

# Restoration Of Thinkers' Lodge/Eaton Estate Underway

By John Eaton

The Cyrus Eaton Estate, normally quiet and serene under a blanket of snow this time of year, has been a beehive of activity this winter. Much needed stabilization and restoration work on Thinkers' Lodge began in earnest in November and will continue well into the spring.

I welcome this opportunity to bring residents of Pugwash and the surrounding area up to date about our progress on the first phase of our collaborative, phased, long term project to restore the Thinkers' Lodge historical site and the Cyrus Eaton Estate.



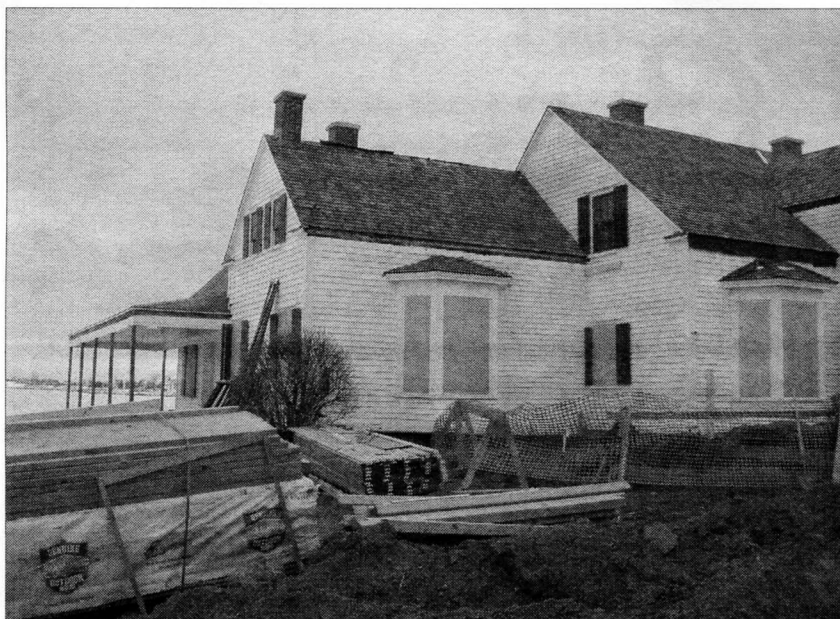
Working collaboratively. In 2008, Thinkers' Lodge was designated a National Historic Site and the Nova Scotia Department of Economic and Rural Development made a grant in support of restoring the Lodge. The Pugwash Park Commission and the Cumberland Regional Economic Development Association convened a steering committee that included local Cumberland and Pugwash citizens to make initial plans to stabilize and restore the Lodge. This group considered bid proposals from architect/planners and unanimously picked WHW Architects of Halifax to be the lead. In 2009, collaboration was expanded to include the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA).

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Working with the best. In late 2009, we finally began restoration. Through award winning WHW, our team was joined by Gary Hanley, who has considerable experience and expertise in restoring wooden structures including being the architect responsible for the restoration of St. George's Anglican Church in Halifax. Also new to the team is construction manager Ron Cahoon, who led the restoration of St. John's Anglican Church in Lunenburg after the fire in 2001 and was also directly involved in St. George's.

Working locally. An important objective of both the Eaton family and CREDA is to benefit the local community. To date 75% of the money allocated for construction has been spent in the Cumberland region. The foundation work is being done by McClearn's based out of Wallace while the custom roofing and much of the carpentry is being done by Rafe's Construction out of Parrsboro. Of course, we are using local materials whenever possible.

Continued page 5



Community outreach. Moving forward, a major objective is to open the Lodge and the Lobster Factory to more community activities. Similarly, community input is sought on what these activities should include and on projects like landscaping. Back in 1929 after two destructive fires there was overwhelming community support for rebuilding Pugwash. Among Cyrus Eaton's personal papers is a list of supporters. People contributed what they could – cash and labour of course, one offer of 3 days of trucking and, perhaps most interesting, 21 different residents volunteered a “team and driver” for a total of 124 days! What is needed now is ideas!

Regrettably, the Pugwash Park Commission was faced with the very difficult decision to remove a number of large

trees from the property. We are all saddened by the loss of the trees on the Estate. Experts checked and found these Poplar trees to be diseased and a growing threat to the Lobster Factory. In March of 2009 there was more than \$1,000 of damage caused by these trees during the ice storm but we were very fortunate the damage was not more extensive. Now, part of the Commission's plan is to raise the Lobster Factory and then plant new trees as part of a new landscaping effort that will help define how the property will look for the next 50 years. The Park Commission is currently being advised by Peter Romkey, Director of the Harriett Irving Botanical Gardens at Acadia University but input from all is encouraged.

To date, the Lodge's six chimneys have been rebuilt from the roof up; the roof is being re-shingled with western cedar and asphalt shingles; and remedial foundation work is ongoing. The decks have been removed and will be replaced and repairs have been made to the dormer windows. Additional exterior work to be carried out as weather conditions improve will include the replacement of missing and damaged wooden eaves, troughs and downspouts; stripping, refinishing and painting of the wood clapboards and windows; and repairing door sills.

The next phase of restoration, to begin as soon as funding is secured, will address the interior of the lodge including replacing and repairing damaged plaster, repainting walls and ceilings, and stripping and repainting wood trim and windows. The character-defining exterior and interior elements of Thinkers' Lodge will not be impacted, as the materials used will match the existing elements in form and detail.

Also to be addressed in the coming months, upon completion of the Lodge interior, will be the refurbishment of the lobster factory (dining hall) and the staff house and property landscaping.

Community collaboration will be the key to success for this next great Pugwash revitalization project - one which would have made Cyrus Eaton proud.

Please send comments and questions to [info@pugwashparkcommission.org](mailto:info@pugwashparkcommission.org)

Pictured here: Commissioner Linda Langille tours the site with Paolo Brenciaglia touring the site.

