



DALVEY-BY-THE-SEA

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Prince Edward Island National Park of Canada is part of a countrywide system of representative natural areas of Canadian significance. The park has a rich and diverse human history, and includes important archaeological and other cultural resources, such as Dalvey-by-the-Sea National Historic Site. As a significant example of Canada's architectural heritage, Dalvey-by-the-Sea can help connect us with our past.

In 1996, the centennial year of the construction of Dalvey-by-the-Sea, Parks Canada and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada erected a plaque and monument at Dalvey, commemorating the building's national historic significance as a fine example of a home built in the Queen Anne Revival style.

Alexander McDonald and Dalvey-by-the-Sea

Alexander McDonald, the original owner of Dalvey, was born in Forres in northern Scotland in 1833. As a young man, he immigrated with his family to the United States and settled in Ohio. By 1863, he had entered the oil business with his brother James. Following a series of successful mergers and acquisitions, by



Alexander McDonald on the verandah – Parks Canada

1892 McDonald had become the president of Standard Oil of Kentucky. Alexander McDonald had also become a very wealthy man.

He married Laura Palmer in 1862. They had a daughter, Laura, who died in February 1895, leaving a husband (Edmund Stallo) and two daughters, Laura and Helena. Not long after their daughter's death, the McDonalds made their first visit to Prince Edward Island, in the summer of 1895. Their son-in-law and granddaughters accompanied them. Following a brief stay in Charlottetown, they relocated to the Acadia Hotel in Tracadie. Before leaving the Island that summer, they decided to buy land nearby and build a summer home.

Everyone Needs a Getaway

At the time when McDonald had Dalvey built it was becoming common for the very wealthy to construct this sort of elaborate seaside retreat. At the turn of



Laura and Helena Stallo – Parks Canada

the 19th century, one way for those who could afford to get relief from the summer heat of the city was to escape to the cooler climate offered along the eastern coast of the United States and in Atlantic Canada. Alexander Graham Bell already had a summer home at Baddeck, in Cape Breton. It was called *Beinn Bhreagh Hall* and was built by Rhodes, Curry and Company, a prominent construction firm located in Amherst, Nova Scotia that would later build Dalvey-by-the-Sea for Alexander McDonald



Dalvey-by-the-Sea, early 1900s – Parks Canada





A Fine Example

Dalvey-by-the-Sea was built in the architectural style known as Queen Anne Revival, which was a popular design in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a choice well suited for a summer home because of the exuberant and lively atmosphere created by the variety and interplay of many design features. The design tends to be asymmetrical, and features a steep roofline with many gables, dormers, bay windows, window groupings and a generous encircling verandah. The effective combination of these elements, as is the case at Dalvey, has the result of catching the light and casting shadows in constantly changing patterns throughout the day.

Queen Anne Revival Buildings are typically constructed by local materials chosen for their appropriateness to the setting. In Dalvey's case, Island sandstone was used for the exterior walls of the ground floor and for the foundation. The extensive use of wood, both inside and out, reflects a long-time Maritime tradition in building. A desired effect in Queen Anne Revival buildings is the creation of a harmonious relationship with the building's environment. At Dalvey, the rusty red of the sandstone, the sandy hue of the stucco, and the green of the shingles help make the house a feature of the landscape.



The impressive fireplace in the central hall – Parks Canada

The Queen Anne Revival design carries through to the interior of the house. For example, the very large central hall, from which all of the downstairs rooms can be reached, is a typical design feature of this style.

The Princesses of Dalvey

After Mrs. McDonald died in 1903, the family visited Dalvey-by-the-Sea less frequently. Alexander McDonald died in 1910, and left an estate of approximately \$15,000,000 to his granddaughters. Laura Stallo married Prince Rospigliosi, an Italian nobleman. Her sister Helena married Prince Murat of France not long after. With a huge inheritance and marriages to European princes, the future looked bright for Laura and Helena. But, by 1930 their inheritance had disappeared as a result of financial mismanagement by their father, Edmund Stallo. Neither marriage proved particularly successful. Prince Murat was a compulsive gambler and he and Helena were divorced before she died at the age of 38. Laura and Prince Rospigliosi were divorced later as well and she returned to the United States to live with her two daughters.

Dalvey Becomes a Hotel

A former employee of the McDonalds, William Hughes, later acquired Dalvey-by-the-Sea. He resold it to William O'Leary, brother of the Bishop of Charlottetown. It was during this period of ownership that many of the furnishings were removed from the house. Captain Edward Dicks bought the property in 1932, with the idea of operating it as a summer resort. Dicks was a local entrepreneur and was well known as a rumrunner during P.E.I.'s lengthy era of prohibition. When Dicks went bankrupt in 1936, George DeBlois assumed ownership. DeBlois was one of Dicks' creditors, and was also the Lieutenant Governor of the Island at the time. Soon after, DeBlois sold the property to the provincial government, which was interested in acquiring Dalvey for inclusion in the new national park. Ownership of Dalvey-by-the-Sea was transferred to the federal government in 1937 when Prince Edward Island National Park was created.

Did You Know?

- Dalvey-by-the-Sea is operated as a summer hotel and dining room under a lease agreement with Parks Canada and is managed by Stanhope Beach Inn Limited. David and Michelle Thompson with Wayne Berry operated the hotel from 1976 to 2011. Mr. Thompson's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Raoul Reymond operated the hotel between 1959 and 1976.
- Dalvey-by-the-Sea was featured in the Sullivan Entertainment film, *Anne of Green Gables* (1985) as the White Sands Hotel.
- The McDonalds' home in Cincinnati was also called "Dalvey". When the Island Dalvey was built, it became "by-the-Sea". The difference in spelling between the Cincinnati and PEI Dalveys is somewhat a mystery.
- McDonald had a wing added to Dalvey in 1899, to accommodate the frequent guests who would come to stay.
- Every season, before returning to Cincinnati, the McDonalds' would host a "ball" for their hired help and local people.

For more information about Dalvey-by-the-Sea National Historic Site, please visit:

www.parksCanada.gc.ca/dalvey

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