

## ABOUT PARTRIDGE ISLAND

The City of Saint John, New Brunswick, was virtually founded overnight by United Empire Loyalists during the early 1780s. Within two years of their arrival, Saint John was incorporated by Royal Charter and growth and development have taken an upward thrust ever since. By the mid-1800s, Saint John was a major industrial and shipbuilding centre and by 1860, it was the fourth largest port by registered tonnage in the British Empire. At the entry to the Saint John Harbour rests an island whose history runs hand-in-hand with the activities of the port; that rocky and foreboding bit of land is called **Partridge Island**.

The first lighthouse on Partridge Island was built in 1791, the 3<sup>rd</sup> in Canada at that time. Partridge Island was the first quarantine station in Canada and as such is a National and Provincial Historic Site. The Island was first used as quarantine station as early as 1785 but received its largest influx of immigrants in the 1840s during the Great Famine in Ireland (the "Potato Famine"). The famine occurred because the staple of the Irish diet, the potato, fell victim to a devastating blight. During this time there were over 4,500 people in quarantine for typhus and cholera on the Island; the hospitals there, however, could only accommodate 200 people. The island had no source of fresh water and therefore had to get it from the mainland. Dr. Collins, the practising doctor on the Island, died of typhus in 1847. There is no record of those who died or were buried there. The cemeteries on the island were consecrated in 1925. Reburial of remains took place in August 1988 in a mainland cemetery (St. Mary's Cemetery on Loch Lomond Road).

On the island there is a large Celtic cross dedicated in 1927 in memory of the Irish immigrants who died of typhus either on their passage to Saint John or on the island after arriving. As many as 2,000 Irish died during this time period although only 600 were buried on the Island. The cross was placed there in 1927 and re-dedicated on August 14, 1985. A smaller replica of this cross was placed at the end of Prince William Street on St. Patrick's Square in 1967.

The remnants of various military training facilities and fortifications from WWI and WWII can still be found on the island. There was a battery radio observation post on the Island during WWII. Over the years many buildings there were torn down because they were a fire hazard. The remaining buildings were burned by vandals in 1999. There is no access to this National and Provincial Historic Site.