

Important Historic Places in Our Town

Like many other towns in New Brunswick, we share a sense of pride in our history and would like to record it. Local residents have written about our oral history and have published books and old photographs. The River Valley News has printed personal and historical accounts of bygone days. Story boards describing our history stand along our heritage walking trail, Colonel Nase Blvd. and at the Brundage Point River Centre.

Building on this work, we, the heritage sub-committee of Grand Bay-Westfield's tourism committee applied for 2 separate grants in 2010-2011. Offered by the New Brunswick Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport, these grants were designed to help list historic landmarks on the NB Register of Important Historic Places. This register is part of a Canadian Historic Places Initiative formed in 2000 to conserve our culture. The grants made it possible to hire a qualified person to research local properties deserving recognition for their historical significance and character defining elements.

How were our properties chosen? Guidelines for approval were set by the provincial and national bodies. With suggestions offered by many residents, the committee made lists and recognized that four themes were emerging: *early settlers, commerce, transportation and recreation*. No property was listed unless the owner consented, with the understanding that under the Heritage Conservation Act, (Municipal) section 68(2), "the designation of a local historic place does not affect the title of the property nor does it impose any restrictions or obligations on the owner of the property". The property owners may have their properties delisted at any time. The research results were submitted to Town Council for approval. Then the Provincial Registrar added these designated properties to the provincial list that includes over 61 other NB municipalities. With recent cuts in provincial funding, the opportunity to list additional properties may be suspended.

To date, 30 important historic places have been submitted to the Provincial Register. These special properties reflect our four themes. For example, *early settlers* include original family farms, private cemeteries, black loyalist grants and early church stained glass windows. *Commerce* is represented by a country store and the Wilson Box Factory. Unfortunately, neither the Thompson Iron Factory nor the James Ready property qualified under the criteria set by the province because there are no visible structural remains. *Transportation* is represented by a Maliseet Portage Trail, a Stagecoach Inn and the Old Post Road, the Westfield Wharf and the riverboats, and Westfield Beach with the early railway. *Recreation* includes the Westfield Golf and Country Club and the Gyro Camp in Pamdenec. Descriptions of these historic sites can be found at www.historicplaces.ca or www.gnb.ca/0131/historicplaces/index-e.asp# (type *historic places* in the search box). Access to these sites is also possible on our town website www.town.grandbay-westfield.nb.ca by clicking on *Historic Places*. Some of them will be added to the Register later this spring.

In April 2011 and 2012, special receptions were held to celebrate the historic listings. Mayor Grace Losier presented property owners with certificates of appreciation for

having their properties listed on both the provincial and national registers. These important historic places, together with our story boards, memory project, books and newspaper articles help define our colourful past for residents and visitors alike. The committee would like to thank participating property owners, our researcher and the Town Council for their interest and support for this worthy project.

Respectfully submitted by
Jan Riddell
Chair, Heritage sub committee