

SWIMMING IN HANTSPORT

Swimming has always been popular in Hantsport, and it would seem local beaches had a high rating in the early days. In an article appearing in Port and Province of 1936 extolling the virtues of the town to "prospective residents, manufacturers and tourists," we find, "...but not all (towns) can offer a mile of golden sandy beach, laved by tidal waters in which young and old can swim in safety, under the "watchful eye of a municipal lifeguard and swimming instructor. We make no sweeping boast about this, but we "wonder if there is another town in the province, especially one of less than a thousand population, that takes such a direct and practical interest in the safety and comfort of its resident and visiting swimmer."

It would appear from the information that the town employed a lifeguard around 1935 who was on duty from two hours before until two hours after high water, when these occurred between 8a.m. and 6 p.m. Later, instruction was added and much later, a float with diving board was provided.

We were especially interested in finding out who had swum across the Avon. We have come up with five names and there are probably more. They are Captain Charles Lawrence, who swam it early in the century and later Jack Swain, Harold Hart, Bill Murray and Reg McLatchy. The venture was not devoid of danger, and it is to be noted that these swimmers carefully studied the tides and currents and were always accompanied by a boat. Two of these men, Hart and Murray, deserve special mention. Hart was a strong swimmer who also enjoyed his relaxation. He sometimes swam wearing a boater hat, and after a while he would take off his hat and take from it his pipe, tobacco and matches, roll over on his back, light up and enjoy a leisurely smoke while floating. Then he would replace his smoking supplies in his hat and get back to more serious swimming.

Bill Murray (no relation to the present Murray Families) was a case of perseverance in overcoming a handicap. As a youth he was a victim of polio which left one arm withered and completely useless, yet he was able to swim the rivers.

Another later swimmer of note was A.L.O. Phillips who used to dive from the government wharf when well on in his seventies.

Swimming lessons were held at this beach up until the pool was built.

SWIMMING POOL

Building of the swimming pool, the project which was the reason for the Community Centre was not immediately carried out because of the financing for the Churchill Property. In 1954 work began on the plans of Mr. Doug Weber of Halifax under the supervision of Mr. Ben Alexander. Work continued through 1954 and into 1955. The pool was one of the first regulation size, outdoor community pools in Nova Scotia and also one of the best of those which have been since constructed.

The foundation, draining and reinforcing were carefully planned and carried out. The resulting debt was paid off in five years with special fund raising campaigns and donations by business, industry, citizens and groups.

The first supervisor was Mrs. Jocelyn Fraser of Wilmot, Annapolis Co. who served for five seasons between 1955 and 1959. All school age children in Hantsport, Mount Denson, Hants Border and Lockhartville were able to register for swimming classes and general swimming. Of the 337 enrolled, 314 took regular instruction in 1956. A season's total of 12,421 swims were recorded. A swimming team was formed and because ours was a regulation size pool most of the first meets were held in Hantsport. The team in 1956 was

made up of 12 boys and 22 girls. They won a total of four trophies, the Halifax Herald Trophy; Beazly Trophy; Lunenburg Kiwanis Cup and the Evans Trophy, in the Junior and Senior Provincial Outdoor, and Western N.S Meets. The season ended with a water show which has become annual.

In the years of operation the number taking instruction has grown from 259 in 1955 to 494 in 1972. Voluntary assistance was given at first until permanent instructors were hired. The value of swimming instruction and children learning to swim skillfully was undisputable. Adult swimming instruction was also given. In 1959 Mr. Ben Newcombe sent a bronze plaque for the pool building.

Swimming lessons continue to be held at the pool. The swimming and diving teams won provincial and local meets throughout the years. The diving teams of 1974, 1975 and 1976 won Provincials titles-under the direction of Andrea Mounce. They continued their success for the next few years with Karen Wilcox coaching the team. Jim and Gary Oickle were named the top male divers in 1973 and 1974 and Sherry McNeil was named top female diver in the Province in 1976. Also, in 1976, 77 the Hantsport Swim Team won the Provincials 10 under Swim titles. Members were; Crystal Sanford, Sandra Sanford Carla McLellan, Krista Bishop, Alison Stuart, Roger Stuart, Dianne Poirer, Kelly Ellis, Jeff Hart, Christine MacNeil, Craig MacNeil, Steve Crowell, Mark Langdon, Scott Bishop, Andrea Miller.

In 1983 Hantsport won the 8 under Provincials Swim Title Dawn Starratt, Jan Zwicker, Sara Janes, Jamie Hamilton and Chris Remme. In later years Nicole Little captured provincial honours as a 10 under swimmer. The town hosted provincial championships in 1985, 1990 and for the 1995 Centennial year.