

PARTRIDGE ISLAND & ST. PATRICK SQUARE

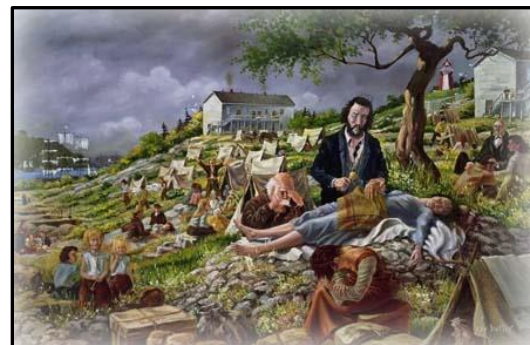
The Irish Connection



Partridge Island, guarding the entrance to Saint John Harbour, is a National Historic Site (1974) about one km offshore. Established by Saint John Royal Charter in 1785, it has served in many capacities over the decades – military outpost, navigational aid station, and military defence position in both WW I and WW II. It was here Canada’s third lighthouse came into operation in 1791. It was home to the world’s first steam foghorn designed by Robert Foulis and installed

on the island in 1859. If you know anything about Saint John, this was a godsend for the people who travelled by water.

The heritage value lies in its historic role as a 19th-century quarantine station, opening in 1830 – the first in North America and predating New York City’s Ellis Island by 60 years. It was here so many refugees had their first glimpse of Canada. It closed in 1941. Today the site contains remnants of buildings and structures associated with its important role. In 1847 2,000 Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine were quarantined here during a typhus epidemic and 601 of them are buried in a mass grave on the island. So many Irish immigrants arrived in North America by way of this single speck of land that it earned the nickname “*Canada’s Emerald Isle*”.



In 1927 an imposing Celtic cross commemorating the living and the dead was erected, with the aid of public subscription, by George McArthur, a descendant of the first Irish immigrants and promotor of Irish heritage in Saint John. He was buried at the base of the cross in 1932.

Can you visit and tour Partridge Island? The simple answer is “no”, however in season *River Bay Adventures* offers a kayak tour to the island.

St. Patrick’s Square, at the conjunction of Water, Prince William, and Broad Streets in Saint John’s South End, is the site of two distinctive Irish memorials – an unusual lamp and a Celtic cross. This triangular little square on the city’s peninsula mainland, looks directly out at Partridge Island.

The grassy square, with its ornamental “Three Sisters” lamp replica of old-time navigational lights, was re-named St. Patrick’s Square during the 1967 Canadian Centennial, to honour citizens of Irish descent. Sailors and boaters recount that Saint John Harbour is a tricky one to enter and the famous lamps aid in entering safely. Apparently, if you see three distinct lamps as you attempt entry, you will not make it safely. Instead the three red lamps must merge as one to make it inside the harbour on your first try.



Photo: www.1gnb.ca

The second monument is an eight-foot high Celtic cross – a replica of the cross on Partridge Island - dedicated in 1967 by the St. Patrick’s Society of Saint John.

The original cross on the island and the replica on the mainland both bear this same wording: “*This monument was erected in memory of more than 2,000 Irish immigrants who died of Typhus Fever, contracted on shipboard during the voyage from Ireland in the Famine year 1847, and of whom 600 were buried on this island. This cross also commemorates the devotion and sacrifice of Dr. Patrick Collins who, after ministering to victims of the disease, himself contracted it and died.*”

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Photo: www.newirelandnb.ca

If you are following the Harbour Passage (cranberry road), you will pass by the square just after passing the cruise ship terminal.

Follow these links for more information about:

[Partridge Island Quarantine Station](#)

[Vintage Facts About Partridge Island](#)

[The History of Partridge Island](#)

[River Bay Adventure – Kayak Tours](#)

[Irish Canadian Cultural Association of New Brunswick](#)