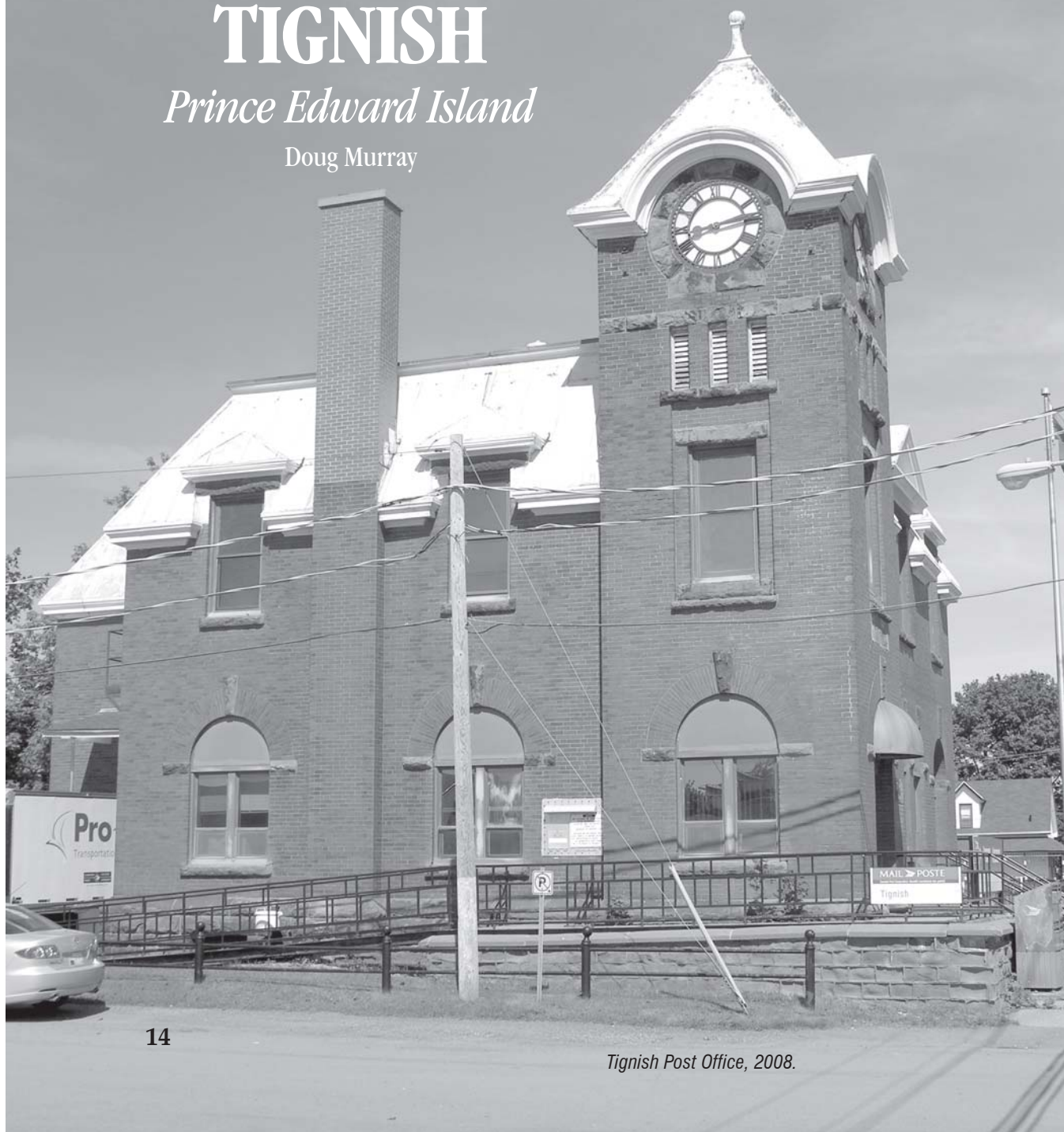


The Dominion Post Office at
TIGNISH

Prince Edward Island

Doug Murray



POSTMASTERS

Nicholas Conroy	1841-06-29 settler from Wexford, Ireland 1835, previously collector of customs, later Sergeant at arms-PEI Assembly, High Sheriff, JP, MLA
Martin Walsh	~1849 - 1853
William Hubbard	1853-10-06 – 1858
Robert Bellin	1858-11-02 – 1865
A. MacLean	1865-04-18 – 1865
T. Wade	1865-10-07 – 1866
T. Fairbairn	1866-05-15 – 1867
Edward Hackett	1867-04-02 later MLA, MP and PM of Charlottetown 1912-16
D. Carroll	1869-06-03 – 1871
R. M. Carroll	1871-04-06 – 1872
Thomas Fairbairn	1872-06-07 – 1873
R. M. Carroll	1873-05-05 – 1875
Sylvain Poirier	1875-07-01 – 1894-10-31
Francis Gallant	1894-12-08 – 1905-10-09
Jeremiah Buote	1905-10-19 – 1909-07-08
John H. Bernard	1909-07-22 – 1912-06-27
J. Albert Brennan	1912-07-15 – 1916-03-25 first PM of new Dominion Post Office
Peter J. Cahill	1916-05-04 – 1936-11-05
Timothy P. Bernard	1937-02-04 – 1940-08-08
John N. Richard	1940-10-01 – 1949-12-31
Kathleen C. Brennan	1950-01-04 acting, long-time assistant, daughter of J. Albert
Joseph H. Buote	1950-10-26 – acting, 1951-10-26 – 1975
William C. Glydon	1975 - 1998 transferred to Alberton
Alice Christopher	1998 - present

rural community. It was a time of change when the new province (P.E.I. joined Canada in 1873) was seeking new industry in the wake of the decline of wooden ship building. The early signs of an emigration of population were evident and the railway contributed both ways. It provided much-needed work, but also a convenient connection to the steam ships which took emigrants to New England.

The rail yard was built on the north side of the main road into the community and the station appears on a side street leading to Chapel Street. Mails arrived twice per day. The post office is noted across Chapel Street on the property of S. T. Perry. "Perry" is the anglicised version of "Poirier", still found today. Note also on the map the properties of E. Hackett, W. E. Hubbard, former postmasters and a Brennan who was certainly related to the later postmaster. There was no Dominion post office building in Tignish before 1912 when the current building was opened. The post office moved to private homes or businesses operated by incumbent postmasters.

Local politicians, Senator Patrick Murphy and Sir Charles Dalton (Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great and creator of the Silver Fox industry in P.E.I.) led the effort to get a Dominion post office in the community. (In the 1920s the Royal Bank of Canada in Tignish accepted deposits of black fox pelts for storage in its vault.) The post

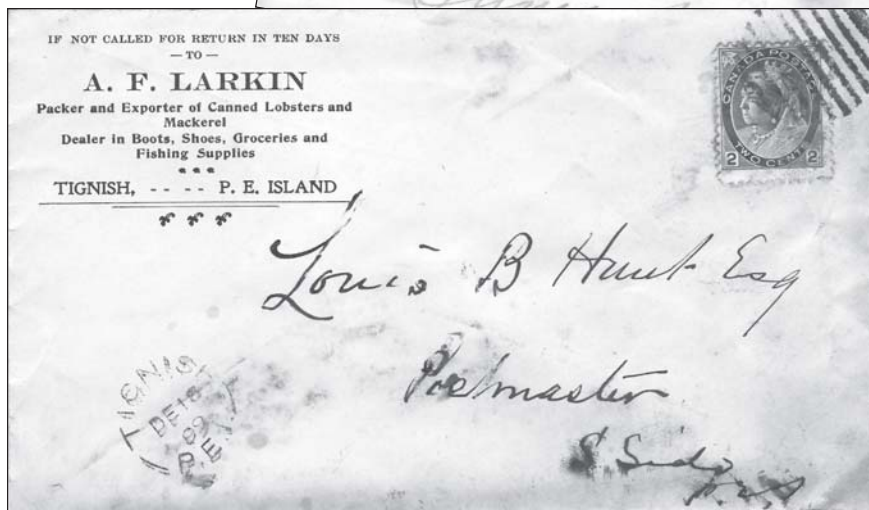
Early postal markings



TIGNISH P.E.I. / AU 7 / 99
*J. F. Chaisson & Co., dealers in
 dry goods, groceries, hardware,
 fancy goods, boots & shoes –
 a general store that had a little
 of everything.*



TIGNISH P.E.I. / DE 18 / 99
*A letter from A. F. Larkin to
 Summerside postmaster,
 Louis B. Hunt.*



office was approved and subsequently designed by David Ewart, a well-known Post Office chief architect working with the Public Works Department of Canada from 1897 to 1914. It was designed in a Romanesque revival style and built by J. M. Clark of Summerside in 1911-12 at a cost of \$19,000 (see title page). Most of Ewart's work was built in Ontario and this is the only one on P.E.I. It is located on the southeast corner of the former railway property facing Chapel Street, replacing the car-shed/agent's residence.

Bricks for the building were made locally. An invitation for the opening (Fig. 2) was printed at *L'Impartial* printing press in Tignish, publishers of the first Acadian newspaper in the province.

Tower clocks in post offices were uncommon in the Maritimes and this one has faces on four sides (Fig. 3). It was made by W. F. Evans and Sons at Soho Clock Factory, Birmingham, England. On the spur of the moment, I asked to see the clock and was readily granted an escort to the foot of a

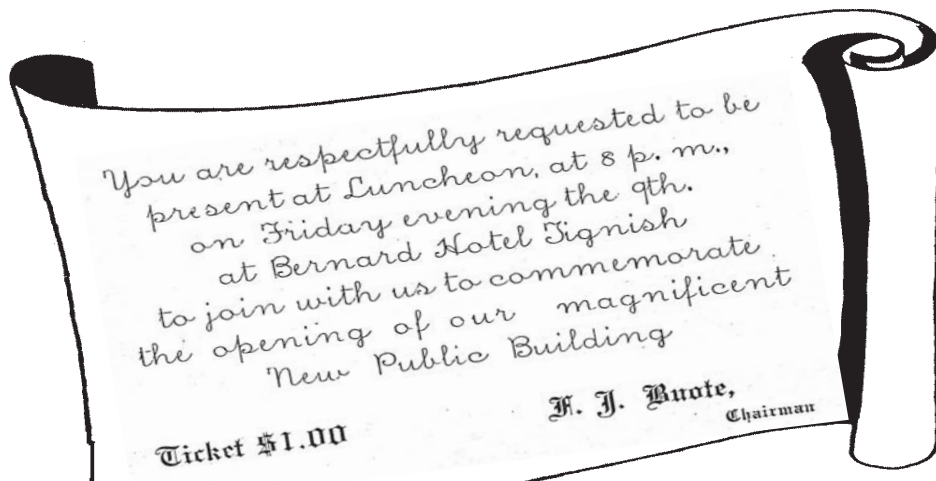


Fig. 2 – Invitation to opening, 1912.



Fig. 3 – Clock tower exterior, 2008.

Fig. 4– Bell located on level below clock.



welded vertical steel ladder on the second floor. From there it was up to me. The next level was a cramped belfry with a low ceiling and a large bell hung in the middle (Fig. 4). My pen is on the bell for scale. It was used up to recent years to toll each hour of the day. Unfortunately a need for regular maintenance has silenced the bell. Up an old wooden ladder from there was the clock tower, illuminated solely by daylight through the

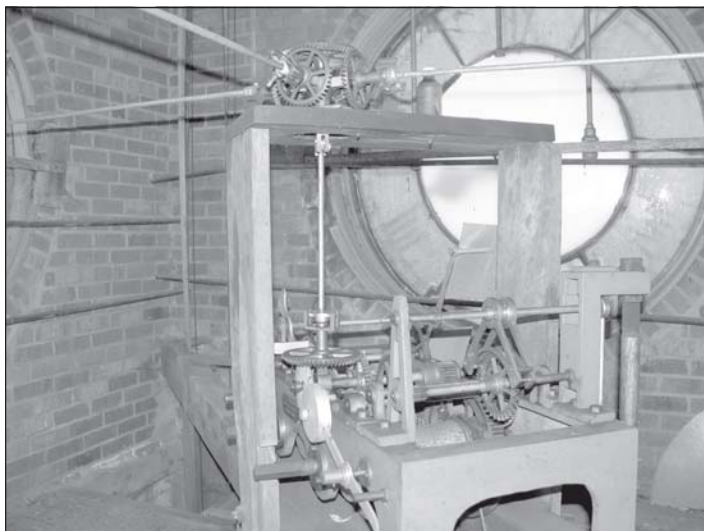


Fig.5 – Clock mechanism.

translucent clock faces. The mechanism is a fascinating array of gears and rods connecting the central clock with the hands in each of the faces (Fig. 5). It was restored in 1981.

Originally the building had mahogany paneling floor to ceiling, solid brass wickets, glass-faced mail boxes framed in brass and

ceramic floor tiles. Most of the old fixtures have been removed and most of the mahogany mouldings have been painted. Despite the changes it was declared a National Heritage Building in 1987, however it continues to be listed for sale. The postmaster indicates there is little budget

available for maintenance and none for restoration. A sad tale. Fig. 6 shows the building with rail cars in the background on an early but undated postcard. The rail yard disappeared with the withdrawal of rail service in this province in 1989. It is now the western trailhead of the Trans Canada Trail. ✉

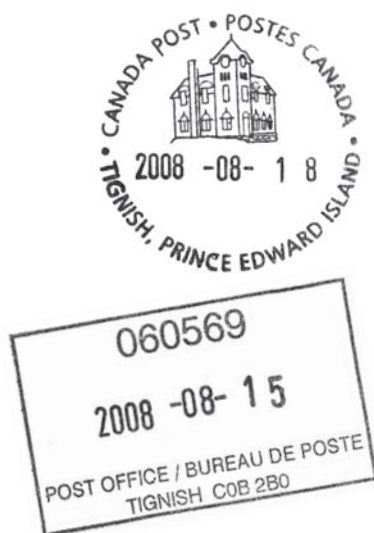


Fig. 6 – Early postcard of PO showing rail cars.

