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Sackville Tribune Post

The Editor:

Many thanks to Charlie Scobie for his very complete description of the work done by the Heritage Review Board and the difficult journey to a satisfactory by-law protecting those buildings whose visual and historical equity add much to this little town. We're lucky to have these people working hard to preserve it.

Now let me tell you of another journey, with another look at the protection of heritage. When I was 5 years old, my mother took my brother and I for a summer tour from New Carlisle in the Gaspé to Caraquet in New Brunswick. My mother drove us in a borrowed 1928 Buick. I remember Caraquet vividly as there was much ado when we found a hair in a restaurant egg sandwich during lunch. These little biases can last a lifetime. But seventy-one years later, last weekend, I returned to Caraquet to visit friends, and was absolutely astounded at the beauty and touristic excellence the people of Caraquet enjoy and have lavished on their little town. Caraquet has the same population as Sackville. Industries of fishing would seem to take the place of the university and the marsh here, in providing employment and a sense of place. But there is another significant difference. I believe Caraquet has a tough working by-law that effectively protects its heritage buildings. Their heritage is not the same as ours, and their buildings are not built of stone as many of ours are at the university. But in Caraquet there is history everywhere, and the people are very together. The simplest of old store fronts have retained their facades, freshly painted and proudly showing the owner's name and date of building. A long section of their main street is lined with large maple trees spaced quite close to each other, offering wonderful shade and a strange sense of calm and peace. I'm sure they are memorial maples, each a living remembrance of a soldier killed in World War Two and planted in towns across Canada to honour them after the war. Elsewhere in Canada, many of these trees have been cut down in the name of progress and the faintness of memory. As with the old Memorial Library at Mount Allison, our obsession with present mindedness can effectively destroy priceless remembrances. At Caraquet's nearby Village Historique Acadien, one can find a living history of early Acadien life. There is an enormous collection of original houses brought from all over New Brunswick. Some are from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and each is open to enter, with helpful folk in clothing of the time, baking bread, making soup, shaving one-piece brooms out of birch limbs. All of this brings an uncanny sense of the past, and all is told in either of our

official languages. It is impossible to be in this village and not be amazed at the innovation and pure technological ingenuity of these early settlers. We stayed in a replica of a 1907 hotel within the Village Historique Acadien, complete with chain pull light switches, separate private toilet rooms and a refreshing lack of television, radio alarm clocks and wi-fi connections. Near the hotel was a special little Sackville surprise, a completely restored early Irving gas station, its main building familiar to Sackvillans as its tired body lay on Main Street for many years, empty and dismissed. It has found a bright new life in a place that perhaps cares a bit more about history. Joni Mitchell said it best; "They paved paradise to put up a parking lot."

The work Charlie Scobie and others with the Heritage Review Board are doing needs more help as Sackville's considerable historical inventory is vitally important to the attractiveness and liveability of our unique little town. It's a prime driver for tourism activity because the whole tonality of the town draws strength from it. People want to visit interesting places. That means activist involvement by many, not just the few with time to write letters. Sackville has two immensely powerful communities within its perimeters. The local populace, whose ingenuity and drive built and maintained Sackville over centuries and through many economic turnarounds. And the university whose influence and pedagogical expertise has brought it national success, though with it, perhaps an element of condescension, for its buildings affect everyone living here who see them as part of home. Both communities are conservative in the best sense of the word, one with the preservation of cultural life, the other with the conservation of knowledge. Both communities must come together in the strengthening of our heritage, because every time an interesting building dies here, a part of Sackville dies too.

As many recent Tribune letter writers have implied, the old Memorial Library at Mount Allison is not just a building, but a beachhead, and sometimes good people who are too busy to give full value to alternatives also give scant value to those elements that give meaning to their and their students lives. I urge us all to rethink and save the Old Memorial library. It is a fruitful journey worth taking. Rather than pushing for the quick destructive solution, a thoughtful *inclusion* might prove to be both innovative and ingenious. These were the hallmarks of the people who first built here. They had time to think and they got it right.

Graham Watt  
13 Campbell's Hill,  
Sackville, NB  
E4L 3R6  
506 536 1436

