

MINISTER'S ISLAND



Miss Addie

LAC E007914036

Chapter Three

ADDIE, BENNY, BILLY AND BEVERLEY ANN

Sir William Van Horne was so charmed with the summer beauties of St. Andrews and its adjacent regions that he instantly hastened across to Minister's Island, purchased the southern end of this great island and at once started upon building a beautiful summer home and improving all sections of his island property. His family spend practically all their summers on this lovely island and they have many visitors. Those visitors cross from the mainland over the Bar at low tide, and stroll or motor alongside Sir William's beautiful home, flower gardens, orchards and other attractions. This island opportunity has proved a great source of delight to tourists who visit St. Andrews by rail and steamboat and by the international motor gateway at St. Stephen.—From "Charlotte County: The Tourists' Opening Door." R. E. Armstrong, April 5, 1926



OPPOSITE

*Coachman Fred Dreyer crossing
the bar. A fantastical scene from
Benny Van Horne's "Copenhoven
Follies of 1919"*

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE



SIR WILLIAM'S will ratified and confirmed the transferral of Minister's Island to his daughter Adaline, which had been deeded to her in 1904. In 1917 there was an ancillary probate of this will which finalized the transfer. The value of the Minister's Island Estate was listed at \$20,000, not including furniture, livestock and art collections which were listed at \$13,545. In 1926 Addie secured complete possession of the Island, picking up the remaining 100 acres from Edwin Andrews.

Addie returned to the Island every summer, along with her mother, and would often be joined there by Benny, his wife Edith and son Billy. The general consensus is that Addie was in some ways her father's true heir, in as much as she seemed to be most like him in some basic ways. Her size aside—for she was no small woman—she loved art. Even in later years, when almost blind, she could give a visitor to the Montreal home a detailed tour of her father's art collection, and in 1937 she was elected Governor of the Art Association of Montreal. She loved cattle, too, carefully maintaining Copenhoven farm at its peak. Like Sir William she had an interest in botany, especially fungi, a hobby she shared with her Aunt Mary and continued after Mary's death in 1904.

Recollections of Addie's time on the Island, from Sir William's death in 1915 to Addie's own in 1941, are rather dim, reaching back beyond living memory, for the most part, but still give a good sense of Addie and the state of Minister's Island under her stewardship. In one respect Addie was quite different from her father. Where Sir William could be either the perfect gentleman or the tough-as-nails businessman, Addie was generally affable and easy going. According to local stonemason John Gibson, "She was an awful nice woman. Everybody loved her, and she loved everybody too." John O'Neill, a descendant of the O'Neill family that ran a local farm and supermarket, remembered her through his father's uncle, a local doctor, as "the kindest kind of person you would ever meet." A genuine person, always smiling, often rather sternly, but in a pleasing way at the same time. "When they would drive in with the horses on their buckboard, Miss Van Horne would always make a point of greeting my great uncle, Henry O'Neill, who was usually sitting on the front of the grocery store. She always had a conversation with him. They were delightful people to deal with."

She had a sense of humour as well. There were always visitors touring the Island, and on rainy days they would lower their heads as they passed under the *porte-cochère* so as to avoid having water drip on their faces. "The townspeople are so polite," Addie remarked to her gardener Bill Clarke on one such occasion. "They always bow their heads when



they pass by.” Benny produced a comical portrait of Addie in a little illustrated series of fantastical misadventures titled “The Covenhoven Follies of 1919,” featuring Addie and her Model-T Ford. In this rather droll production, Addie is referred to as “Cherub,” an affectionate dig at her genial good nature, and comes under the ironic gaze of her somewhat cynical younger brother. After Addie, in an access of frugality, decides on a cheap Model-T instead of something more fitting to her station, like a Bentley or Rolls, she custom orders an especially large door for the vehicle so she can get in and out with greater ease. After she leaves, the salesman calls the mechanic aside and tells him to throw in an extra leaf spring or two, for good measure. On another occasion Addie and her reluctant driver, old Fred Dreyer, find themselves submerged on the bar,



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*Miss Addie, front center, at the
dedication of the Boy Scout Club
House, 1922*

CHARLOTTE COUNTY ARCHIVES

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with just enough car showing for an annoyed Addie to stick her head out the vehicle window. “When I seen the bar and how close it was,” protests Dreyer from his perch on the roof, “I just remembered that we could get home for your lunch time. So I says to myself, remembering how much you thought of your meals, we’ll have to chance it and get Miss Addie home to her lunch at any cost.” Since Benny produced this booklet as gifts for friends and family, Addie would have been well aware of these digs and must have been understood to be of sufficiently good nature to take them in the proper spirit.

Addie was also a conscientious summer citizen and did many good works for the town. In 1907 summer resident Donald MacMaster pre-

Addie, Benny, Billy and Beverley Ann

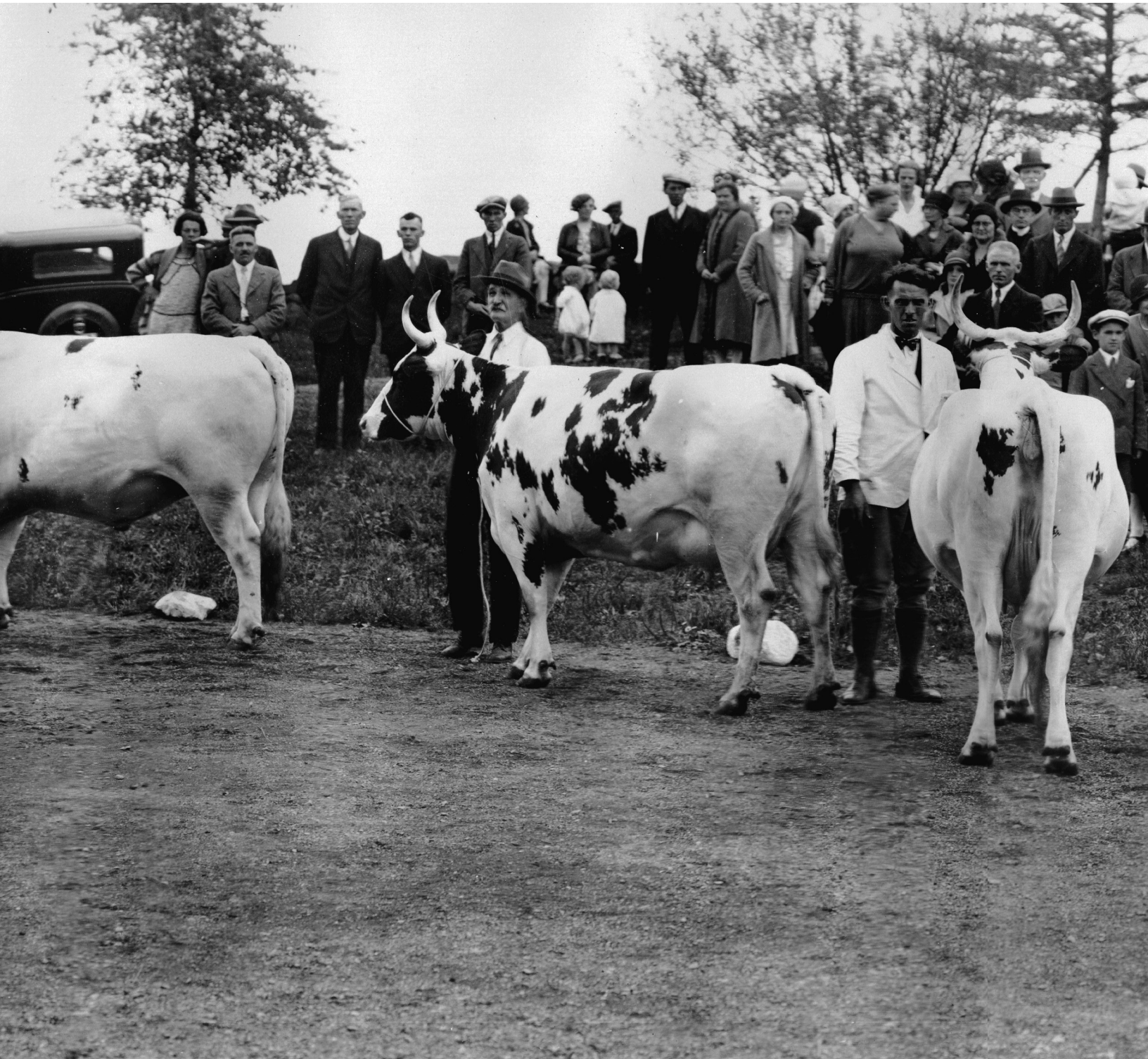


sented the schools of St. Andrews with a British flag, a ceremony at which Addie was present. She had a care for her nephew, Billy, who was a Boy Scout. In 1922 she presented the local Troop with a new Club House on Prince of Wales street. The ceremony included a letter from Sir Robert Baden-Powell, which was hung on the Club House walls. In 1930 she added to this gift a new gymnasium next door. Lady Willingdon, wife of Governor-General Willingdon, attended the ceremony and presented Addie with an honorary medal of merit in recognition of her services to the Scouts. The gymnasium is still used by the Scouts but is now formally the property of Vincent Massey School.

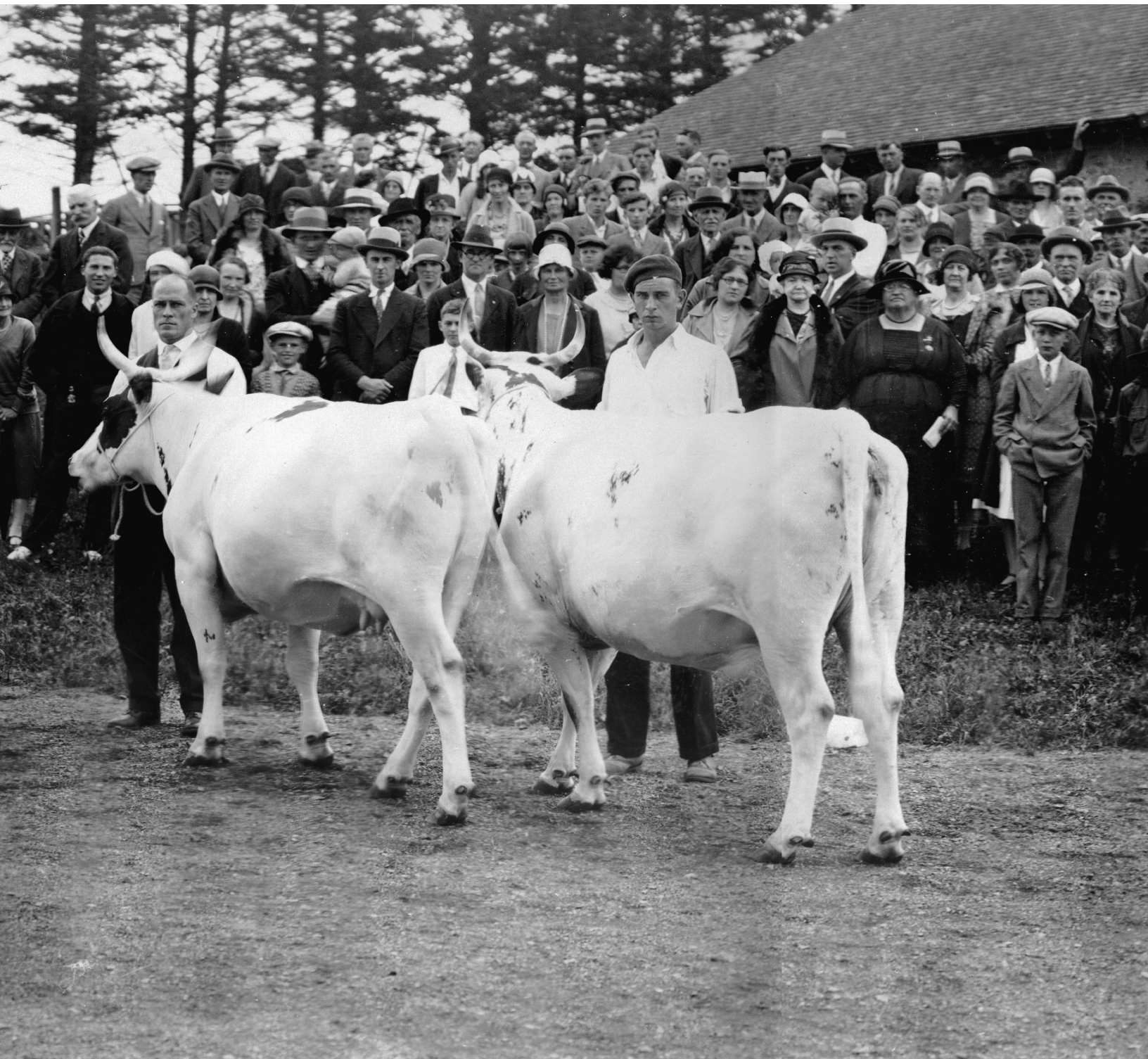
*Miss Addie, third from right, at
the dedication of the Boy Scout
Gymnasium, 1930*

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE

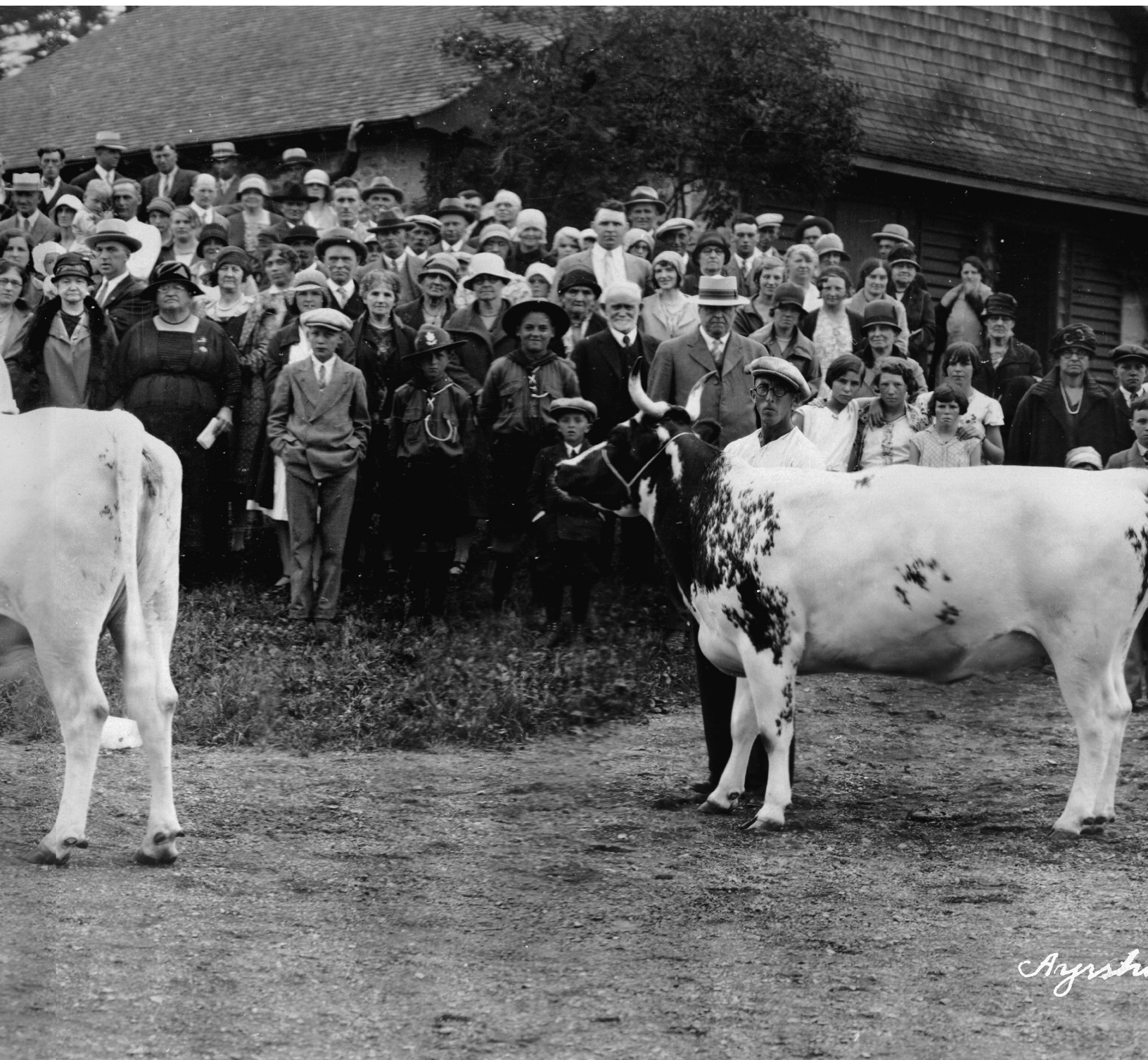
MINISTER'S ISLAND



Addie, Benny, Billy and Beverley Ann



MINISTER'S ISLAND



Addie, Benny, Billy and Beverley Ann



Field Day at Koven-Koven Farm
St Andrews N B Aug. 4 -30

MINISTER'S ISLAND



Addie loved cattle, and in August of 1930 she hosted the annual Ayrshire Cattle Breeders Day. Representatives of the Association came from Ottawa and around the Maritimes. The Scouts themselves were present in large numbers and a striking panoramic photo was taken of the event in front of the ice-house. Miss Addie stands dead-center in the picture with characteristic but misleading dourness of expression. She donated the judging prizes, and her own fine stock of cattle were used for the purpose. "Not the least enjoyable feature of the day," remarked the local newspaper, "was the inspection of the beautiful grounds of Covenhoven, the modern improvements of the estate and the fine live-stock with which it is equipped and which has won many prizes." Even at this event, Addie's kindness and good nature showed through. John Gibson's sister Phyllis won one of the judging events, but declined the prize as she had entered the contest only as a dare and had no interest in cattle or cattle-related prizes. Miss Addie gave her a huge basket of Covenhoven grapes instead and re-assigned the original prize to someone else. When Addie sent the photograph of this event to her nephew Billy in Toronto, he replied: "I received the pictures of your 'cow picnic' and I must say you look very dainty with the broad grin on your face, in the centre of all the bovine celebrities. How many of the children got sick on the barrels of candy? I hope you did not indulge yourself too much."

As under Sir William, Minister's Island remained a groomed and manicured estate with doors open to summer visitors. In 1923 a Colonel Heasley featured a visit to it and St. Andrews in his home silent movie, now in the Provincial Archives. A large and cheerful Addie in a print dress comes out to meet the visitors and, accompanied by her nurse, a slim and frail-looking Mrs. Van Horne is brought out to sit on the veranda in her rocking chair. The day is gusty and sunny. The windmill is spinning at a great rate, and the grounds look lush. There is the Bar Road crossing, and there is Addie's famous Model-T.

A GOOD PICTURE of the operations of the Minister's Island estate in the 1920s and 1930s can be pieced together from the recollections of the surviving members of the Clarke family. Harry Clarke, an Irishman by birth who came to Minister's Island via England and Montreal in 1896, was head gardener for decades, as was his son William (Bill) Clarke after him, and gardeners or general purpose workers in their turn, in some capacity, were his sons Jim, Henry and Bud. In 1993 oral historian Janet Toole conducted interviews with Henry, Jim and also with former head gardener Sandy Miller, whose father Clarence was herdsman on the Island in the twenties and thirties. These recollections come from

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PREVIOUS TWO SPREADS
Ayrshire Field Day, 1930. Miss Addie hosted the event, and her own cattle were used in the judging competitions. She may be seen to the immediate right in the first spread, to the immediate left in the second, holding a paper in her hand.

COURTESY LENA MILLER

LEFT
The great barn, 1920s or 1930s
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them, and to them have been added the memories of local stonemason John Gibson, the second of two generations of Minister's Island stonemasons.

In its heyday under Addie, house staff was 7, garden staff was 6, stable staff was 2, and farm staff was 8, for a total staff of about 23. The butler and female house staff were brought over from England; they wore uniforms and were paid about 10 dollars a month and "found." "Found" meant that in addition to regular pay there were fringe benefits such as farm eggs, milk and ham. The cook ruled her kitchen like a dictator. Even the gardener was not allowed in, but had to leave his produce outside the door. According to John Gibson, in a story that must have been passed down three generations, she once chased Sir William himself out of there with a cleaver. Thompson (Tom) Greenlaw was Farm Manager from the twenties to early forties. He and his family of five children lived in the "Stone House," the Minister's old house near the entrance to the Island. One of Sir William's first masons, Charles Horsnell, and his son-in-law Joseph Gibson, were paid 100 dollars a month and "found." In Depression times, that was good money. When the Island was at its peak, Horsnell and Gibson had a standing order to give the Island buildings a close inspection each spring and fall, and, sight unseen, replace and repoint any stonework that needed maintenance.

The Van Hornes were good people to work for, "the very best," remembered John Gibson, but they maintained a professional distance between themselves and the staff. Farm staff did not use the regular road, but went up over the fields. There was more familiarity between the garden staff, which worked closely around Covenhoven, but even here things were kept fairly formal. There was some consideration for the hard-working house staff, on the other hand. Occasionally, Lady Van Horne and Addie would help with the chores so that they could have time off. There was always a dance in town on Saturday night. If the house staff got everything done in time to catch the last dance, that was a great thing.

More were hired for the busier times in spring and fall. In the winter, staff that had been laid off found extra work. For Art Knijff, from Holland, it was butchering pigs. In exchange for his expertise he took the feet, ears, tail, kidneys and heart, and he'd often say: "In my country, we eat everything but the squeal."

Groundskeeping was labour intensive. Miles of woodland paths had to be mown along their borders, and what are now fields were once lawns. A four-foot horse drawn mower, operated for years by Jim Clarke, was kept in constant operation, for the lawns had to be mown twice a

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RIGHT
Haying on Minister's Island,
1920s or 1930s
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week. A pedometer Clarke once attached to his belt calculated that on average about 30 miles of walking was required for one complete cut.

The gardening operations were huge. In the spring there would be a big rush to get the seed order out. Locally, there were no nurseries, so many depended on the Van Horne greenhouses for seedlings. Bill Clarke supplied all of St. Andrews and half of St. Stephen, his son recalled. He also supplied the locals with a large amount of cut flowers. Whatever was left over after the Van Hornes were taken care of, went to the town. On Sundays the yard would be full of visitors, mostly from St. Stephen and Calais. The gardener's children made a few nickels running tours through the greenhouses.

MINISTER'S ISLAND



The vinery operations were quite elaborate, Jim Clarke recalled:

The greenhouses grew grapes, peaches, pears, plums, cherries, nectarines, all under glass. The first two houses, when you walked in, were Belgian grapes, the Foster seedlings. They were a yellow grape, and then there was a real deep, deep black, I guess, or dark blue grape. Those were the two main types of grapes, and they grew with vines trained up the glass. They'd start at the bottom, then train them up the glass and then tie them, and of course all the bunches hung down from the vines. Some were early grapes and some were late, with a section or house in the vinery for each. So, when the Van Hornes came at the end of June the early grapes were just about ready. They would use that house, and the second after the first was finished. The next section was the peach house. Again, the vines were trained up the glass like a big fan, and it was all tree-ripened fruit. For the peaches there was a net, almost like a seine. The netting was placketed under all these peaches. The pollination was done by brush in a lot of cases. There were no bees that could get in and pollinate these blossoms, so they were done by brush. And the peaches would ripen, and drop into the net, and they would only drop a matter of two or three inches, and they would roll down into these pockets. That's when the fruit was ripe, and that's the only time. It would roll down in there and it would be picked out very gingerly. The pears were Bartlett pears, and the cherries were Byng cherries, and they had the Niagara grapes. And these were in what we called the big greenhouses. They were in a greenhouse that ran up into the field in between the other greenhouse. There was no heat in that one at all. The pears, the canning variety, I've known to be a pound and a half for one pear. There were poles underneath the branches to hold the branches up to keep them from breaking down.

The vines had to be tended or they would go haywire. They had to be cut back in the fall by about 75 percent and cleaned up in the spring. To bug proof them the Clarkes used a mixture of Blackleaf 40, which contained DDT, mixed with soap and nicotine to make it stick. The grapes were so delicate that even brushing them with one's hair could damage them. The peaches needed a net because they were so soft that if they hit the floor, Henry Clarke recalled, they would just explode. They were shipped to Montreal along with other fruit, but Clarke wondered what sort of condition they must have been in when they arrived. The staff were not allowed to eat this fruit; you might have a strawberry. In

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LEFT

The vinery. Sir William loved his grapes, and his vineries grew many varieties of them. They were for eating purposes only.

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THE GREENLAW AND MILLER FAMILIES



LEFT

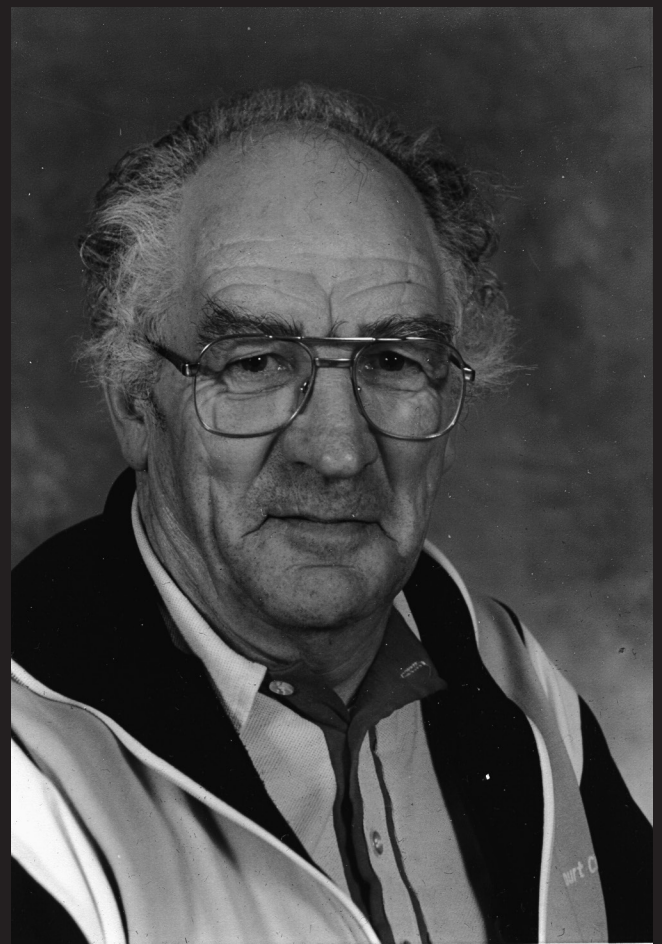
Thompson Greenlaw and Family. Circa 1928. The Greenlaws lived in the Minister's House and Thompson (Tom) Greenlaw remained farm manager until the early forties.

COURTESY LENA MILLER

RIGHT

Sandy Miller. Son of Clarence Miller, below, Sandy Miller worked the gardens of Minister's Island for several decades before leaving to become Head Gardener at the Algonquin Hotel.

COURTESY LENA MILLER



LEFT

Clarence Miller, right, was herdsman on the Island in the twenties and thirties. A characteristic pose, as a congenital eyelid problem required him to lean backwards to see properly.

COURTESY LENA MILLER

THE CLARKE FAMILY

RIGHT

William (Bill) Clarke in his beloved greenhouse. The son of one of the Island's first gardeners, Harry Clarke, Bill Clarke spent a lifetime of service keeping the gardens of first the Van Horne, later the Van Horne Island Club, and finally the Harbour Farm estates in top condition. Under Provincial ownership his services were terminated.

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE



LEFT

One of the Island's first gardeners, Harry Clarke began work on the Island in 1896 and died in St. Andrews in 1931 aged 67. His sons and grandsons worked the Island's gardens after him.

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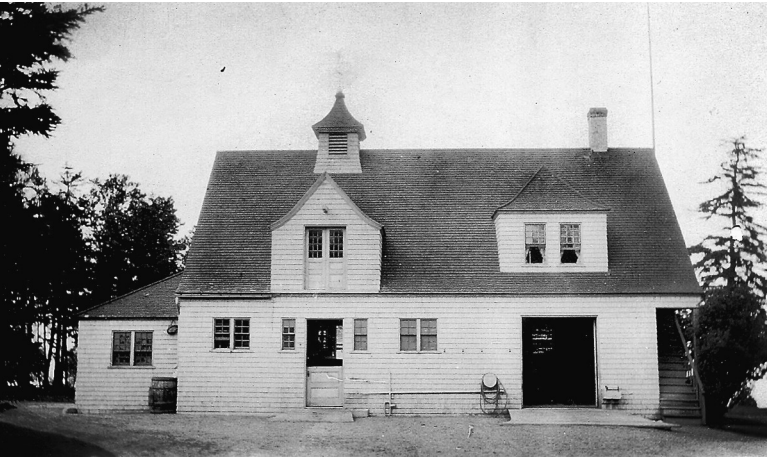


RIGHT

The Clarke family.

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE

MINISTER'S ISLAND



later years after Adaline's death things were a bit less strict; the gardener's children would go to school with nectarines and bunches of grapes, neither of which were available locally.

Outside were Japanese lilacs around the veranda of the house, and some down by the tower. There were three apple orchards—one by the gardener's cottage, one huge one up the avenue as you came up from the barn, and one by the old Andrews house, on top of the hill. There were also a lot of red beeches, an unusual tree for the area. Umbrella trees, beechnut, hazel nut, an old maple nut tree half way down to the tower. A lot of birch trees. Cherry trees in front of Covenhoven itself. A flower garden at the boating green 100 feet long and 6 feet wide, full of alyssum, geraniums, lobelia, purple lobelia for the border, delphiniums, phlox, larkspur, asters, snapdragons, peonies, sweet pleas, gladiolas, and orange dahlias—anything that could be used for cut flowers in the house. Pansies but no roses, just some wild ones down by the tower.

Farming operations were also large-scale. Clarence Miller was a herdsman in those days, and his son Sandy became gardener on the Island in later years. Sandy remembered that stacking the barn with 20 feet of loose hay was one of the hottest, dirtiest and dustiest jobs on the face of the earth. There was no combine on the Island; one would be borrowed from the Shaughnessy farm at Bantry Bay. The Island was a beehive of activity, with twelve to fifteen men on the farm operations. Remembered Miller,

They had about four bays of hens and ducks, and they had a fellow to look after them. And they had a piggery. Twelve to fifteen. They had a lot of these china pigs. They were like a belted one, black and red or something, different from your ordinary white pig. They had treacherous tusked boars. Four kinds of cows—Ayrshires and Dutch Belted, French Canadians. French

Canadians all black, dual purpose, meat and milk. And Holsteins. Two barns, about 20 in each barn. Hanson may have planted apple orchards. They had so many barrels, and they were all down in the cellar of the barn. I can picture it now, barrel after barrel. They'd have to go all through them and sort them out. Grade them. They'd go to Montreal. Same with the milk and butter. Whole milk, cream and milk separated, not pasteurized. The butter room was downstairs in the barn.

There is story that Minister's Island was entirely self-sufficient, but that is a bit of an exaggeration. True, the Island sold a lot of milk and hay. Tons of hay were put up every year, more than could be used, and the local dairies picked up raw milk on the Island every week. True too, that in some ways the tide made it imperative to keep operations as self-contained as possible. The house had a second-floor storeroom, John Gibson recalled, in which many hardware-type sundries could be found, such as oilcloth, tiles, and the like. There was a well-equipped mason's shop and plumbing shop. If you used a bag of cement, you put one back, so the Island always had a full supply of basics on hand. There was portable staging for roof work. On the other hand, John O'Neill remembered that a lot of feed such as oats was sent from O'Neill's farm to Minister's Island, and the O'Neill's town market also made daily grocery deliveries to the Island and slaughtered pigs. Sometimes local blacksmiths were called upon to shoe horses.

The Island also had a couple of weirs. Henry McCurdy and Gordon Cline worked them. Frank O'Halloran was captain of one of Sir William's boats, but also fished the weirs. They lived in camps along the shore of the Island.

Work on the Island was not easy, even under Addie's fairly beneficent watch. Jim Clarke remembers his father Bill "working constantly, constantly." He doesn't remember him ever having a holiday. The job was 365 days a year. The ventilation of the greenhouses, for example, required constant supervision, the fruit being so delicate that it would spoil easily. And besides Bill Clarke there was only one other person tending these buildings. Workers who arrived five minutes after seven in the morning, didn't work that morning. "You came back at one o'clock, and you got paid for the afternoon." Sandy Miller recalled that his father Clarence, who worked on the farm from 1924 to 1941, "never had a day off in that whole time." Later, when he moved off the Island, he would get up at 3 in the morning to beat the tide and still somehow make it home every night.



LEFT

Some outbuildings—from top to bottom, the carriage house, the boarding house, and the stone garage. The building visible to the side of the garage may be Sir William's outdoor studio, constructed in 1909.

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE AND
LENA MILLER



MINISTER'S ISLAND

BENNY, HIS WIFE Edith and his son William (or "Small William" as he was called by his grandparents) were frequent summer visitors. Benny had married Edith Molson, of the Montreal brewing family, in 1906. Even as a teenager, Benny saw the Island only on short vacations, as he was in school first in New York and later in Boston; later working first with the CPR and after that on Sir William's Cuban railroad project.

Like his father and his Aunt Mary, Benny was handy with brush and pen. His letters home from Holbrook's Military School were frequently adorned with humorous pen and pencil sketches of school life, and by the time he was in his late teens they showed considerable ability. He was quite proud of this talent. He produced not only the "Covenhoven Follies," already mentioned, but also two similar but lesser quality works called "A Basketful of Pups" and "Getting an Earful." In 1928, when he was in his late forties, he paid the Todd Company over \$1,200 for 200 reproductions of each of these three booklets.

Like Sir William, too, Benny loved to sail. Sir William bought the first "Uvira" for Benny in 1900, and for the first decade of the century the *Beacon* kept track of his various victories in races from Cape Breton to Saint John and Passamaquoddy Bay. In 1917 Benny ordered a

larger yacht which he called "Uvira II" from the Camden Anchor-Rockland Machine Company in Camden, Maine. This was a combination sailboat and steamboat, custom made, and larger than the original "Uvira," being 79 feet in length and 16 feet across the beam. The captain of "Uvira II" was Daniel Irwin, the brother of Arthur Irwin, who had drowned while working on the "Covenhoven" in 1910. In 1917 Daniel Irwin himself drowned in a boating accident on Chamcook Lake. It's not certain what happened to the "Uvira" or "Uvira II," but in 1930 Benny purchased second-hand

another steam yacht, this one called "Intrepid," which was then renamed "Uvira," perhaps to replace one that had been either sold or destroyed. It was insured for \$60,000, and appears to have been even larger than the others.

Benny loved Minister's Island, even as a teenager, and was a regular summer visitor in later years but there is no mention of him as an active participant in local activities or charitable events. He is only mentioned a few times in the local papers, and there only in connection with

Coachman Fred Dreyer's cottage

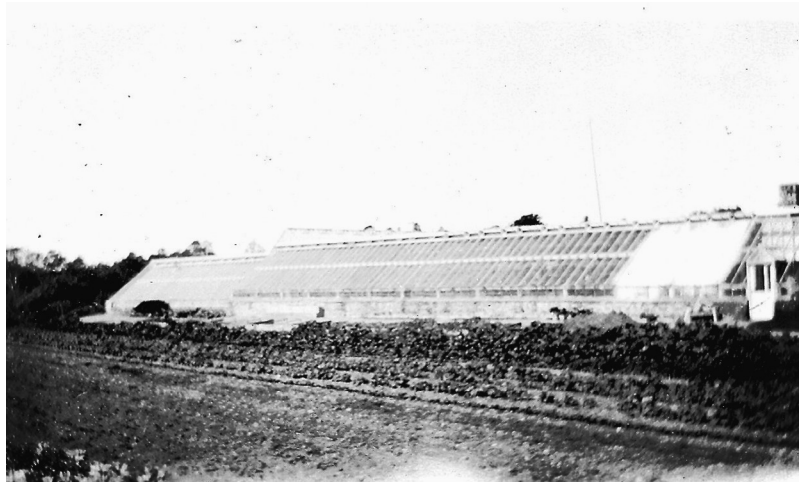
COURTESY HENRY CLARKE



his yachts and improvements on Minister's Island. In 1916 and 1917 for instance he was in charge of the installation of a steam heating system at Covenhoven, which added sixty radiators to the house. In 1917 a two-car stone garage was added to the property for the vehicles which he had purchased the preceding summer. A gasoline store house was built on the beach below the tower, the coachman's house was altered and enlarged, with a dining room added to it; the stables were repaired, and a new mechanic's workshop was erected. That season the tennis court was entirely remade, with an English expert employed for the purpose.

Though a talented, wealthy and in his way successful man, Benny laboured in the shadow of his famous father. He was well educated but the jobs he secured afterwards, on Sir William's Cuba railway project and in the CPR, were all provided courtesy of his father's extensive business connections. Certainly, Sir William would have been a hard act to follow under any circumstances, but Benny seems to have acquired a rather fatalistic attitude and unlike his father may not have had a great deal of self-esteem. He may be referring to himself in the third person in his prelude to "The Covenhoven Follies" where he recounts the brief story of the "hard working non-entity in a large corporation" who had gone as far up the ladder in that organization as he was capable, being "not endowed enough mentally to go further and he knew it." He also seems to forecast his own fate in this individual, who fell heir to a vast fortune and was able to realize diverse dreams of speed and daring but who was never really satisfied with his toys and settled down in a bungalow on a remote glacier. Addie, he writes ironically, was a model girl who worshipped her father, whose likes and dislikes were her likes and dislikes, and who considered his lightest word a law higher than the Unitarian Creed. Benny may have been a more independently minded person than Addie, and perhaps a more entertaining conversationalist, but seems to have been an undisciplined and unsatisfied person.

Sir William once said that he drank as much as he could, smoked as much as he could, ate as much as he could, and didn't give a damn about anything. There was some humorous bluster here, but in Benny the love of a good drink came strongly to the fore. John Gibson tells the



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One of the vineries

Undated photo

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE

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story of an uncle who, as the new man in W. E. Mallory's livery stable and consequently lowest on the totem pole, was given the Benny Van Horne run. His job was to pick up Benny at Minister's Island, drop him off at the Algonquin bar and wait for him to come out. Unfortunately for the poor coachman, Benny was the first one in and last one out, and the coachman was required to wait there in every weather. To make matters worse, he was never spoken to either on the trip over or back. One morning, says Gibson, the butler came over to the gardener's house to ask for help in getting Benny out of bed, assuming that Benny had really tied one on that night. But Benny was dead. The coroner's report for August 20, 1931, stated that Richard Benjamin Van Horne had died of cirrhosis of the liver. He was only 54. He was buried in the local cemetery, after a service which included many CPR notables. The next year, at Covenhoven, his widow married Randolph Bruce, the former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, now Canadian Ambassador to Japan.

If Benny showed the first signs of decay in the Van Horne line, these became full-blown in his son William Cornelius Covenhoven Van Horne, Junior, nicknamed Billy. Educated at private schools and at Lower Canada College, Billy was an enthusiastic sportsman who won many trophies at motor boat racing and yachting, and was a member of the Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club. During the war he was at Halifax with the Sea Cadets. He organized the Auburn Motor Sales Company and served as its president for some time. In the 1930's he worked as a pilot and mechanic for Skyways Limited, an Ontario flying company operating out of Toronto which offered flying lessons, aerial photography, charter flights, and mechanical repairs. He was there in 1930 during one of the biggest media events of the year—the arrival of the R-100 dirigible from Britain on its first Atlantic crossing—was allowed to inspect the craft and sent off photos to the Toronto papers. He would sometimes fly down to Minister's Island for a quick summer vacation in his seaplane. A photograph survives of him in his flying gear.

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LEFT

Richard Benedict (Benny) Van Horne. Benny inherited his father's talent for drawing, but took heavily to drink.

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BELOW

As a student at Holbrook's Military School in New York, Benny frequently decorated his letters home with humorous sketches. Here a doleful scene at examination time.

LAC MG29 A60 VOL.88 (1895)

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A sad case.

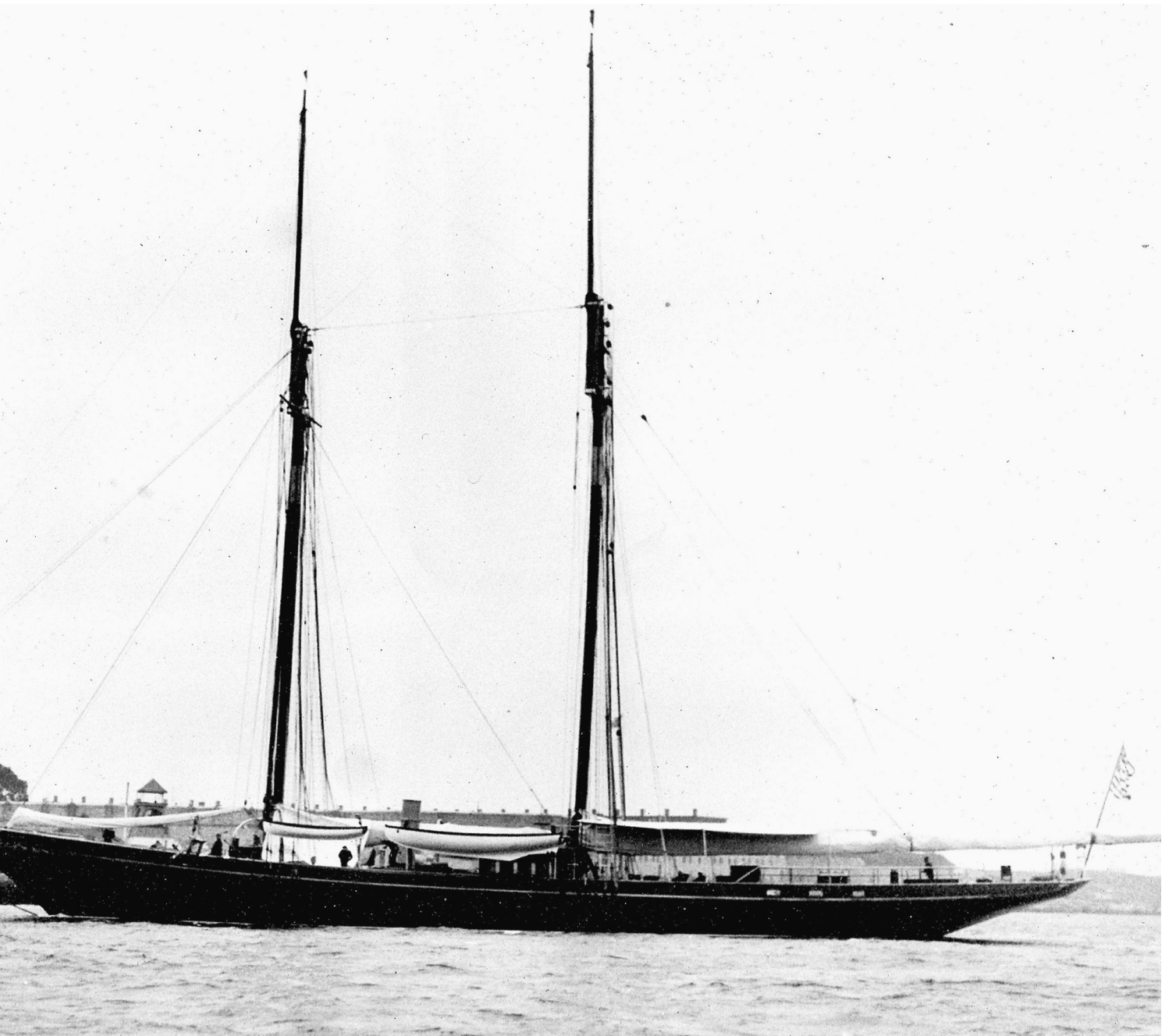
MINISTER'S ISLAND



Benny Van Horne's yachts. To the left "Uvira" One or Two, and to the right "Intrepid," renamed "Uvira" in 1930

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE

Addie, Benny, Billy and Beverley Ann



FOLLOWING SPREAD

TOP LEFT, *Edith Molson and son William (Billy) Van Horne, 1907* LAC E007914030

BOTTOM LEFT, *Sir William and "Small William"* LAC E00794034

RIGHT, *Billy and sailboat* LAC E007914038



Billy never needed to work. His grandfather, who spoiled him shamelessly and allowed him to destroy valuable, hand-made model boats on the Island's pond, had left him \$200,000 in his will. Billy married his first wife, Audrey Edythe Fraser, of a well-to-do Montreal family, on November 29, 1928, and had a daughter Beverley Ann born to them in 1932. Billy's marriage with Audrey Fraser did not end on a happy note. On August 14, 1934 she and some friends had driven to a dance in St. Stephen, and on her way back, in foggy conditions, she drove over a cliff at Oak Bay, just outside of St. Stephen, and crashed into a dry creek bottom. Her skull was fractured and she died after admittance to Chipman Hospital in St. Stephen. The cause of death was ruled accidental, and no autopsy was performed, but there was another occupant in the car, a man named Nels Svenson, whose relationship to her was not mentioned. Local resident David Caughey recalled that this man was the head waiter at the Algonquin Hotel and that after this "accident" he was never seen in the area again. Implying, it seems, that there were other factors involved not mentioned in the newspaper account, and that all may not have been well in her marriage with Billy. Billy married Margaret ("Billy") Hannon, of Toronto, the next year.



Addie soldiered on at Minister's Island. It must have been rather lonely for her at times. Benny was gone, her mother had died in 1929, Sir William in 1915 and her beloved Aunt Mary in 1904. And of course both her grandmothers, who had been regular summer visitors to the Island in the early years, were distant memories. It's not certain just how often Billy came down to visit. Addie seems to have fallen ill in the late thirties. In one of his many affectionate letters to her from Japan, Randolph Bruce made concerned reference to the "many troubles" with which she was surrounded. That was in 1938. In 1940, Miss Addie spent her last summer at Covenhoven but was quite infirm. It took a team

of men and some special equipment to remove her from the house. A block and tackle was set up over the bed, and a platform was built on the back of a truck to hold a special sedan chair that had been hammered together out of lawn furniture. Henry Clarke, just four years old at the time, remembers that event because he was chosen to sit in it while the men made sure it could safely negotiate the stairs. Miss Addie returned to Montreal that fall and died on Feb. 24, 1941.

In her will of 1939, Addie had bequeathed her Minister's Island Property not to Billy but to his daughter Beverley Ann. In the summer of 1941 Billy and Margaret Hannon purchased the Thomas Turner O'Dell house in St. Andrews at the corner of Montague and Augustus streets, a handsome neo-colonial structure. In Beverley Ann's minority the Minister's Island Estate was administered jointly by Mrs. Bruce and the Royal Trust Company. Billy and Margaret were given permission to remove a few personal items from Covenhoven, as well as some encyclopedias for little Beverley Ann to use in her studies. The estate also provided them with a regular supply of chickens for their kitchen, and the tennis court was rolled so that Beverley Ann could play on it.

Many stories survive of Billy's antics on Minister's Island. It's not certain just when these took place, perhaps some while Addie was still alive, but it's probable that with restraining influences out of the way he had freer reign after Addie's death. Like his father he was an alcoholic, showing up drunk at church and the Algonquin pool room. A later owner of the Island wondered at a series of small boxes attached to various trees around the Island and was informed by then Manager Pat Pethick that these were where Billy hid his liquor. They provided him with a much-needed drink while roaring around the Island in his various cars and motorcycles, some of which were driven off cliffs and whose wreckage was still evident in the 1960s. He was particularly fond



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of Red Indian motorcycles, powerful machines with a “suicide shift” on the side. With these he would do some amateur logging, and when one was destroyed he would order in another. He had a loyal band of young adults around him, and equipped them with war-surplus .22 caliber rifles. He also had a cabin on the north end of the Island—quite

a handsome affair, and still in existence, though fallen into ruins—in which he once got drunk with a bear cub. Like

his father he loved boats. He took over stewardship of the “Uvira” and/or “Uvira II.” There is a story

that he destroyed one of these boats, but that is not certain. He also had smaller boats such as

the “Gilda Grey,” “N. Mason” and “June Bug,” derelicts which he had fixed up. According to

former gardener Sandy Miller, these boats were just an escape for Billy. “He’d load up with liquor and a bunch of cronies and away they’d go.”

Myth and fact become one with Billy, and it is hard to know which is which.

One local story has it that Billy committed suicide in his Augustus street house, and that the affair was hushed up in the press.

This story is not true, however. Billy died at Weir, Quebec, in September 1946 after what the obituary described as a short illness. Billy

had requested that his body be brought to St. Andrews for burial as a Roman Catholic. He was

formally interred beside his father on Sept. 9 of that year. He was only 39.

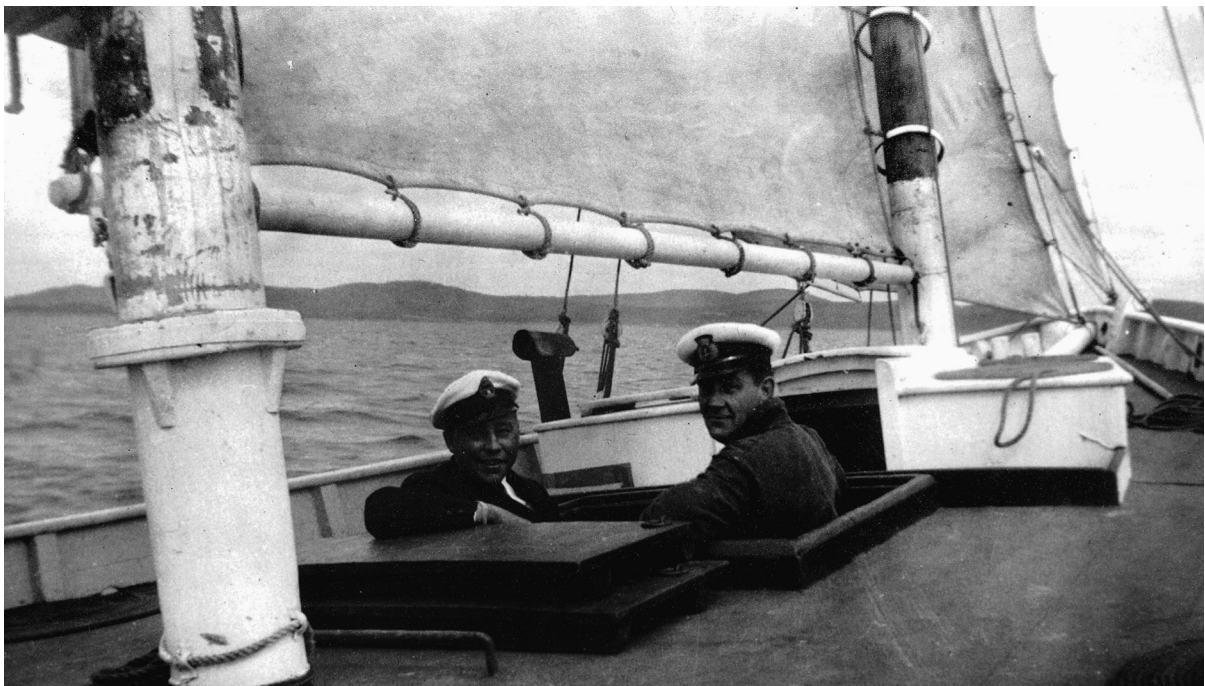
Almost immediately the Augustus Street house was sold to the Cowans, long-standing summer residents

from Montreal, and Margaret seems to have completely severed her connection with St. Andrews, indicating that her connection with the town and with Minister’s Island was only ever by way of marriage.

It does not seem that Benny’s widow had much more interest in Minister’s Island than Margaret. A series of letters between the Royal Trust and Bill Clarke, head gardener, show that immediately after Addie’s death, Mrs. Bruce was desirous of cutting costs on the Island and that this concern became more acute with time. The wharf was rotten and needed rebuilding—perhaps it could be partially rebuilt, using logs from the Island or salvaging some from the part that would not be



Addie, Benny, Billy and Beverley Ann



MINISTER'S ISLAND



~
*Judge Berry and Senator
Matthews, of Tom's River, New
Jersey, enjoyed pastoral summers
on Minister's Island in the late
forties and early fifties*

PANB 367-78

~

repaired. The tennis court is in bad shape—it would be good to have it rolled for little Beverley Ann to play on, but it cannot be resurfaced. The stairs by the tower are falling apart—put up a warning sign or remove them altogether. Perhaps a second-hand lawnmower could be found somewhere. Payroll is rather high; is there really enough work for four gardeners in the winter? Consider growing vegetables in the greenhouses in conjunction with the fruits, as selling these might pay for the 25 tons of coal needed to heat the greenhouses in the winter. Some of the flower beds could be levelled and made into lawn, such as those along the walk leading to the house. Present shrubs can be maintained but no replacements.

By 1944 Mrs. Bruce decided that seeding and planting of annuals should be reduced to “a few showy shrubs, placed where they will best attract the eye,” that flower beds should be rotated for cultivation every other year, and finally, in 1945, that staff on Minister's Island should not increase during spring and fall, but become a kind of mobile workforce, moved from farm to gardens to fields whenever need required. Henry

Clarke remembers his father sitting up late at night poring over seed catalogues, trying to get his order down to about thirty dollars. All this time, in a kind of irony that doesn't seem to have been perceived by Mrs. Bruce, there were complaints by the Royal Trust that the grounds were becoming increasingly unkempt, with long grass growing at the foot of trees, weeds by the roadside, hedges overgrown, and the coachman's cottage looking "as if it were abandoned in a hay field."

Through this period Mrs. Bruce began to look for summer tenants. In the fall of 1941 signs were put up at the entrance to the Island and near the house itself advertising "Residence to Let," in the hope of catching the eye of some summer visitor wandering the grounds. There was a ray of hope in 1944 when, as a result of the efforts of Mrs. Redmond and Miss Shaughnessy, summer residents, the Wartime Convalescent Homes did an inspection, but nothing came of this. The old Tait house on the golf links, and the old Marine Hospital on Montague Street, were used instead. Finally in the summer of 1949, Covenhoven was rented by Judge Berry and Senator Matthews from Tom's River, New Jersey.

The Judge and the Senator were friends by reason of their marriage to two sisters. They rented Covenhoven for about \$1,000 a summer—a pretty good deal, as it came mostly intact from Addie's day. Though cost-cutting measures had caused it to have gone downhill somewhat, the Island was still quite gorgeous, the house itself was more or less in peak condition, and the building came complete with a cook, maids and chauffeur.

This elderly foursome enjoyed retired and genteel summers at Covenhoven. They raised the American flag on the house, dressed formally, liked to have tea on the veranda, and take long, leisurely dinners. They are remembered chiefly by Henry Clarke, a young teenager who picked up some pocket money washing dishes. They wouldn't come to dinner, he recalls, until they heard the gong, and the length of time they spent at the table was somewhat annoying because he liked to play cards in the evening after everything had been cleaned up and put away. "They were nice," he remembers, "a little bit strict. They were la-de-da when it came to tea and all that stuff like that. That was the only time I ever saw such formality because I hadn't been there for the Van Horne part of it. They enjoyed themselves. They were always dolled up, the men wore suits and ties, the Judge a straw hat. The Senator was an old sea captain. He'd have his yarns with you, so would the Judge. The two old ladies were nice."

Though they didn't really like it when Henry cut the grass at tea-time, they would sometimes snag him for a game of croquet if they were



PREVIOUS SPREAD

LEFT

Billy in flying gear

PANB 367-15

TOP RIGHT

*Moose Manor, Billy's cabin
retreat on the north end of the
Island*

PANB 367-13

BOTTOM RIGHT

*Billy onboard "Uvira" with farm
manager and friend Ivor (Pat)
Pethick*

PANB 367-35



MINISTER'S ISLAND



ABOVE

Fred Dreyer, faithful coachman to the Van Hornes for many decades, poses with little Beverley Ann Van Horne, circa 1934. For a time Dreyer also owned a stable business in St. Andrews and a farm in Chamcook.

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OPPOSITE

Beverley Ann Van Horne, middle, with Henry Clarke, right

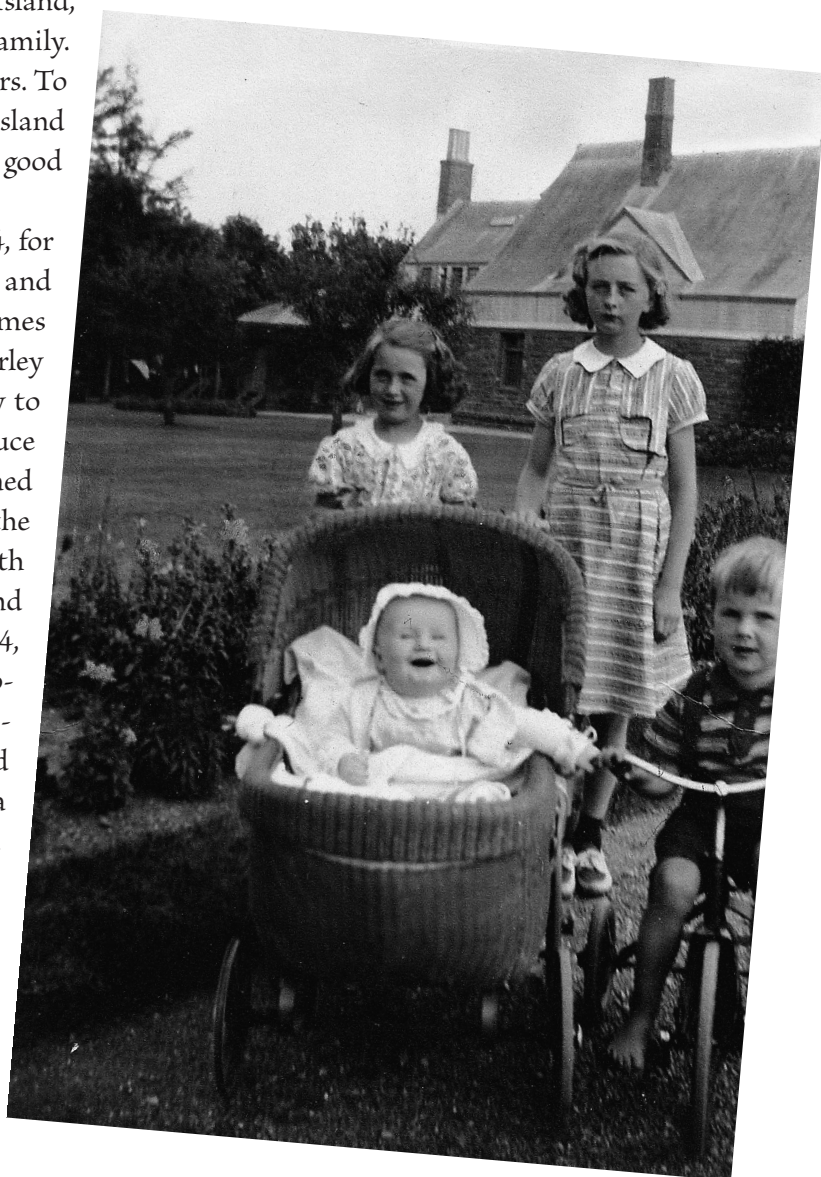
COURTESY HENRY CLARKE

short-handed. "I'd get out there in my bare feet and they'd shoot my ball into the flower beds or something. I'd go to pick it up and they'd say, 'No, you have to play it from there!' I'd say: 'If I do that my dad will have my head!'"

Luckily for posterity, this foursome took lots of photographs, some of which survive in the Clarke family and the Provincial Archives. They show that they were not alone on Minister's Island, but were often in the company of friends and family. It was really quite a retreat for these vacationers. To have been able to pick up this extraordinary island retreat for such a price must have seemed too good to be true.

The Judge and Senator were gone by 1954, for the St. Andrews summer directory for 1954 and 1955 shows that the occupant was now James Beattie, the husband of Beverley Ann. If Beverley Ann had had to wait until her 21st birthday to take over control of the estate from Mrs. Bruce and the Royal Trust, this would have happened in 1953, so probably this is the main reason the Judge and Senator were no longer there. With her mother having died when she was two, and an alcoholic father who died when she was 14, it is little wonder that Beverley Ann had problems. At 17 she made headlines when she disappeared from her Montreal home and was found by private detectives a month later living in a Vancouver boarding house and working as a dishwasher. The newspapers made a great deal over the plight of the "poor little rich girl."

During her brief residency on Minister's Island, she is remembered by Algonquin staff as one who liked to drink and party. On leaving the Hotel bar she would invite the entire staff over, and many would go. Al Redner recalled that "The Beverley Van Horne we knew was an alcoholic. She had a butler, she had a maid, and she had a husband. The husband was fooling around with the maid. I don't think she was fooling around with the butler but they ran the house and we would go over there and party all night long. She was a very kind person;



MINISTER'S ISLAND

she was a little off the wall, because of all of her money and the alcohol she was consuming, but she was a nice person. What we saw at Beverley Van Horne's was a spoiled girl who was into drugs and alcohol and a husband who was fed up and carrying on with the maid. Beverley certainly had no purpose for living; she was just spoiled wealth." Bellman Terry Grier was there on one occasion. He remembers being struck by the enormous beer-freezer; he says a lot of it was being consumed on that occasion. Head bellman Cuddy O'Brien attended one party. Beverley Ann made a grand entrance, he recalls, descending the staircase "dressed like a swan." That night Mr. O'Brien slept in Sir William's bed.

There were other antics. One day, recalls Henry Clarke, as she was rowing over to the mainland to attend church, she lost an oar, but instead of simply using the other to bring the boat close enough to pick it up, she dove in after it. No church that day. That night, he says, she did a striptease on the piano in Addie's old black clothes.

Unlike her father and like Mrs. Randolph, Beverley Ann didn't put a great deal of work into maintaining the estate. In 1955, she sold the Island's herd of Ayrshire cattle. Probably she considered the farm just another unnecessary expense. After 1955, she seems to have stopped coming. Locals and Algonquin staff remember this time as one in which it was easy to party and have overnight assignations on Minister's Island, otherwise known as being accidentally stranded by the tide. At that time, remembers bellman Alan Casey, the beach house was open, with glass scattered about. No door, you just walked in. The gardener, Mr. Clarke, didn't seem to mind.

You'd put the radio on, sit around and chat, dance, whatever. Some people would drift off to look at the view from another location. It was really a classy little spot. The swimming pool was down on the beach. They did their swimming, mostly at low tide, because you had the pool full of salt water. It was a beautiful little beach house. You'd go down under the first floor and there was a little changing area; keep going out the door, and walk down a cement spiral staircase, which was a part of the beach house itself. The pool has filled in a lot since then. Even in those days you could just see remnants of it. The caretaker would probably empty it out of rocks, sand and whatnot.

In 1959 the Royal Trust Company, acting on Beverley Ann's wishes and doubtless those also of Mrs. Bruce, put the Island up for sale. It was about to pass into American hands. 

Addie, Benny, Billy and Beverley Ann



ABOVE

Sale of Ayrshire cattle, 1955. Shortly after she took ownership of Minister's Island, Beverley Ann sold the Island's Ayrshire cattle, a sign that she did not share her Aunt Addie's attachment to the Van Horne summer estate.

COURTESY HENRY CLARKE

NEXT SPREAD

Bar Scene at low tide, with road grading machine in foreground

COURTESY LENA MILLER

DEATH

After Van Horne built his home on Minister's Island the CPR began to promote the place as offering "the novelty once experienced by the Children of Israel—that of going through a passage in the sea which had fallen back on either side." The fate of the pursuing Egyptians was never mentioned, but for those who lived and worked on the Island the fast-rising tides were a perennial concern. Over the last 100 years many have drowned trying to beat the tide.

The first death in the Van Horne era occurred in November of 1905 when two men, George Henderson and George Buhot, the former an employee on the Island, attempted to cross the bar while the tide was rising over it. They had done this before, when the tide was even higher, but this time a skittish horse, alarmed by the rising water, foundered out into a deep gully, causing the two men to abandon their carriage. Henderson was carried into deep water and was later found washed up in a nearby weir, while Buhot, resuscitated by Island employees who had been watching events from the shore, barely escaped with his life.

The fall of 1907 provided the locals with a number of thrilling near-death stories courtesy of the Minister's Island bar. On the same October day that Miss Addie Van Horne fell overboard from the "Covenhoven" and had to be towed to

shore, Ms. Beatrice Andrews, the daughter of Sir William's neighbour Edwin Andrews, came within a horse's whisker of losing her life. Though experienced crossing the bar, Ms. Andrews did not take into account the possible panic of the horse she was driving. She started over as the tide was lowering, as she had done many times before, but this time her horse stepped into a hole and panicked, stumbling out into deeper water. Ms. Andrews got out to rectify matters when the horse panicked again and plunged away, leaving her unprotected against the swiftly flowing currents, which swept her out into the channel. Her

sister had been watching from an upstairs window and summoned her

father but by the time Mr.

Andrews got his boat to where his daughter had

last been seen, he found

her floating unconscious just beneath the

surface. Fortunately for Beatrice,

the prompt attentions of her father and Dr. Gove managed to bring her back to life.

Two weeks later there was another near fatality. Eugene Worrell and Frank Miller decided to cross the bar from the Island to the shore when the tide was on the flood, ignoring the shouted warnings of James Henderson, whose brother George had died there two years before. Once again, the horse was the unpredictable variable in the equation. Falling into a hole, the carriage overturned and the two men bailed out. Miller



ON THE BAR

was kicked in the head and chest by the horse while clinging to it, and by the time help arrived both men were almost completely exhausted by their efforts to keep a grip on the carriage. The horse was drowned by the waves and was later towed to shore, still attached to its carriage. The *Beacon* provided a fitting moral to this story when it noted that to attempt the bar when the tide was on the ebb was dangerous enough, but to attempt it when it was on the flood was courting death.

The summer of 1910 saw Arthur Irwin, deckhand on the “Covenhoven,” fall overboard and drown, and a large funeral at Chamcook Church at which Sir William himself was present. It also saw the near-drowning of Andrew Reed, Sir William’s second coachman, who was delayed in getting the mail and attempted to cross the bar to the Island while the tide was on the flood. Once again, the horse stumbled in the rising water, broke the whiffle tree and plunged out into deep water, dragging Reed behind him. The horse got free somehow and swam to shore, but Reed was left clinging to a nearby tide pole and was only rescued at the last minute by some men on the Island who had been watching the event.

Horses did not respect the bar any more than humans. In the summer of 1912 a horse belonging to Acheson Hartford which was tied to a barn at Minister’s Island broke its leash and started for home while the tide was on the flood. The heavy weight of the carriage in the deep water pulled the animal down and it was drowned.

A double tragedy took place in August of 1917 as Hugh McQuoid, a farmhand on the Minister’s Island estate, accompanied by Annie Murphy, housemaid, attempted to cross the bar one night on their way back from a dance in town. This against the warnings of their friends, but this time no one was around to help. It is not certain exactly what happened that night, but the

next day a fisherman found the dead horse still attached to its carriage entangled in his weir, and in a nearby cove the body of Mr. McQuoid, part of the horse’s harness still in his hands, was discovered as well. It was surmised that he had gotten out in the water and was swept away from the carriage. Annie Murphy’s body was never recovered.

The summer of 1954 saw a double drowning. Two men on a short vacation—Daryl Morton, 24, of Sussex, N.B., a lineman with the New Brunswick Telephone Company; and Albert Boutilier, 30, of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, a gunner with the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery Regiment at Lake Utopia—had their car swamped by the rising tide and were drowned attempting to get to shore. Their vehicle was found abandoned on the bar, and some eight hours later the men themselves were found floating not far from shore.

Jane Hossler remembered that when her family owned the Island they would frequently warn tourists picking mussels or clams on the bar of the danger they faced if they were not careful of the tide. “You know folks it’s fine for you to dig mussels or clams or go beachcombing or what have you, but when this tide starts coming in, it comes in really fast, and if you get stuck or have car problems, you’re going to get swept away, and it’s mighty cold water.”

In October of 2004 two students at the local community college, returning at night from Minister’s Island, attempted to beat the tide. Leaving their car on the Island and heading towards a light on shore, but not realizing that the bar took a turn to the left, they wandered out into deep water and 21-year-old Joshua Brown of Oromocto was drowned. His body was discovered on the shore of the Island several weeks later. 