



# the trident

A quarterly publication of the Newfoundland Historic Trust

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## 29th Annual Southcott Awards presented June 25, 2013

The 29th Annual Southcott Awards were presented on June 25 at the Newman Wine Vaults Provincial Historic Site. Awards were given in the Heritage Preservation category, Heritage Craftsperson and for Design in Context.

### Building Restoration or Preservation Winners

#### Murray Premises, St. John's



Originally constructed in 1846 as a warehouse space, the Murray Premises played a significant role in the mercantile activities of the Newfoundland fishery.

The Newfoundland Historic Trust was instrumental in saving the building from demolition and neglect in the 1970s.

The recent renovations have maintained the historical nature and significance of the Murray Premises and it remains a stunning fixture of the St. John's Harbourfront.

#### Mallard Cottage, Quidi Vidi, St. John's

Another gem of historic Quidi Vidi Village. Constructed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mallard Cottage has been given new life as a high-end dining establishment. The current owners found the building in terrible disrepair and requiring a major structural overhaul. The owners intended to restore Mallard Cottage to as close to its original state as possible and succeeded.



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## Gentara Building, St. John's



Dated from 1902, the property at 348 Water Street served as a merchant premises for a number of businesses, notably Wood's West End Candy Shop.

The restoration required numerous structural and aesthetic upgrades. During the restoration, the building's key architectural feature – a turret – was added back to the building. The dedication of the owners to restore this Water Street landmark was challenged by significant structural issues, but thanks to the careful and well-planned restoration by the City of St. John's, it now serves as an information centre for tourists visiting the area and contains city's Economic Development offices.

## Design in Context

## The Plantation, Quidi Vidi, St. John's



Nestled in one of St. John's most historic areas, the Quidi Vidi Village Plantation was another successful municipal project for the City of St. John's. The Plantation is a unique collaboration between cultural heritage and modern-day craft.

Using traditional ideas and materials, the space is home to a wide variety of visual artists who ply their craft while visitors watch. Built to reflect the traditional fishing stages and rooms traditional to the area, the Plantation serves as a craft incubator for emerging artists. Boasting open spaces and natural light, the newly-constructed building now serves as a space for the public to connect with local artists and craftspeople.

## Heritage Craftsperson

## Sweet Lumber, Trinity



Trinity-based Sweet Lumber Enterprises Ltd has restored and rebuilt numerous heritage structures around the province. Most notable of their accomplishments are the Parish Hall in Trinity, with hand-crafted windows, clapboard and trim, the Trinity Court House, which involved rebuilding the bell tower, and the 2013 Southcott Award winner Mallard Cottage in St. John's. They are also known for the restoration of one of the oldest homes in Trinity that was deemed beyond repair which involved putting the roof back to original and adding two bell towers. Their work can also be seen in the rebuilt Pork Shed, now known as Rising Tide Theatre. Their work is extensive and well-executed .

The Newfoundland Historic Trust wishes to acknowledge the generous sponsors of the 2013 Southcott Awards. Thank you for your continued support!



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and the wonderful musical talent of  
Naomi Kavka

A very special thank you to the 2013 Southcott Committee, without whom the event would not be made possible: Robyn Pike, Co-Chair; John Drover, Co-Chair; and committee members Bonnie Andrews, Kim Cooper, Ben Jesseau, Leslie Pierce, and Susan Wright.

## City Remembers Freedom of the City Recipient

Many will remember Paul O'Neill as an actor, activist or an author, but for Mayor Dennis O'Keefe he will always remember Paul O'Neill as a perfect example of a "townie".



"Paul O'Neill was a tremendous townie," says Mayor O'Keefe. "He dearly loved St. John's, it was one of the main loves of his life and his pride in his community came through in everything he did. He was a real gentleman and in one way or another he was always promoting the City, talking about the City and even walking about the City he loved so much. He will be truly missed by all who knew him."

Paul O'Neil passed away on Monday, Aug. 11 at the age of 84. The City of St. John's honoured him for his contributions to the City by presenting him with the Freedom of the City in 2004. He was also honoured with the Order of Canada and the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. O'Neill will probably be best known for his two-volume book 'The Oldest City' which was published for the first time in 1975 and detailed the history of the City.

"I consider Paul O'Neill a long-standing friend and a true pioneer of the heritage movement in the City," says Deputy Mayor Shannie Duff. "We both shared an interest in the City's history and heritage and his work 'The Oldest City' is an extremely valuable resource on the history of our City that will be used for generations to come. His passing represents a tremendous loss to St. John's."

The City of St. John's would like to pass along its sincerest condolences to his family and friends.

## Writer Paul O'Neill, chronicler of St. John's, dead at 84

CBCnews | Newfoundland & Labrador

### 'Utterly unassuming' author had wide-ranging career

Posted: Aug 14, 2013 11:20 AM NT Last Updated: Aug 14, 2013 11:18 AM NT

Friends and colleagues of writer Paul O'Neill, who died Monday at 84, say his books will be read and enjoyed for many years to come.

O'Neill, who specialized in the history of his beloved home city, had a varied career that included decades of work with CBC Radio and an acting career involving the stage and screen, had been in poor health for several months.

O'Neill wrote several books, the best-known of which is the two-volume *The Oldest City*, originally published in 1975 and reissued in 2003. O'Neill was uneasy about the title selected by his publisher, as he

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admitted that St. John's could not actually claim to be North America's oldest city.

Yet O'Neill cared deeply about his home city and province, and with numerous organizations, including the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland Historic Trust and the Beothuk Institute.

"He was passionate about Newfoundland," said former Lt.-Gov. Ed Roberts, who first met O'Neill before he entered politics in the 1960s.

O'Neill started working with CBC in 1953, and went on to produce numerous shows for both radio and television, including *Reach for the Top* and *Skipper and Company*, as well as a series of school broadcasts that brought radio plays and other materials into the curriculum.

He wrote plays himself, as well as poetry. By the time O'Neill retired from CBC's arts department in 1986, he had already established himself as an author, specializing in history.

Not formally trained in history, O'Neill was reluctant to call himself a historian.

"But he was," said John FitzGerald, a St. John's-based historian who worked with O'Neill several times over the years. "He wasn't an academic, but he could his own."

FitzGerald described O'Neill as being generous and helpful to others.

"He would always be willing to lay his hand on a document or file, and more than happy to share it," said FitzGerald. "He was always very kind and very helpful."

'Magnificent piece of work'

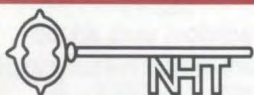
FitzGerald said O'Neill's books will be consulted for years to come.

Roberts agreed.

"I think it will stand," Roberts said of *The Oldest City*. "It's a magnificent piece of work. It's thoroughly researched ... and he wrote well. He had the facility to put words together. It will be around for a long, long time."

O'Neill earned many accolades through his lifetime, having been named to the Order of Canada and the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. He also received the Freedom of the City from St. John's.

Roberts, though, said O'Neill was always modest. "He was utterly unassuming."



Paul O'Neill was a long-time member of the Newfoundland Historic Trust. He was instrumental in the production of our publications, *A Gift of Heritage* and *Ten Historic Towns*, which we sell to this day. He was a generous supporter of this organization's ideals and was a familiar face at our annual Southcott Awards. The Trust wishes to express its condolences to the family of Mr. O'Neill. He will always be remembered for his contributions to the historical education of the province and our knowledge of built heritage has grown because of him.

## Noon-Day Gun Tradition

### Summer Celebrations on Signal Hill

This year St. John's celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> birthday and kicked off the summer with a little fire and a big bang! On June 21<sup>st</sup> the city revived its age old tradition of firing a noon-day canon on Signal Hill. At precisely 12pm the city's mayor, Dennis O'Keefe dressed in traditional military attire, lit the fuse to the monumental gun and BOOM! A tradition was re-born. Since June many lucky visitors have donned the uniform of the Royal Artillery c.1812 to take part in the history and light the fuse of the noon-day gun.

In 1842, when it was too cold to keep a clock tower ticking, it was established that a gun would be fired at Fredrick Battery (Southside) at noon every day to provide the city with a public way to tell the time. Eventually, the Southside canon was replaced by a gun installed at the Blockhouse, which later became Cabot Tower, on Signal Hill. Archives indicate that the noon-day gun was fired daily from the Blockhouse, which served as a Marine lookout station and watch-tower for defences overlooking the Narrows. The gar-



ison used morning, night and evening guns to regulate its daily activities. Signal flags flown from the Blockhouse announced the approach of oncoming vessels so that mercantile firms and waiting families could prepare for their arrival. After the troops left in 1870, the residents of St. John's continued the firing, demonstrating the importance of the gun to the people of the city.

There were other very practical reasons to fire the gun at Signal Hill. When heavy fog rolled into the harbour, the artillery would fire the gun once an hour for navigational purposes. The New Year was signalled by the gun at exactly midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup>.

The Annual St. John's Regatta, the oldest running

boat race in North America, relied heavily on the sounding of the gun. Once the committee decided that the weather was fair enough for the Regatta to go ahead it was confirmed to the public by the highly anticipated roar of the gun.



A short-lived interruption in the daily tradition occurred in 1906 when clergymen complained the gun was too much of a distraction among parishioners. Allegedly, it was a common habit among locals to check their pocket watches harmoniously with the noon-day gun, distracting them from their current dedications. This interruption gave rise to many poems and verses such as, "Who Stopped the Noon-Day Gun?" by Maurice A. Devine which begins in proper Newfoundland dialect,

"` Now hasten forth, reporter man," the editor did say, / "For some important news is about the town to-day." / "Go down to skipper Eli Dawe, and question him, my son; / He knows, I s'pose, who told Tom Rose / To stop the Sunday gun."

The death of the tradition was initiated in March, 1949 when there was a shortage of percussion caps that were used to fire the gun. After Confederation, on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1949, Signal Hill came under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transport and the tradition ended.

In 1959, Parks Canada recovered the tradition and the firing of the noon-day gun which continued until the 1990s. As part of a celebration of St. John's history, Parks Canada recovered the tradition yet again for the summer of 2013. Added to the tradition was an opportunity for the public to take part in the history and experience the thrill of lighting the noon-day gun. Participants were dressed in period attire, given a safety brief, training, and the honour of setting the gun ablaze and sending their own message across the city of St. John's.

# Doors Open Days 2013

September 7-8 marked the eleventh year of the annual Doors Open Days event in the St. John's area. Over 7000 visitors visited the 19 participating sites on a beautiful September weekend.

## Participating Sites this year:

- James J O'Mara Pharmacy Museum
- Railway Coastal Museum
- Newman Wine Vaults
- Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist
- Art Gallery at the Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council (RIAC)
- Central Fire Station
- Crow's Nest Officer Club
- Robin Hood Bay Waste Management Facility
- St. John's Farmers Market
- Winterholme Heritage Inn and Spa
- YMCA of Northeast Avalon.

## New sites for 2013 included:

- Peter Lewis Gallery
- Quidi Vidi Brewery
- Far Out Fitness
- Logy Bay-Middle Cove - Outer Cove Museum
- Fluvarium
- Clovelly Stables
- Basilica Cathedral of St. John the Baptist



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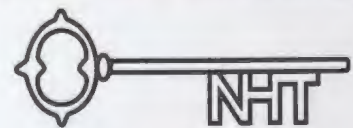


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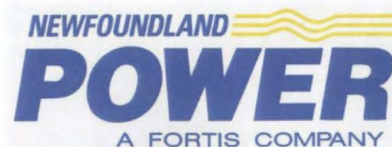
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Annual membership fees support the ongoing work of the Trust in fulfilling its mandate of education, advocacy and outreach. The ability of the Trust to speak confidently and lobby effectively to protect our province's built heritage, neighbourhoods, streetscapes and open spaces depends to a large extent on the degree of public support it enjoys.

New membership benefits! As a member you are provided opportunities for:

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