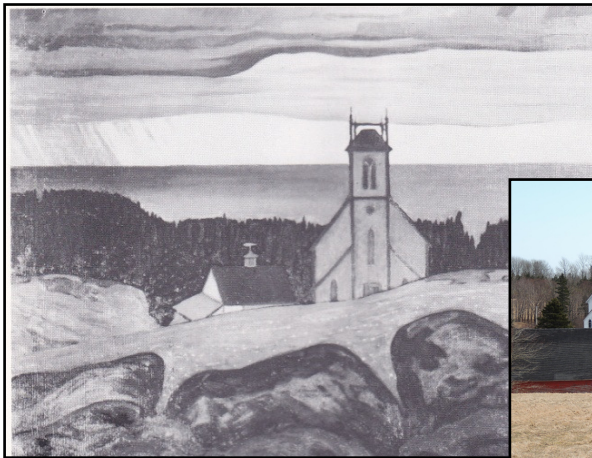


Petite Riviere

There is magic in the *Petite* air. Those who visit Petite, return. Those who live in Petite do not wish to live anywhere else. Artists over the decades have come, ever attempting to capture this Petite magic. Among those taking up the challenge was Group of Seven master, J.E.H. MacDonald, painting ***Church by the Sea*** in 1924.

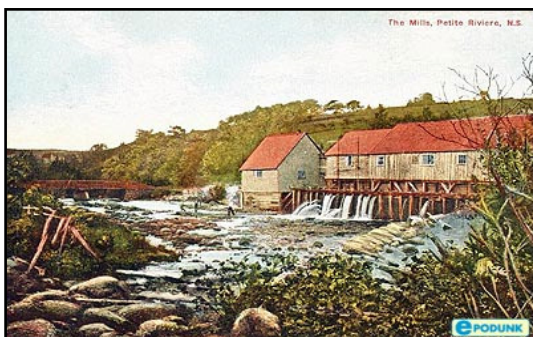


Those who love nature marvel at Petite's treasures. During the summer people pour into the campground and rentals and onto the beaches surrounding Petite Riviere.

For the permanent residents, the serenity and beauty invite year-round creative pursuits, and its beaches offer inspiring all-season recreational walks. To be sure, folks living in

rural locales often see their place as special. But the virtues of Petite Riviere are confirmed over and over by visitors addressing locals with the envious judgement, "Oh, you are so lucky to live here!"

Ice-age drumlins roll down to Petite's Atlantic shore, jagged with ancient outcrops of rock, yet made accommodating by miles of sandy beach. A small river, named *Petite Riviere* by the explorer Samuel de Champlain in 1604, twists, turns and flows down through the hills to the estuary where flocks of migrating waterfowl seek shelter. Once dotted with small mill operations, the river is now a simple, unadorned natural beauty, alive



with many species of fish, including the Atlantic salmon which the Petite was once famous for.



The province's most popular camping park, Risser's Beach, is nearby, and now it features a long, winding boardwalk for exploring



the nature-rich back bay of the estuary.

The famous Crescent Beach, just two minutes from Petite, stretches a mile and a quarter from the shore out to the LaHave Islands, settled first by Europeans in the 1760's and still a place active with fisher folk. Facing the shores of Petite is Cape LaHave, a 2400 acre island with the status of *common land*. Preserved in perpetuity, with no human

habitation, not even paths, LaHave Island is a windswept wilderness which will thrill any contemporary explorer. A bit more accessible is the 5 km shore line hiking trail between Green Bay and Broad Cove.

Samuel de Champlain, whose ship, Le Don de Dieu, anchored off Cape LaHave for four days having just crossed the Atlantic from France on his first voyage of exploration, drew a map of these physical treasures, and included was the site of a Mk'maq settlement in the estuary. The aboriginal peoples considered



Petite a fine area for summer encampments. In the modern day, folks swarm into Petite and the Green Bay area in July and August to enjoy the beaches, the shore-line walks, and the holiday ambiance.

Petite is as alive with the pursuits of its residents as it is alive with natural beauty. There is not the forest and fishing industry that the 19th



and 20th centuries knew, so community life and trade are different, the demographics have changed. But the community is a vital and vigorous one.

The rural route mail delivery numbers some 280 stops in historic Petite and around to neighbouring communities such as Crousetown (where Petite Riviere Vineyards has established itself). Its primary school has an enrolment of 90 pupils. The Fire Hall, the Petite General Store, the Wesley United Church are alive and well. There is an antique store, a fine art and crafts gallery (Maritime Painted Saltbox) and a crafts and gifts store (Mariner Craft). And recently, a rug-hooking center has opened.



If the physical beauty of Petite and area means residents are lucky to live here, then it can also be said that the mix of people should be especially appreciated. There are residents whose families came at the time of early settlement. There are those who have worked in the forest or been to sea during their work life. While quite a number of residents are retired, Petite is home to many families – who work locally in Bridgewater or commute up the highway to other communities. When a Fire Department breakfast is held, when a concert is organized by The Little River Folk during the summer, or when a public meeting is held in a matter of public concern, the true variety of backgrounds is manifest. There are many who have moved to Petite 'from away', yet they have become full and active members of the community, not only accepted, but embraced.

It has been observed that rural life in Nova Scotia, and elsewhere for that matter,



is in decline, relative to urban Canada. Petite, undaunted, remains a vital community, alive with all sorts of activity and pursuits, and community spirit. Its defense of its small rural school is one example. Its plan to create a community park right at its center, on land that Covey Boatworks has agreed to donate for this purpose, are just two examples.

Petite Riviere is a warm and welcoming community. It is also a place where deep friendships between villagers

and those from away can form. Quite possibly ***Your Place*** is in Petite Riviere!

Chris Gill