

The History of Middle LaHave, N.S. (Written by Gwendolyn J. Lohnes)
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Founding –

On March 7, 1604, De Monts set sail from LeHavre in France, with two ships, to found a colony. After being nearly wrecked on the treacherous banks of Sable Island, the expedition made land on May 8 at the mouth of a river, which he called the LeHavre after the LeHavre River in France. (That is where Middle LaHave acquired its name.) Thence the explorers turned westward along the south shore of Nova Scotia. De Monts' expedition consisted of a group of adventurers. There were no women and children in their party, therefore there was no possible making of a sound colony on this expedition.

Situation and Area –

Middle LaHave is a fairly large village situated along the beautiful LaHave River. It is about nine miles from Bridgewater and five miles from Riverport.

It is one of the several “LaHave Districts”. We find Upper LaHave above it and East LaHave below. Years ago all these districts were known as East LaHave Ferry. Like all the villages along the river, this one has beautiful scenery during all seasons. The river, which at this point is a mile wide, divides Middle LaHave from West LaHave on the other side. In the spring there is the green foliage, in the summer hills covered with daisies and dandelions, in the autumn beautifully coloured leaves on the trees, and in the winter, snow. This scenery can be seen on both sides of the river.

The First Settlers and Their Descendants –

Land was granted to the early settlers by his Majesty King George III, in 1785. They came from Germany. A large grant of land was given to Joseph Pernette, Esq. In pursuance of the terms of the grant, Mr. Pernette settled many families of Germans and others on the banks of the river. Some of their names were: Lohnes, Corkum, Ritcey, Walters, and Mosher. To him credit is given for the first settlement of any importance. Some of the Germans came from Halifax shortly after its founding and settled at what is called “Crouse's Settlement”. These early settlers spelled their names “Krouse”. Later some Scotch people came from Scotland and settled in the cover between the two “Bear Hills”. Their name was Wilkie and they called their settlement “Wilkie's Cove”. It is now known as Middle LaHave. We also have a few families of Dutch and French Descent.

The early settlers liked to build their homes far away from the road and on hills. The rooms were so small and the ceilings low. Often only about six steps led to the rooms above, which were still lower. The roofs of many houses were thatched. The doors and shutters were made of two inch planks, when it could be had, and fastened with iron bolts. In our community we still have many low-ceilinged houses, although gradually they are being remodelled.

The oldest house standing today in our community belongs to Mr. Earling Zinck. It is about one hundred and twenty-five years old. The oldest not standing belonged to the late Mr. Pernette. The newest house standing belongs to Mr. Perry Crouse, which is ten years old.

The oldest barn standing belongs to Mr. Howard Hartman, of Middle LaHave, which is over two hundred years old. The one end of this barn has never been repaired. Directly below our district is a very old house owned by Mr. Roger Wilkie. One can still see the logs as they were hauled from the forest by pioneers, which serve as the foundation of the house.

Their mode of living was very simple – tea, coffee and “sweetening” were luxuries to which many were strangers, while potatoes and barley soup formed the chief articles of diet.

Men and women wore homemade clothing. The women spun flax and wool, while the men carded with hand cards. Men wore shirts of coarse, home-made linen without flannel undershirts. Many of the women wore handkerchiefs on their heads or old-fashioned scoops. Homemade skirts were worn and “bedgowns” as they were called, of printed cotton, formed the outer covering. Large blue spotted handkerchiefs were pinned down like shawls.

Their occupation was farming and fishing. They were poor, honest, true-hearted, God-fearing, self-reliant, industrious people, and worthily represented the nations from which they emigrated.

The community of Middle LaHave is still progressing. The houses are well kept. There are seventy in number and are all equipped with electricity. Very few are without full modern conveniences. The members of the older generation have seen many changes. Some of our grand old residents are: Mrs. Lucy Hartman, Mrs. Anna Corkum, Mrs. Emma Lohnes, Mrs. John Haughn, Capt. John Haughn and Mr. Gabriel Mosher.

Churches –

There are three denominations of churches in our community, the Anglican, United and Lutheran. The Anglican is the oldest church in the community. It is one hundred and eleven years old. Before this church was built many of the people walked to St. John’s church in Lunenburg for Sunday services. Later they held their services in the John Hunter house which stood below the present church. Finally in 1836, St. Bartholomew’s church was erected, the day and month were lost through time. The early church had a gallery and was plastered inside with lime. However, in 1890, it was remodelled and new pews put in. The old pews had open backs. For many years St. Bartholomew’s was the only church building of any denomination in Middle or East LaHave. Rev. James Cochrane, of St. John’s Church, Lunenburg, was the first minister because the church was considered part of St. John’s parish until the year 1894, when St. Matthew’s church was organized with Rev. D. Harris as the first rector.

The corner stone for the present Lutheran Church was laid on July 4, 1901. The pastor then was Rev. Marver. The first baptism was that of the son of Carl Richard. The last baptism was that of Rodney Donald Corkum, son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Corkum of East LaHave. The first marriage was that of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles Walters.

Before this church was built another one stood on the same side of the street, which served as a Union Church, where Lutherans and Presbyterians worshipped. The first Lutheran Pastor was Rev. Schneidy, who ministered unto his people from 1881 to 1891. While the new church was being built, this one was moved to the opposite side of the street, so the services could continue as usual. Later this building was sold in Oak Hill, Lunenburg County, where it was used as a orphanage.

School –

The first school stood a short distance away from where the present one is built. While the old school was being built, sessions were held in a small building owned by Mrs. Sadie Conrad. The new school was built in 1902 on the site as the old one. It was finished about the last of September. Boehner Bros., West LaHave, constructed the building. The first teacher in the Advance Department was Mrs. Edna Shankle (formerly Miss Edna Westhaver) who is still a resident of our community. In the Primary Department was Miss Young of Lunenburg. At that time the daily attendance often amounted to seventy-five pupils.

Stores –

About 1837 the first store was owned in the community by Capt. John Hunter. It stood just below the Anglican church. He only had a small variety of miscellaneous goods, such as: tea, tobacco, pipes, thread, matches, and a variety of cottons. Coffee was not too plentiful. Most people made their own coffee by baking beans and peas, and grinding them.

Shortly after another store was opened by Mr. Eleazer Corkum. It stood near Miss Janet Corkum's home. Next, Mrs. John Corkum opened a store in "Wilkie's Cove". Later, Mr. John Shankle and son opened a large store where at the present time Mr. Newton Shankle has his taxi stand.

Mr. Charles Walters and later his wife, in recent years operated a general store which stands by the Lutheran Church. Since her death, the store has been closed. Therefore we have only one general store in our community, owned by Mr. Willis A. Corkum. It is centrally located and has been operated by the present owner for many years.

Roads –

At one time the main road was only wide enough for a foot path (that is about four feet in width). Two roads branch off from the main road running through Middle LaHave. They are leading to “Crouse’s Settlement” and to the town of Lunenburg, about seven miles away. The latter has a sign bearing the name “Grimm Road”.

Wharves –

There are many small wharves in our community, but the largest is the “Government Wharf”, originally known as “Corkum’s Landing”. At first it was only a small sized wharf. However, a passenger boat operated at that time between Riverport and Bridgewater used to stop there for passengers. It was badly in need of repairs and the passengers made many complaints, particularly the women in the community, considered it unsafe.

Capt. John Haughn took an interest in re-building the wharf. The Liberal Government was then in power and when the Dominion election came in 1930, through his influence, an appeal was sent to Ottawa for the construction of a new wharf for the community of Middle LaHave. The appeal was granted and a sum of \$1,000 sent to his credit to build a new wharf. On July 22, 1930, Captain John Haughn proceeded with the construction and had it about half finished when the election came. The Liberals were defeated and he received an order from Ottawa to discontinue the building. In the meantime, Mr. R. C. Mosher, a “Tory” follower, decided upon taking the work over and finish the wharf. The balance of the money assigned was used and the wharf was still unfinished. It remained that way until Sept. 16, 1940, when a severe storm came and tore the whole top off the wharf. Capt. John Haughn notified the Government and a few days later Mr. MacLain, the wharf inspector at the time, called. A credit of three hundred dollars was granted to Capt. John Haughn and the wharf was finally completed. Up to date, the wharf is in good condition.

Mills –

About fifty-five years Mr. Benjamin Hirtle operated a flour mill where Mr. Reginald Corkum now lives. The brook known as “Hirtle’s Brook”, served as power for operating the mill.

Hall –

The hall of Middle LaHave is the property of the Lutheran church congregation. It is over thirty-five years old. It first belonged to Mr. Eugene Corkum, now a resident of the United States, and was used as a garage where cars were repaired and sold. The beams in this hall are very old, having been taken from a building owned by the late Caleb Corkum.

Industries and Occupation –

The Industries and Occupation of Middle LaHave are: fishing, dairy farming, poultry farming, cattle raising, fruit and vegetable growing, lumbering, trucking and carpenter work.

The biggest percentage of the men earn their living by fishing or coasting. Some sail from Lunenburg to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, others go shore fishing. The fishermen work hard, particularly the ones fishing out on the Grand Banks. They encounter many difficulties and dangers, of which the landsmen know only by hearsay. There is no body of men who deserve to be held in higher regard than the fishermen. The deep-sea fishermen especially, contribute immensely to the wealth of the county and province. Those who go shore fishing generally own small boats of their own.

Years ago great quantities of salmon and shad were caught in the LaHave River in March and May. Three hundred and fifty shad were not thought much of a catch for one day. In March nets were set through holes in the ice. It was no uncommon thing for twenty or thirty salmon to be taken from a net at a single haul. A few of our older residents still set their salmon nets. The season opens April 15 and closes August 16. However, neither salmon nor shad are too plentiful now. If at the end of the day a fisherman finds one salmon or shad in his net, he is satisfied.

Years ago the fishermen, returning home from the Grand Banks, provided the older men with work all summer by having them dry their fish in the sun. Time and progress changed that. Methods of preparing the various kinds of fish for sale are being constantly studied and improved by fish processors and scientists. They now have modern means of drying fish in fish plants.

Other men make their living at farming. There are a lot of small farms in Middle LaHave. A very modern poultry farm is owned by Mr. Grant Walters. He started his poultry farm on a small scale about five years ago (1942) and through the years he progressed immensely. He has built several modern buildings and his scientific methods are bringing him successful results. He crates and ships eggs to Halifax and Liverpool, and also provides most of the community with eggs.

Dairy farming is also carried on in our community. Some of the farmers raise vegetables and take them to the market. Practically every home has a small garden, raising enough vegetables for their own use, and preserve enough for winter months

Transportation and Communication –

The early settlers often walked many miles to reach their destination. The ladies frequently rode for many miles on a pillion behind their husbands. Later they had fourwheeled carriages.

Our means of transportation are by bicycles, car, boat, horse and by bus. The bus came into effect just recently and is operated by Mr. Goodwin Zinck of Riverport. There are two taxi services in Middle LaHave, one operated by Mr. Aubrey Corkum and the other by Mr. Newton Shankle. The first car was owned by the late Messrs. George and Napean Crouse.

A few years ago a passenger boat was used from Riverport to Bridgewater. It was owned by Capt. Almon Parks of East LaHave. With the coming of the car, this means of transportation was eliminated.

There are still some horses in the community. They are used for light work only. These are owned by Mr. Charles Crouse and Mr. Austin Corkum, brought from Sable Island years ago. He used the pony to do his farm work, including wood hauling.

In the winter the river freezes over and people can cross over to the other side. This winter however, for the first time in history, the LaHave River is wide open to navigation all winter from Bridgewater to the Atlantic Ocean.

The roads through Middle LaHave are gravel, but passable in the winter. They are improved each year, and in a few years' time we hope to have paved roads in the community.

There are several telephones in the community by which quick communication is available to all.

Post Office –

The first Post Office was kept by the late Miss Margaret Pernette and the present one is kept by Capt. Ernest Wilkie.

Medical –

Science and medicine have greatly advanced since the early settlers have gone. Many believed in charms and made their own medicine with various herbs. Very seldom was a doctor called. Time and progress changed all that. We have a very modern hospital in the town of Bridgewater. A clinic is held every few months at Riverport and X-rays given to all who wish to have a check-up on tuberculosis. The Board of Health sends a visiting trained nurse to all the schools to check up on the children's health.

Although there are many doctors in nearby towns, the people in our community depend mostly on Dr. G. A. Barss of Rose Bay. Recently his son, Dr. A. H. Barss, opened his office at Riverport and in his father's absence, his competence is well known by his popularity in our community.