

Three Men, Three Stories

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 ready. Crew had everything ready to leave, and the Captain came up from the hull and looked around. It was overcast and grey and there were flakes of snow starting to fall. He came up and looked all around, and he gathered some snowflakes, and said, 'Ah, pretty little snow, pretty little snow! I guess we won't go!' And he turned around and left.

"First house on the downside of the bridge was where the Captain lived. When I was walking home from school, I would always meet him coming up with a basket, coming up to get groceries or to the bank. He was always such a gentleman, I really liked him. I used to deliver papers to him. He had a bowler hat and would walk up, always well-dressed. Very gentlemanly man, Captain Randall. He was the one who sailed the ship [in the book]."

"We went to watch the launch. You know, a boat can't be insured while it's launching. On land, and once in the water, it's insured, but

not on the slips or during a launch. Springhillers were known as 'pit rats'. You know, they were down in the coal pits. Miners in general were a cocky bunch! The launch was getting ready to go, and this guy from Springhill in the crowd ran up and jumped aboard the ship so he could be on the launch! So that was fine! The launch was going down, and first thing, he got up in the bow and was showing off, and he dove off the boat in the water, and when he came up, some of the sailors in the crowd yelled up to whoever was on the boat. They said, 'You'd better abandon ship! The pit-rats are leaving!' It's a sign of sinking when rats leave."

"I was told this story by the guy that was involved in it. He was young, a teenage boy, and just out of high-school at the end of spring, and this schooner was going to sail, so he asked the Captain if he could get a job for the summer. The Captain didn't really want to take him on, but he knew the family. He said, 'Okay, you can



come with me for the summer.'
 "So they went into Boston, and after everything was tied up, all the sailors got ready to go ashore. The boy started to go with them, and the Captain wouldn't let him go. He said, 'No, you wait till I go.' He had to wait, and eventually the Captain said, okay, we're going ashore.
 "It was a really tough area in Boston harbour. Rows of bars and so on. He said, 'The Captain stopped at the first bar and in he

went.' He said it had a mud floor, you know, the big old bars full of longshoreman sailors. The Captain was a big man, and the sailor said the Captain went right to the middle of the floor and rolled his sleeves up, backed his sleeves up like this, and looked around. Everybody kind of stopped and looked at him, and he says, 'I can beat any bastard in here. Anybody want to try?' Everybody just kinda turned back to their drinks, so he said to the kid, 'Okay, I think we're safe here.' That sailor was an old man when he told me that story. He was from Parrsboro. That was his first time ever sailing.

"That Captain had big hands. I've got a nice picture of him out standing at the wheel of the schooner. My father saw the picture on the wall, in the shop, and he said, 'The first time I met him...' My father worked at a garage up here at the time, and they got a call from up in Lakelands from this Captain. He was phoning, and he said, 'Send the wrecker up. My car's stalled or something and I don't have time to fix it. Tide's coming in and my ship's at the pier. I gotta get to Parrsboro.'

"My father thought he could probably fix it if he went up, so he went up and offered to look under the hood to fix it, and the Captain said, 'No, no no, don't have time for that, just put the tow-line on. I gotta get there.' So my father hooked on, and when he was getting in the car, the Captain yelled out to him, 'And don't spare the horses!'

"Of course it was all dirt road then, so he put the gas to the floor and away he went. He said, 'I couldn't see in the mirror, it was all dust.' He roared into town here, pulled into where the Irving station is now. He said he got in there, and my father got out of the wrecker. It was just a converted car with a hoist in the back. He got out and looked back, and the Captain was getting out of his car.

"He had this hat on, he was beating the dust off, and he yelled to him, he says, he says, 'You woulda made one fine sailor!' My father says, 'Why's that, Capt'n?'

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Cumberland Lowered Flags in Remembrance

By Darrell Cole

Flags at all municipal properties were lowered to half-mast beginning Thursday, April 17, 2025, and remaining in that position until Tuesday, April 22, 2025, in recognition of the fifth anniversary of the 2020 mass shooting that touched many communities in northern Nova Scotia, including Cumberland County. Municipality of Cumberland Mayor Rod Gilroy urged residents pause for a moment of silence at noon on April 18 and April 19.

"It's important for us as a community to pause, reflect and remember the lives lost and honour the survivors, the families and all of those who have been impacted," Mayor Gilroy said. "No amount of time will ever diminish the horrible memories of those days."

Residents, businesses and community organizations that fly flags are also encouraged to lower them to half-mast April 18-19.

Twenty-two people plus an unborn child were killed by a gunman beginning on the night of April 18, 2020, in Portapique and ending on April 19, 2020, when the gunman was shot and killed as a gas station in Enfield. Four of the people killed were residents of Wentworth, including Sean McLeod, Alannah Jenkins, Lillian Campbell and Tom Bagley.

Remembering and reflecting on the events of 2020 may affect Nova Scotians in different ways.

People in need of emotional support can call 211 to reach a community resource navigator who can connect them with help.

Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis can call the provincial mental health and addictions crisis line any time at 1-888-429-8167.

Information on mental health services and support can also be found online at: <https://novascotia.ca/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>.

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Maritime Happenings

The somewhat surprising demolition today (April 19, 2025) of two adjacent buildings, located at 241 and 243 Main Street in Parrsboro was witnessed with much interest by many residents of the town. The destruction, ordered by the Municipality of Cumberland after the buildings had earlier become unstable and unsafe for occupancy, occurred after an overnight shift in the stabilization of the structures.

Many of those who witnessed the event today were still able to recall great old memories of previous, popular businesses that once existed there, among them, Cameron & Wilson Auto Parts (Nobel Cameron and George "Doe Wilson), Smith's Restaurant (Stan and Inez "Ine" Smith) and Fraemar Gift Shop/The Trophy House (Fraser and Margaret MacKay).

The larger building at 241 Main Street, was probably built in the late 1870s, making it approximately 145-150 years old at the time of today's demise. This building is located on what was parts of lots 69, 70 and 71 of Church of England "Church Lands."

The original owner was hotel proprietor, Martin Gavin. Recorded documents reveal that while Gavin owned it, it was occupied by J. S. Henderson, Martin's son-in-law, as a boot and shoe store. In 1903, Martin left this shop to his daughter, Annie, wife of J. S. "Sutt" Henderson.

Over the years, the building has had several owners and tenants: Gordon E. Pickard, small grocery; Jake Resnick, boots and shoes; Basil Sheck, plumbing shop; Cameron & Wilson, auto parts; Burke and Fullmore auto showroom; Inez L. Smith, restaurant; Parrsboro Properties, shoes and clothing; and beginning in 1981, by Fraemar Enterprises Limited dealing in jewelry, gemstones, trophies, etc.

The building's final business was Allsortz Clothing.

The smaller part of the combined structure, at 243 Main Street, was erected on what was also part of lots 69, 70 and 71 of Church of England "Church Lands" for hotel proprietor Martin Gavin. It was built just a few years later, probably around 1880. Martin Gavin was owner of the adjacent Minas Hotel.

For some time, this shop was occupied by Martin's son, John, as a tailor shop, then, by Mrs. Oliver Knowlton as merchant. In 1903, while still occupied by Mrs. Knowlton, the shop was left in trust for John by will of his father. John operated a tailor shop here well into the 1940s.

For years, this location was "famously-known" as the shop of Gerry Gillespie, a well-respected town barber. In 1977 it sold to yet another popular barber, David "Pidge" Morris and was known as Dave's Barber Shop. Previous to today's demolition, the final business greeting customers there was a computer repair shop.

- Historic Stories & Research - Parrsboro NS (Michael G Winters) with information from the 1989 publication "Heritage Homes & History of Parrsboro."

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