

In the winter, “there wasn't much going on,” but they would go skating in Benny's Pond, by the Government wharf, and Sister's Pond and The Old Dyke Pond, by Clarissa's house.¹¹⁷ Bernadine and her siblings would come home from school sometimes to find a note from her parents: “Bring your skates, come over and meet us at the Barachois,” and they would all go skating.¹¹⁸ Children would also go “coasting” or sledding down Coolen's Hill in the winter. “Just on the main road, because they weren't paved then. Three or four cars, that was all.”¹¹⁹

The profile in the preceding paragraphs leaves out the religious component of village life in Prospect. At the time of the study, it seems that Prospect was entirely a Catholic community. “When I was growing up, everyone was Catholic in this village,” Bernadine notes, “and they all went to church. It was a pre-requisite.”¹²⁰ The Catholic Church was described in the interviews as “the centre of the whole village” and as “a

¹¹⁴ M.D., p. 82. For the mention of various place names, see C.L., pp. 8, 11, 12, 15, 20, 27, 28, 33, E.R., pp. 36, 47, 60, M.D., pp. Pp. 14, 19 & B.M., p. 23.

¹¹⁵ B.M., p. 141. E.R., p. 47.

¹¹⁶ M.D., p. 87-8 & B.M., p. 140-1.

¹¹⁷ C.L., p. 27.

¹¹⁸ B.M., p. 129.

¹¹⁹ M.D., p. 101.

¹²⁰ B.M., p. 149. Michael also notes that everyone “living here at the time” was Catholic. M.D., p. 94. There was some confusion surrounding this during the interviews. I was aware that there were Merlins in the village at some point. They would have descended from the “foreign Protestant” Merlins that arrived in Nova Scotia in the 18th century. It seems, however, that the Prospect Merlins all converted to Catholicism, although the reasons for this and the time frames involved are unclear and would require further research.

very influential organization,” with most community activities being connected to the church.¹²¹ Many of these activities were parish fund-raisers, with the main event being the annual summer picnic. The funds would be used for the maintenance of parish buildings – including the church, community hall, rectory and convent – and other cost associated with the work of the parish.¹²²

During the annual picnic, men would donate lobsters for a supper. Women would prepare “mashed potatoes and peas and the white sauce” and pies for dessert.¹²³ Ellen can remember her mother spending the day in the kitchen with other women and not being able to sleep at night, because “her legs would be in such a state from standing on them” all day.¹²⁴ Michael remembers that he, and other teenagers, would also help out at the picnic, carrying water, washing dishes, carrying the garbage out and cleaning up.¹²⁵ People contributed items for sale or raffle in outdoor booths such as embroidery, crocheted runners, canned goods and “odds and ends” from people’s homes such as glasses and cups.¹²⁶ “Oh, yes, everyone donated everything. Then you’d go down and you’d buy the stuff back again.”¹²⁷ There were also games such as Sword and Anchor and darts and bingo and square dancing at night.¹²⁸

There were two main societies associated with the church: The Holy Name Society for men and Children of Mary for women. The men were involved in “work

¹²¹ B.M., p. 134 & E.R., p. 56.

¹²² E.R., p. 56 & B.M., p. 148.

¹²³ B.M., p. 148.

¹²⁴ E.R., p. 56.

¹²⁵ M.D., p. 110.

¹²⁶ M.D., p. 110, B.M., p. 148, E.R., p. 56.

¹²⁷ B.M., p. 148.

¹²⁸ B.M., p. 148 & M.D., pp. 86, 110. Michael refers to one of the games as “Crown and Anchor” rather than “Sword and Anchor.”

around the church” such as maintenance and repairs.¹²⁹ The women would be responsible for church linen and were also “assistants to the sisters and priests,” helping with prayers and the preparation of First Communions and Confirmations.¹³⁰ Bernadine remembers “collecting flowers” as a “junior” Children of Mary. Both societies had banners that they would carry during church events, such as the annual May Procession which included the “blessing of the boats” and “crowning of Our Lady.”¹³¹

The Church played a key role in the transmission and instilling of values to families in the community. Clarissa, for instance, spoke of the importance of the Ten Commandments in her home and of the “nuns” teaching them to respect “all the elders in the village.”¹³² When asked about her parent’s teaching “what’s important in life,” Bernadine responded, “I guess the Church was the biggest thing there.”¹³³ The priest was a central figure in the Church and the community, exerting significant influence. Clarissa remembers the priest as “the boss man,” who was never questioned.¹³⁴ He would take teenagers back to their homes, for instance, if he saw them “scoutin’ around.”¹³⁵ Bernadine recalls that some of the priests were strict, “but they were good” and “taught us so much.”

The priests also provided leadership for village activities not directly related to the church, such as the introduction of street lights and the paving of the road to Halifax. “Father Lanigan would say, ‘We’re going to have a meeting in the hall’ ... He would have some information to feed back” to people, who would then discuss the issue and

¹²⁹ M.D., pp. 109-110.

¹³⁰ B.M., p. 147.

¹³¹ M.D., p. 110. For photos of the Holy Name Society, see page 34.

¹³² C.L., p. 13.

¹³³ B.M., p. 134.

¹³⁴ C.L., p. 24.

¹³⁵ C.L., p. 24.

“agree, disagree or whatever.”¹³⁶ Father Mahar was also involved in getting the road to Halifax paved, apparently exerting both secular and spiritual pressure. Michael sometimes accompanied Father Mahar on his daily trips to Halifax to buy a newspaper and fresh fish. Father Mahar would “stick a medal of St. Joseph down in the mud” whenever he came to a bad spot on the road, accompanied by a prayer to protect them from getting stuck and a prayer to get the road paved.¹³⁷

The sister’s main role in the community was the running of the school, but they were involved in other activities, in particular related to individual kindness and charity. Bernadine remembers her family receiving fruit from the sisters when someone was sick. “I don’t know if other people got these bags of fruit also, but I know we always did.”¹³⁸ Michael also made reference to the “quiet charity” of the sisters, helping people that needed clothing for instance. “But it was always very quiet. No one would want you to know that they had to accept charity.”¹³⁹

Like the priests, the sisters could also be known to exert discipline outside of school hours. “I can remember Sister Beatrix coming out on the front step of the convent and saying, ‘Ellen White you go home’ into the dark.”¹⁴⁰ This would not necessarily have been considered unusual, however. Adults in the village often assumed responsibility for the care and discipline of children in the village. According to Clarissa, if “you were somewhere you shouldn’t be, someone would tell you. ‘Scoot along home now.’”

Michael also remembers that “all the adults around the village” would look out for them

¹³⁶ B.M., p. 147.

¹³⁷ M.D., p. 112.

¹³⁸ B.M., p. 139.

¹³⁹ M.D., p. 113.

¹⁴⁰ E.R., p. 52.

when they played as children. “They could all bawl you out or go home to your parents and tell on you. The parents weren’t upset.”¹⁴¹

In general, although the sisters sometimes “over-stepped,” and the priests could be authoritative, parents seemed to approve of the priests and sisters and were appreciative of their work in the community.¹⁴² Clarissa’s parents, for instance, “thought that the nuns were wonderful” and according to Bernadine, her parents were “really happy with the teachers, the sisters, and all that they were teaching us.”

As was mentioned, the main role of the Sisters of Charity revolved around the running of the school. There were at least three sisters living in the village at a given time. One was the housekeeper and cook in the convent and the other two taught in the school. Our Lady of Mount Carmel School occupied two rooms – “the little class and the big class” – on the second floor of the parish, or community, hall. Children from primary to grade 5 received instruction in the “little classroom” and grade 6 to grade 11 students were instructed by the Sister Superior in the other classroom.¹⁴³ There was no grade 12 in the school, although some students chose to write provincial examinations in Halifax in order to receive their High School Diploma.¹⁴⁴

The teacher assigned work by moving from one grade to another. She would spend 15 to 20 minutes with students in one grade – maybe 5 or 6 children but sometimes as few as 2 or 3 – before moving on to the next grade. “During our French class,” Michael recalls, “all the other classes would be there, they’d be doing their work. We

¹⁴¹ C.L., p. 21 & M.D., p. 100. See also, B.M., p. 150.

¹⁴² C.L., p. 19, M.D., p. 95, B.M., p. 144. Ellen’s household was an exception. Her mother thought the sisters “were wonderful” and she was “very fond of Father Lanigan.” Her father had had a negative experience with a “very domineering” and “abusive” priest as a teenager in which the priest broke his nose. As a result, he did not go to church, although he “didn’t talk against them” either. E.R., p. 53.

¹⁴³ C.L., p. 15 & E.R., p. 51.

would have to stand up and read our translations and you'd hear the older ones snickering... We didn't mind it because we were used to it."¹⁴⁵ Various grade levels sharing the same classroom could create a stimulating learning environment. "When you're in a class with all those other grades, it's fascinating," Ellen remembers. "Because if your class, your grade is doing something boring, you can listen to everyone else. It was great. I knew all the stories they were doing in the readers."¹⁴⁶

There were perhaps 40 to 50 students in total in the school at any given time.¹⁴⁷ The school followed the Department of Education curriculum, teaching regular school subjects such as English, history, geography, science and mathematics. Latin, German and French also were taught in the school at different times. Religion was taught as a school subject. Michael remembers question and answers sessions based on the Baltimore Catechism during religion class. In the higher grades, saints and Virgins such as Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Guadalupe were studied through the discussion of readings. Clarissa recalls studying the Ten Commandments and the Virgin Mary and having to write exams in religion class, but always receiving a mark of 100 percent.¹⁴⁸

The school had "exercise classes" that involved 15 minutes of "stretching and breathing" and the students also did arts and crafts.¹⁴⁹ At Christmas time, older children

¹⁴⁴ M.D., p. 96. Although the school did not grant diplomas, it did have graduation exercises. See page 30 of the report, for instance, for a description of the 1942 graduation exercises in the *Carmelita*.

¹⁴⁵ M.D., p. 98. See also B.M., p. 136.

¹⁴⁶ E.R., p. 51.

¹⁴⁷ Ellen recalls that there "were only 40 students in the whole school when I finished." E.R., p. 51. Bernadine guessed that there were "maybe fifty." B.M., p. 138. Bernadine also noted that, when she was in the upper grades, students from White's Lake and Shad Bay attended the Prospect school for a "short period of time." That would have been in the mid-to-late 1940s. B.M., p. 138. Michael echoes this memory, noting that the "kids from Shad Bay and White's Lake" attended the Prospect school for a few years before they built a school in Shad Bay in the early fifties. M.D., p. 96. To place the number of students in the school in context, recall that, according to the *Atlantic Advocate* article reviewed previously, there were approximately 160 people living in Prospect in 1950. See page 25 of the report.

¹⁴⁸ M.D., p. 97 & C.L., p. 17.

¹⁴⁹ M.D., p. 100.

were “expected to make Christmas things for the little ones.” Boys from the older grades would drop “notes from the fairies” on the smaller children by climbing along the attic. This was “a wonderful thing that happened at that school” according to Ellen. “The idea that you’re responsible for the pleasure of someone, of smaller children.”¹⁵⁰ There was also an annual concert, or pageant, at Christmas time that included singing and dancing – Irish reels and the Flamberout Sword Dance for instance.¹⁵¹ There were not many clubs organized through the school, although Bernadine remembers her mother starting a Garment Club in which girls’ sewing projects were judged.¹⁵² There was a school choir, and Clarissa remembers going to Halifax with Sister Beatrix to sing in festivals.¹⁵³

Other school outings were closer to home. Michael remembers “being allowed out early” and going with the sisters to the High Head to pick cranberries. They raised enough money to purchase a record player. The records, “old 78s, with marches on them,” would be played at noontime and all the school kids “would line up outside, two by two, and march in the hall and up the stairs.”¹⁵⁴ Bernadine also tells the story – quoted at the beginning of the report – of going “up the shore” to pick cranberries in Mr. Hardiman’s field. In her generation, it was an outing that was long enough to involve stopping for lunch, but not long enough to pick all the berries, given that they returned the following day for more. Although Bernadine did not recall the amount of money raised, she did remember that the funds were used to buy school desks.

¹⁵⁰ E.R., p. 52.

¹⁵¹ B.M., pp. 143, 149.

¹⁵² B.M., p. 122. The *Carmelita* also describes the activities of the Garment Club. See pages 29-30 of the report.

¹⁵³ C.L., p. 19.

¹⁵⁴ M.D., p. 99.

The story of student's picking cranberries also appears in the *Carmelita, Annals of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School*.¹⁵⁵ From the *Carmelita* story, we know when the expedition took place as well as the routes taken by the boys and girls, respectively. We also know that they stopped for lunch after picking berries, thus making it an activity that took place during the middle of the day rather than after school. Finally, we know how many berries were picked, the price received for them, and the fact that the group returned the next day for more berries.

It is likely that these two stories refer to the same two days of berry picking by the teachers and students of the village school in Prospect. Both stories involved picking cranberries in Mr. Hardiman's field "up the shore," both involved a picnic lunch and in both stories the group returned for a second day of cranberry picking. It is perhaps interesting to note that the *Carmelita* account is recounted as a story and as such has a similar narrative tone (for instance, through the use of dialogue) present in Bernadine's story. In a follow-up meeting with Bernadine, she felt that the two stories did in fact refer to the same berry-picking expedition. The *Carmelita* thus corroborates Bernadine's story. It also adds specific details, such as the route taken by the boys and girls to Mr. Hardiman's cranberry field, the size of the bog, the amount of cranberries picked and the price obtained for the berries. Bernadine's account also provides details of the outing not present in the written source, such as the challenge put to Sister Ellen Vincent by Mr. Hardiman to pick a lot of berries as well as information on how the money raised was utilized. The two accounts thus provide a good example of the potential for oral and written sources to complement one another, not only providing mutual corroboration but also combining to present a more detailed outline of an event.

¹⁵⁵ See review of written archival documents in the report, pp. 30-31.

The sisters are generally remembered as good educators, both creative and kind. Discipline was generally firm but fair. On her first day of school, Ellen remembers “sitting in a very small desk and being expected to sit there and be quiet, which was not really what I was used to.” She goes on to say, however, that she did learn and that “school was a good experience.”¹⁵⁶ Ellen feels that the students at the school had “a tremendous advantage” in being taught by the sisters, many of whom were well educated and well traveled women. Sister Beatrix, for instance, who taught Ellen in the upper grades, had a master’s degree.¹⁵⁷ Bernadine notes the kindness of most of the sisters, who would take them to the convent during recess for a glass of milk.¹⁵⁸

Michael tells some colourful anecdotes that reveal a school atmosphere relaxed enough for a bit of mischief. In one story, for instance, the children would tell Sister Beatrix – who was afraid of thunder and lightening – that the noon radio forecast had called for a storm in the afternoon. “So, she would start looking out the windows, and she’d say, ‘Oh, well, I do see a cloud. Oh, maybe we should go home before it starts.’” In another tale, he describes how the boys had to go to the basement of the hall to get coal for the stove and how they would put water in the coal hods, or buckets. “The coal would be wet and the water in them would start smouldering, and smouldering the gases and all of a sudden the cover would blow off of the stove [and] the classroom would fill up with smoke. They would have to let us outside for a half-hour or so...”¹⁵⁹

Children in the lower grades would be sent to the big classroom to receive a lecture from the Sister Superior as a disciplinary measure and the “embarrassment of

¹⁵⁶ E.R., p. 42.

¹⁵⁷ E.R., p. 52.

¹⁵⁸ B.M., p. 139.

¹⁵⁹ M.D., p. 95.

going over there in front of all the big kids” could be discipline enough. Corporal punishment does not appear to have been used frequently in the school, although Michael remembers getting a “crack on the hand once by Sister Beatrix” and Ellen remembers “getting spanked” for talking aloud.¹⁶⁰ Bernadine, who would have started school almost ten years earlier than Michael, also remembers that, with the exception of her primary teacher, Sister Geraldina, the sisters would discipline by giving “a little talk” rather than through physical disciplinary measures. They would say “things such as: ‘Don’t do it anymore. You’re supposed to go to church. You’re supposed to behave.’”¹⁶¹

The sister’s reference to the Church as a disciplinary tactic highlights the role of the school in the transmission of values, not only through the formal study of religion, but also through their approach to discipline and education in general. The values taught in church, thus, were reinforced through the school. When asked about values transmitted through the school, Michael also makes reference to the church. He remembers that “hard work and obedience” came through the school but also the Catholic community. “There was mass every morning. I was an altar boy from the time I was 6, 7-years-old. So you would have to take turns serving mass every morning...the Church was a big part of just daily...living.”¹⁶² In a close-knit community such as Prospect, there was in fact a triangle between home, church and school in which each had the potential to reinforce the values taught in the other. When asked about manners, punctuality and tidiness in the school, for instance, Clarissa responded that they “had all those values, but we had those values

¹⁶⁰ M.D., p. 93 & E.R., p. 41.

¹⁶¹ B.M., p. 139. Bernadine notes that Sister Geraldina – who would “beat people with long pointers” – was an exception in terms of discipline and “wouldn’t even be allowed to teach children” today.

¹⁶² M.D., p. 94.

at home too, so it was just a continuation.”(As was noted previously, when asked about discipline in the home, Clarissa spoke of the Ten Commandments.)¹⁶³

Our lady of Mount Carmel school closed in the late 1950s, although the exact date of the closing was the source of some confusion due to a discrepancy between the dates given by the interviewees and the closing date given on the written sources reviewed. The Prospect Genealogical Website, for instance, gives the closing date of the school as 1959, the same year that Atlantic Memorial School opened in Shad Bay.¹⁶⁴ Two of the people interviewed were not sure of the exact closing date of the Prospect school, but felt it had to be earlier than 1959. Clarissa, for instance, was sure it could not have been 1959 because that was the date of her marriage. She had stopped going to school at least a few years prior to her marriage and was among the last students to attend the school.¹⁶⁵

Another interviewee, Ellen Ryan, also thought the school closed earlier. “I finished school in ’56 and I think about ’58 that school closed.”¹⁶⁶ The Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Halifax, were contacted in July, 2004, to see if they had any official record of the closing of the school. Patti Bannister, Congregational Archivist for the Sisters of Charity responded with the following information:

Your... question regarding the date of the closure of the school is a bit of a maze to sort out. From notes on the history of the mission by Sister M. Geraldina, “In 1957 the Prospect School closed and pupils attended Shad Bay School. They came by bus.” This is backed up by the Convent annals

¹⁶³ C.L., p. 18.

¹⁶⁴ On a chart in the “History of Prospect” section, the website states: “1959- Atlantic Memorial Elementary School opens in Shad Bay, The School in Prospect is closed” Smith, Nathaniel. “Welcome to the Prospect, Halifax County, Genealogical Website.” November, 2003. Online. Halifax County Genweb. Available: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~prospect.htm>, 16 January 2004. The “Digital Histories” website further added to the confusion by giving the closing date of the “Mount Carmel School in Upper Prospect” as 1948. Resource Opportunities Centre, “Digital Histories, Schools.” Online. Available: <http://chebucto.ns.ca/terencebayarea/history>, 2004.

¹⁶⁵ C.L., p. 16. Clarissa finished school in 1955, “or something around there” and remembers that as being the year “that the school closed,” with the children going up to Shad Bay after the closing.

¹⁶⁶ E.R., p. 50. Ellen remembers that Clarissa and Michael attended the school for one year after she did, which would mean they both finished school in June, 1957.

for 1957, which state that the school held its last graduation exercises in June 1957. In September 1957 the annals make reference to bus trips to the Shad Bay School.¹⁶⁷

Another interviewee, Michael Duggan, noted that a school, not Atlantic Memorial, was built in Shad Bay in the early fifties, but the children from Prospect did not attend this school at that time.¹⁶⁸ It seems possible, however, that children from Prospect may have attended this school in Shad Bay for the 1957-58 and 1958-9 school years, before Atlantic Memorial was built and after Our Lady of Mount Carmel School was closed. The question of the closing of the school remains somewhat of a maze, to use Patti Bannister's term. The journey through the maze is, however, an interesting one. Not only does it help to correctly document the historical record regarding the school – something of particular importance to the oral history project since this date was initially chosen as the cut-off date for the project – but it also constitutes another example of the way in which written and oral sources can be used.

One of the critiques of oral history involves skepticism regarding the “accuracy of human memory.”¹⁶⁹ It is interesting to note, however, that in this case it was the oral interviews that identified the inaccuracy of the 1959 closing date of the school. The interviewees used historical reference points that were personal – marriage in one case and the memory of other children attending the school in another – to negate the 1959 closing of the school. The Sisters of Charity Archives further confirmed this to be the case by pointing to 1957 as the closing date of the village school. This example highlights

¹⁶⁷ E-mail correspondence from Patti Bannister to Emily Burton, July 27, 2004.

¹⁶⁸ M.D., p. 96. Michael also notes that Atlantic Memorial was built “about a year or two after I graduated from grade 11,” which would be consistent with both Ellen's testimony that Michael attended the school until 1957 and the archival closing date of 1957. This would mean that Michael was in the last class to graduate from Our Lady of Mount Carmel School. The other students in the 1957 graduating class would have been Mary Kiley, Betty Christian and Nancy Ryan. See photo, Part I, p. 118.

¹⁶⁹ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, p. 27.

that oral history does not merely confirm written sources, but can in fact help clarify ambiguities and inaccuracies in the existing written record.

In some ways, the closing of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Prospect was part of the end of an era. Children no longer walked to school or went home to a hot mid-day meal. Parents had to put them on a bus and send them up the recently paved road to another community. According to Bernadine, this experience was “probably traumatic” for some mothers.¹⁷⁰ Ellen did not see the logic of consolidated schools, particularly in the higher grades when children had to travel long distances. “You take 2,000 children 35 miles from home, put them in the middle of nowhere and expect them to behave?”¹⁷¹ While acknowledging that the children who attended school in Shad Bay wouldn’t have the “close memories” that he and his peers had, Michael nonetheless felt that “going outside to school and then high school” was good because “it gave them the opportunity to meet kids in the surrounding area” and also gave them “a broader outlook on things” by not being so focused on Prospect.¹⁷²

The beginning of the era of consolidated school in the province occurred at a time when other significant changes were taking place in the Maritimes which would also have an impact on Prospect. The biggest of these involved the fishery, the economic backbone of the community. Ellen remembers her father pointing out an offshore fishing trawler to her from the pantry window and saying; “See that, that’s the end of the inshore fishery.” And, Ellen notes, “He was absolutely right.”¹⁷³ The decade of the 1950s did indeed mark the beginning of dramatic changes in the fishery. Large freezer trawlers

¹⁷⁰ B.M., p. 150.

¹⁷¹ E.R., p. 52.

¹⁷² M.D., p. 47.

focusing on the banks fishery tripled the cod catch in a few decades. Excessive fishing left few fishing resources for the inshore fisherman, who could either become “a labourer on a corporate trawler” or change occupations.¹⁷⁴ The death of the inshore fishery involved a shift, not just for fishermen who became wage earners (or unemployed) rather than self-employed independent fishers, but also for the village as a whole. Subsistence and barter activities, including domestic tasks such as raising chickens, making preserves or hooking mats, had been part of the economic life of the village that revolved around the inshore fishery. For most young people in Prospect, the fishery was no longer a viable long-term option.

Many sought employment in Halifax or elsewhere, a shift that was facilitated by another major change introduced in the community in the 1950s – the paving of the road to Halifax (which also allowed for the busing of children to consolidated schools). Only a select few – among them the priest – had a car until the 1950s. With the paving of the road, however, “different people started to buy cars” and they would commute back and forth to Halifax, taking neighbours who also obtained employment in the city as passengers. “I bought my first car in 1961,” Michael recalls. “I would have maybe four or five passengers that would travel with me everyday... They would pay me five dollars a week – three dollars a week at first – for gas, for the week’s transportation. That was just the normal thing for people to do. Every car that was in Prospect had a full load of passengers every day. No one drove to Halifax alone.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ E.R., p. 49.

¹⁷⁴ In fact, there was a 40% decline in the number of Atlantic Canadians fishers between 1951 and 1961. Alvin Finkel, Margaret Conrad and Veronica Strong-Boag, *History of the Canadian Peoples: 1867 to the Present* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, Pitman, 1993), p. 348.

¹⁷⁵ M.D., p. 116.

The close-knit community of the 1930s and 1940s (and before) thus began to give way to changes in the 1950s and subsequent decades. Although all four interviewees raised their children in Prospect, most of their children have chosen not to remain in the area as adults. The out-migration of that generation of Prospect children has been paralleled by an in-migration – the largest in-migration since the mid-18th century according to Ellen – of people that by and large do not have family connections in the village and live in Prospect but work elsewhere.

Clarissa, Ellen, Michael and Bernadine – all grandparents now – continue to live in Prospect, a community which has undergone significant change in the last half century but which still maintains continuity with its village roots. On balance, they all remember their Prospect childhoods with fondness. The portrait of Prospect that emerges from the interviews is one in which people, although economically poor and lacking adequate healthcare, emergency services and other modern conveniences, were relatively independent, self-sufficient and content. Most people owned their homes and had plenty to eat – often providing their own food through fishing, hunting, the keeping of animals, gardening and berry-picking. People were resourceful and neighbours helped each other as needed. The Catholic Church played a unifying role in the community, being involved in both religious and secular matters, and children received a well-rounded education through the village school. Children worked – household chores and, in some cases, part-time or seasonal jobs – but they also had plenty of time to attend Church picnics, participate in school concerts and outings, and play. Skating, sledding, swimming, playing baseball and games like Hide-and-Seek and Hoist-the-Sail while adults in the village – parents, nuns and priests – looked out for them.

Clarissa saw Prospect was “a family-oriented place” where children were looked after. Michael reflects that he did not feel he was “missing anything” as a child and that he has “close memories” of people living, socializing, working and playing together “right here in this community.” Ellen tells us that “all in all it’s been a wonderful place to live.” Bernadine sums up her childhood experience with the following observation: “I just think it was such a privilege for us to have the life that we had as children.”¹⁷⁶

The above portrait of Prospect in some ways coincides with, and in other ways is a departure from, the impression of the community conveyed through many of the written sources reviewed previously. The centrality of the Catholic Church in Prospect – the leadership of the priests, the charity and dedication of the Sisters and the general emphasis on religious values in the community – is conveyed through both the written documents and the oral interviews. As one would expect, the Church documents consulted do not include negative references to clergy. The oral interviews, on the other hand, do so on more than one occasion. In general, however, the interviews credit the Church with a positive social, religious and educational role in the community.

There is a greater discrepancy between the interviews and other archival sources in terms of the overall portrayal and characterization of the community, in particular with respect to the centrality of economic factors. The 1969 *Mail Star* article for instance, describes the village in the 1920s as “ominous” and on the “downgrade.” The other newspaper article from the mid-1960s, reporting on a study of ten local communities, describes the area as one that had been suffering for a long time, with “problems of unemployment, illiteracy and apathy.” In the annals of Our Lady of Mount Carmel school, the sisters also note the precarious nature of the fishery and the “crying need” for

¹⁷⁶ C.L., p. 21, M.D., p. 115, E.R., p. 66 & B.M., p. 154.

other industries in the village. They make a point of mentioning the opening of the tuna factory – owned by Mr. Thomas Christain according to the *Carmelita* – and the building of a new wharf at the factory. They also note the problem of out-migration in the village as people sought employment in the city.

With the contrast between oral and written sources seen in its sharpest light, Prospect is either a thriving close-knit and family-oriented community or an ominous, apathetic community with problems of unemployment and out-migration. The characterization of Prospect as apathetic stands in stark contrast to the image of the resourceful, independent people of Prospect with a strong sense of community that emerges from the oral history interviews. In other regards, however, the sources do not necessarily contradict each other, but they do offer up profiles of the village from different vantage points. While the written sources may be accurate in a strict socio-economic sense, they do not convey the richness and variation of the community that comes through in the personal reminiscences and colourful anecdotes present in the oral interviews. The oral sources thus provide valuable historical insights and information regarding Prospect as seen through the lens of childhood experiences. As such, the interviews represent an example of the importance of oral history in attempting to uncover a more accurate and more complete picture of the past.

CONCLUSION

The project *A Prospect Childhood* has attempted to explore the childhood experience of living in a Nova Scotian coastal community, primarily through adult reminiscences collected in one-on-one oral interviews. The project has also attempted to examine the process of generating historical sources based on oral history. The result of the project has been the creation of a portrait of Prospect, approximately between 1930 and 1960, with particular reference to the childhood experiences of home, school, community, work and leisure.

The reminiscences of childhood in Prospect reveal a small coastal community in which children were taught by religious sisters – often well educated and usually strict but also kind – in a village school located in the parish hall. Values were transmitted through the school, but also the home and the Catholic Church, which was central to the religious and social life of the community. Children had ample time and space to engage in leisure activities – usually outdoors – and were also expected to help out in the home and, in some cases, contribute to the family income. Mothers mostly worked in the home and fathers were fishermen, although they also sought paid employment in the city. The village began to change in the 1950s, when the introduction of consolidated schools coincided with dramatic changes in the inshore fishery and the paving of the road – all of which accelerated and accentuated village links to neighbouring communities, Halifax and beyond.

The term “portrait of Prospect” is used intentionally to emphasize that the interviews and report do not constitute *the* definitive description and analysis of childhood experiences in Prospect. Rather the image – or portrait – emerges from the memories and narratives of the people interviewed, from the additional primary and

secondary sources consulted, and from the emphasis given in the interpretation of the interviews. A change in any or all of these elements would have resulted in a portrait that would have been consistent with the present one in many respects, but which would also have deviated in many ways, perhaps significant, perhaps insignificant.

For instance, additional written archival sources – in particular from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese Archives and the Sisters of Charity Archives in Halifax – could have been consulted more extensively. Because the focus of the project was the collecting of oral histories on Prospect, however, other primary sources were consulted only to aid the interview and interpretation phases of the project. The written documents consulted did prove useful in establishing a historical context for the interviews and in corroborating or complementing information conveyed through the interviews. Contrasting the written and oral sources also helped highlight the value of oral history in providing information that would not likely be found elsewhere.

Four interviews were carried out for the project. A richer portrait of childhood experiences in Prospect would likely have emerged if a greater number of interviews had been carried out, in particular in terms of personal stories and opinions. For instance, it would have been advantageous to the project to include more people who began attending Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in the 1930s rather than 1940s. The four interviews, nonetheless, are rich in information, anecdote and opinion. They have the potential to refresh the memory or provide new mental pictures of Prospect past, depending on the listener or reader.

Much of the information regarding work, leisure and church and school activities is contained in more than one of the interviews and, in some cases, is also found in

existing written sources. Many of the stories recounted are more personal in nature, involving individual or home experiences. Clarissa playing with mercury in the lighthouse on Betty Island. Ellen stuffing candy wrappers in the comfy chair behind the stove. Michael buying blue paint for his bicycle with the money earned from house painting. Bernadine eating broken cookies at her uncle's house in Kelly's Point. These lively tales stand alone as personal reminiscences or memory claims that are internally consistent with other aspects of each interviewee's narrative.

Vignettes and stories such as the ones outlined above – and many more contained in the interviews – contribute significant nuance and colour to the broader narrative, in some cases providing insights that contrast sharply with existing archival sources. As such, they reveal the importance of oral history in the generation of historical knowledge with respect to local history.

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APPENDICES

- **Project Information Sheet – Prospect Community Library Presentation**
- **Project Information Sheet for Interviewees**
- **Interview Release Form**
- **Interview Questions**
- **Prospect Peninsula Resident's Association (PPRA) pamphlet**
- **Map of Prospect village and environs 1947**

Project Information Sheet – Prospect Community Library Presentation

A Prospect Childhood (Oral History Project, 2004)

What was it like to have lived in Prospect as a child in the 1940s and 1950s? The oral history project “A Prospect Childhood” explores this question against the backdrop of community life in general during this time period.

Materials such as newspaper articles, church documents, genealogy and digital history websites regarding Prospect -- as well as articles and books which provide information about Nova Scotia generally -- will be consulted during the first phase of the project.

The second phase of the project (April-May, 2004) aims to interview people who grew up in Prospect. Most of the people to be interviewed will have been children in Prospect in the 1940s and 1950s. The year 1960 is an approximate cut-off because the school, run by the Sisters of Charity, was closed in the late 1950s.

The main goal of the project is to have people tell their stories about growing up in Prospect so that the stories can become part of the documented history of the community. As such, the results of the project can become a historical resource for the community that will be available through the new Prospect Library.

If you would like to tell your story, please contact Emily Burton at 852-3920 or eburton@chebucto.ns.ca. I look forward to hearing from you!

INFORMATION SHEET

Oral History Research Project: A Prospect Childhood

Emily Burton
Department of History
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

I am a graduate student in the Department of History at Saint Mary's University. As part of my Master of Arts degree, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. James H. Morrison, Department of History. I am inviting you to participate in my study. The purpose of the study is to involve Prospect residents (or former residents) in the documenting of childhood experiences of living in Prospect with the hope that this documentation will be a resource for the community and for future generations.

The study involves interviewing people who lived in Prospect as children up to the 1960s. The interviews will cover areas such as family and home life, school experience, community involvement and childhood leisure. The interviews will be combined with archival sources (such as newspaper articles and church documents) as well as selected books and articles that discuss the history of the province during the time period of the study.

Because one of the objectives of the research is to share historical knowledge, results of the project will be made available to the public, for instance to the Prospect Community Library and the Oral History Archives at Saint Mary's University. Individual participants may be identified through the final project report, tape recordings and/or summary transcriptions of the interviews.

If you have any questions, please contact Emily Burton, project researcher, at 852-3920 or eburton@chebucto.ns.ca.

***Oral History Research Project:
A Prospect Childhood***

Emily Burton
Department of History
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

.....

RELEASE FORM

Name: _____

Interview # : _____

Subject to the conditions noted below, I release all rights to this recording to Saint Mary's University and the Prospect Community Library.

Conditions: None _____ or

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Agreed: _____

Date: _____

POH (Prospect Oral History Project)

A Prospect Childhood

Interview Questions

1. Family and Home Life

Where were you born? How many years did you live in the house were you were born? Where did you live after that? (continue to present) What year were you born? How many brothers and sisters do you have? (birth order).

How old was your mother when you were born? Had she any jobs before she was married? Part-time or full-time? What about after she married? Do you remember the kind of work your mother did at home? (cleaning, housework, making clothes, etc.) Is she alive now? How old was she when she died?

How old was your father when you were born? What kind of work did he do before he was married? After? (all jobs) Part-time or full-time? Do you remember your father doing work around the house or yard? (cleaning, shovelling, gardening, repairs, etc.) Is he alive now? How old was he when he died?

Did anyone other than your parents or siblings live at home with you? Did anyone help your mother or father around the house? Did older siblings help? What kinds of chores or work around the house do you remember doing? Did you receive an allowance? Did you ever carry out work for which you were paid as a child (outside of your family)?

Did your family own the house in which you lived? Rent? Who owned it (if rented)? What was the house like? (number of bedrooms, etc.)

Did your family sit down together for meals? Do you remember what kinds of meals you had? (breakfast, lunch, dinner) What were meal times like? (quiet, lively, etc.) Did you eat different foods on certain days? (religious days, Christmas, etc.) Did your mother or father bake bread? Make jam? Bottle or pickle vegetables or fruit? Make wine or beer? Make medicines? Did your family have a garden? Raise chickens or other animals? Who took care of garden/ chickens, etc.? Did your father or other family members hunt? Fish for family consumption? What foods were considered a treat?

When your parents were not working, what kinds of things did they do to enjoy themselves? Did they read? (books, magazines, newspapers) Play cards? Play musical instruments? Visit neighbours, friends or relatives? Have or go to parties? Attend church social events? Other community events? Clubs or pubs? Go to movies? Concerts? Sporting events? Did they play sports? Did the family listen to the radio? (kinds of programs?) T.V.? Did you go out together as a family? Did you go on holidays together? What (other) kinds of things did you do together as a family?

Did your parents bring you up to consider certain things important in life? Would you say that you received the ideas you had about how to behave from both your parents, or did one play a more important role than the other? If you did something your parents disapproved of, what would happen? How did you get along with your siblings? What did your parents do if you quarrelled with your siblings?

2. School Experience

Where you given lessons by anyone before school? Did you go to the school in the village? (Sisters of Charity) What was the name of the school? How old were you when you started? Do you remember your first day of school? How many grades did you complete in the school? How many classes and grades were there in the school? How Many students (in your class, in the school all together?) How many teachers were there? Do you remember their names?

What did you think of school? How did you feel about the teachers? If you did something the teachers disapproved of, what would happen? Were the teachers strict? Relaxed? Did they emphasize certain things as important in life? (manners, tidiness, punctuality, ways of speaking, modesty, hard work, etc.) Did they teach Christian values? Was it a separate part of the curriculum? What subjects were taught in school? Did you have a favourite subject? Did you do well in school? Did you ever get into trouble at school? Was there a lot of discussion in classes? Note-taking? Reading? Testing? Did you have homework? How much? Who helped you with your homework? Were there clubs at school (choir, sports, hobbies, etc.) Was there a physical education program at school?

Did you play games at school, during class time or before/after/recess? What kinds of games? Did you go home for lunch? Did all the students go home for lunch? What was the school schedule? (daily, seasonal). Did your parents ever not send you to school? (help out at home, fishing, illness, etc.) What about your siblings?

Do you know what your parents thought about the school? Do you remember them encouraging you to go to school? Do you remember when the school closed and the school in Shad Bay opened? Do you know what year that was? Were all the children that went to the village school Catholic?

3. Community Involvement

When you were growing up in Prospect, did you think of yourself as living in a rural area? A village? What did you think of Halifax? How often did you go there? Has Prospect changed much since your childhood? Can you describe what the village was like when you were a child?

Did neighbours help each other out a lot? How? (illness, birth, death, etc.) What did people do when they were sick?

Would you say there were different social classes in the village then? If so, how did differences between social groups show up? (Size/style of houses, cars, clothing, charity, etc.) Were there people richer or poorer than you? What were the main occupations in the village? (Fishermen – daily routine? Fishermen’s cooperative?) Were some people unemployed? How did they get by? Did many people work outside of the village (Halifax for example)? Was there a village store in the village when you were growing up? Who owned it? Operated it? What kinds of things did they sell in the store? What other businesses existed in the village during your childhood? (lobster and rabbit cannery, etc.) How many people/families lived in the village in 1950? [160?]

Apart from the church, what kinds of community or social groups existed in the village? (Rate-payers Association, Home and School Association, Social Clubs, Fishermen’s Co-operative). What kinds of activities were they engaged in? Do you remember living in the village before streetlights were introduced? [1947?]

What about the church? What kinds of activities was your family involved in through the church? (attending mass, Sunday school, collections, other fund-raising, altar boy, Children of Mary, Knights of Columbus, charity, picnics and other social events, etc.) Do you remember specific activities that you were involved in through the church? (religious, charity, social)? How important was the priest in the community? What kinds of things did he do apart from Mass? What about the sisters of Charity? Were they involved in the community outside of school? Where did they live? How central was the church in the community? Was everyone in the community involved in the church somehow?

4. Childhood Leisure

(Have already touched upon this topic, would like to ask a few additional questions.)

Who did you play with as a child? (school mates, neighbours, siblings, cousins) Did you have your own special group of friends? What kinds of games did you play? What kinds of activities were you involved in? (skating on one of the ponds in winter, swimming and playing baseball in summer, etc.) Did boys and girls play together? Do you remember your parents encouraging or discouraging you from playing with certain children? Did children/teenagers generally get along?

Did you have any hobbies? Did you take any lessons? (piano, etc.) Can you remember a family member, relative or someone else who taught you something? (to play an instrument, cook, knit, sew, garden, fish, hunt, etc.)

Did you belong to a sports team? Girl Guides or Boy Scouts? Any other youth organization? Did you go to movies, plays or concerts when you were young? In the village or elsewhere? How did you spend your summer vacations?

What are your fondest memories of growing up in Prospect? What are your worst memories of growing up in Prospect?

5. General

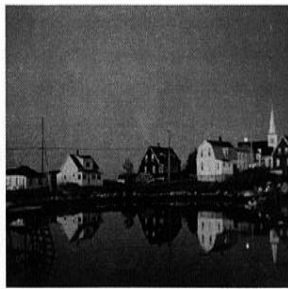
Do you remember growing up in Prospect during World War II? What was it like? (rations washing up on shore, young men from village in war, etc.) Did Prospect change after the war?

Have you ever not lived in the village? Do you have children? Did they live in the village while growing up? Do any of them live here now? How do you think their childhoods were different from yours? What about now?

How has Prospect changed since you were a child?

There's No Place Like Home...

The PPRA is a grassroots neighborhood organization with standing before council where we enjoy the support of our government representatives. Everyone who lives on the Peninsula (basically the Prospect Bay Road and surrounding area) automatically belongs. Our goals are many, our main focus to bring the people together by updating newsletters and providing a sense of community and pride in the awesome history and bright future of a wonderful place to call home.



PPRA

Regular monthly meetings are the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm in the Prospect Community Library

PLEASE JOIN US!

Executive Board:

Tressa Kiley	Chairperson
Sam Rogers	Vice Chairperson
Carla Grant	Treasurer
Meagan Austin	Secretary

Phone: (902) 850-PPRA (7772)
Email: ppra@eastlink.ca
www.prospectcommunities.com



Prospect Peninsula Residents Association
Lobster Supper ~ August 22nd, 2004, 2pm-6pm

Thar She Blows...

With a huff and a puff Hurricane Juan blew Prospect into the 21st Century of community development and precipitated many visual changes to the Village. As much as Mother Nature put asunder, she couldn't overshadow what we have built this same year. On April 3rd, 2004, we opened the Prospect Community Library

Hours are:

Sunday 1-4pm

Mondays 1-4pm & 7:30-9:30pm.



Story time at the Community Library

We welcome patrons from Goodwood to Black Duck Run and every reader's appetite in between. The Library, made possible by partnering with Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church Committee also hosts the meetings of the Prospect Players (our master thespians) as well as monthly meetings of the PPRA.

Jumping off The Govie...

Through the Federal Divestiture Program, we have taken ownership of our Community Wharf formerly called the Government Wharf and known always in our hearts as The Govie. Because we now own the wharf and the library, the association has incurred fiscal responsibilities. This year our General Liability insurance is \$3150 and our Directors insurance is \$1299. Add to this the cost of our regular activities and enriching special events and the bill is more than goodwill can surmount. Because they won't sell us goods on our good looks, we annually hold a number of fundraisers. The ticket sales on our recent draw for a first prize of 20lbs of lobster and a 2nd prize of \$100 in gasoline were brisk and fruitful. David Duggan won the lobsters and Ellen Ryan won the gas.



The biggest and, hopefully, most successful of these events will be our Annual Lobster Supper, held in the Church Hall.

August 22nd, 2004 from 2pm to 6pm...

This year's menu will include local mussels, rolls, lobster, salads, and of course, tea, coffee and pie.

Much more than a good meal...

We are hosting a craft show where our wonderful, talented craftspeople will show their wares. Also featured will be the creations of the less professional among us. Fun events will include bingo for all and games for children. For the adults we have a Beer Garden featuring the libations of Halifax's own Garrison Brewery Company. Entries in the "Prospect Photo Challenge" will be displayed in the Hall and the winners of this judged amateur photo exhibition will be announced at 5:30pm.

Dinner tickets are available at the Library or by calling Ellen Ryan at (902) 852-2285.

Adult Tickets ~ \$18

Child Tickets ~ \$8

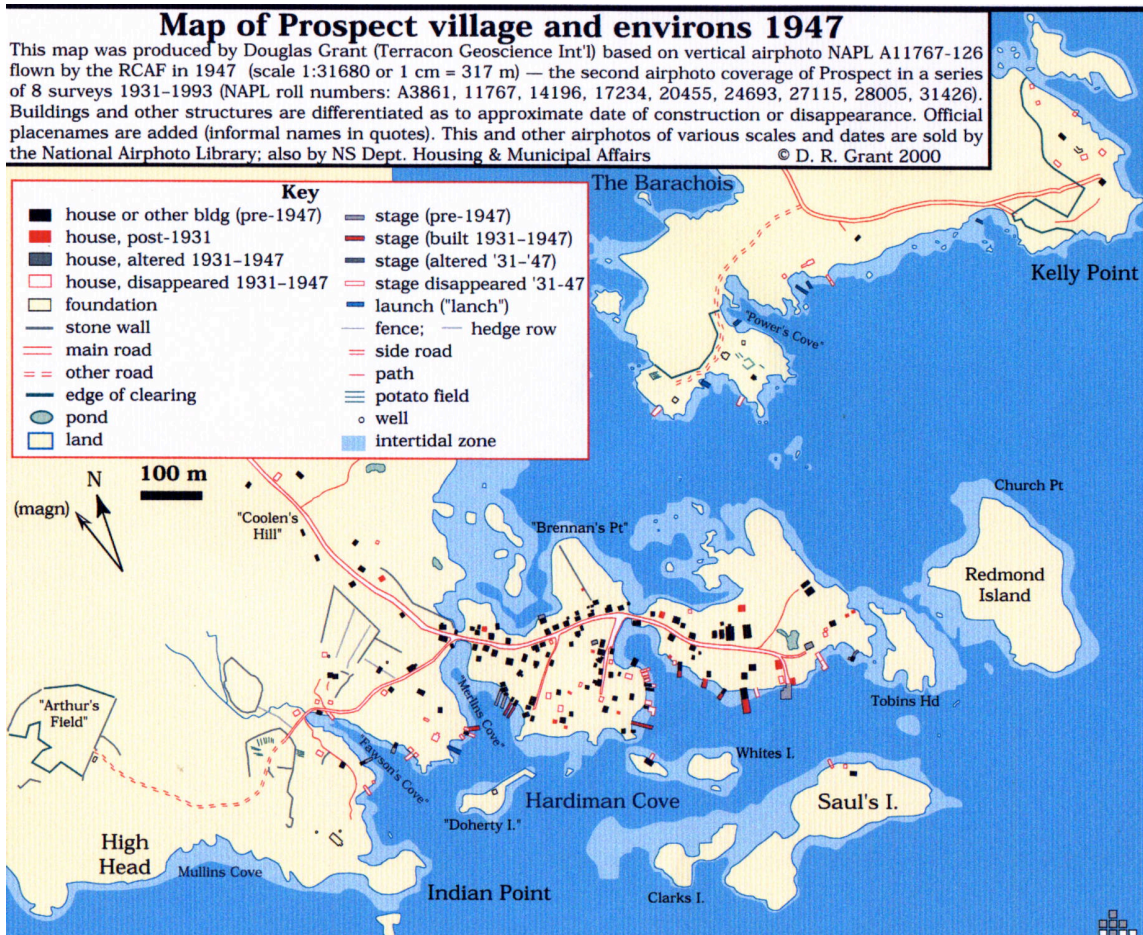
(the children's meal will be a ham plate)

Upcoming Events

In September ~ The Prospect Players will stage an adult performance of Cinderella., date to be announced.

In November ~ Variety Show.

For more information, contact Sue Browne (902) 852-3082



Source: "Prospect Genealogical Website,"
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~prospect>.

Photo used with permission of Eleanor Grant

