

Honours Thesis

Interpretation Planning at Courthouse Hill, East Hants



Yvonne Reeves

Supervisors: Patricia Manuel
& John Zuck

School of Planning, Dalhousie University

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Honours Thesis

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Summary

Courthouse Hill is located in the centre of the Municipality of East Hants. From the site there is a spectacular view that encompasses five Nova Scotian counties. A courthouse that once stood on the hill was a historic landmark until it burned down in 1956¹. A monument erected on the site in 1980 describes the view and provides a brief history of the courthouse. The Municipality of East Hants would like to rejuvenate the site by improving both the natural and human heritage interpretive experiences available there and to preserve the view into the future. This report documents an inventory of the natural and human history of the site and surrounding area, the current state of the site and the surrounding environment, as well as current land uses in the area. From this inventory, a recommendation has been made for themes and stories for a future interpretation plan. A recommendation of possible media options for sharing the themes and stories are also described. Designers and interpreters can use this document to inform a future interpretation plan and design for the site.

¹ Municipality of East Hants. *Heritage*. 2011, Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/heritage>

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Introduction

An interpretation plan involves capturing the attention of an audience of visitors in order to increase their interest in, or awareness of, a place. An interpretation plan involves developing a theme and narratives to reveal to visitors; these narratives, or stories, can be about human history and the environment of a place. A site will have a complex natural and human history and, therefore, many narratives about the site could be told. It is up to the interpretation planner to decide which narratives will be communicated to visitors, based on a chosen theme, as well as what the best media is for telling those narratives². Interpretation plans use the resources that are available at a site to develop and tell these narratives³.

Courthouse Hill in East Hants, Nova Scotia is a place with remarkable views of the province. There is also a human heritage aspect to the site where a courthouse once stood. An interpretation plan for Courthouse Hill can include narratives about the site itself, the surrounding area that can be seen from the hill, and how the site relates to other destinations within the municipality.

The intent of this project is to develop background information for a future interpretation plan for Courthouse Hill including an inventory of information and possible narratives about the environment and human history of the site, the surrounding area, and its location relative to other destinations in the Municipality of East Hants. The project will also inform possible media options that can be used to tell these narratives.

² James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 3-8.

³ Ibid.

Background

Courthouse Hill is located in the Municipality of East Hants, Nova Scotia; the site is on a dirt road that turns off Highway 354 south of the village of Kennetcook (Figure 1). It is located in a rural area at the center of the Municipality and is surrounded by agricultural land⁴. A courthouse that once stood on the site was used for County Court and council meetings for the County of East Hants from 1867 to 1907. After this, the courthouse building became a historical landmark until it burned down in 1956⁵.

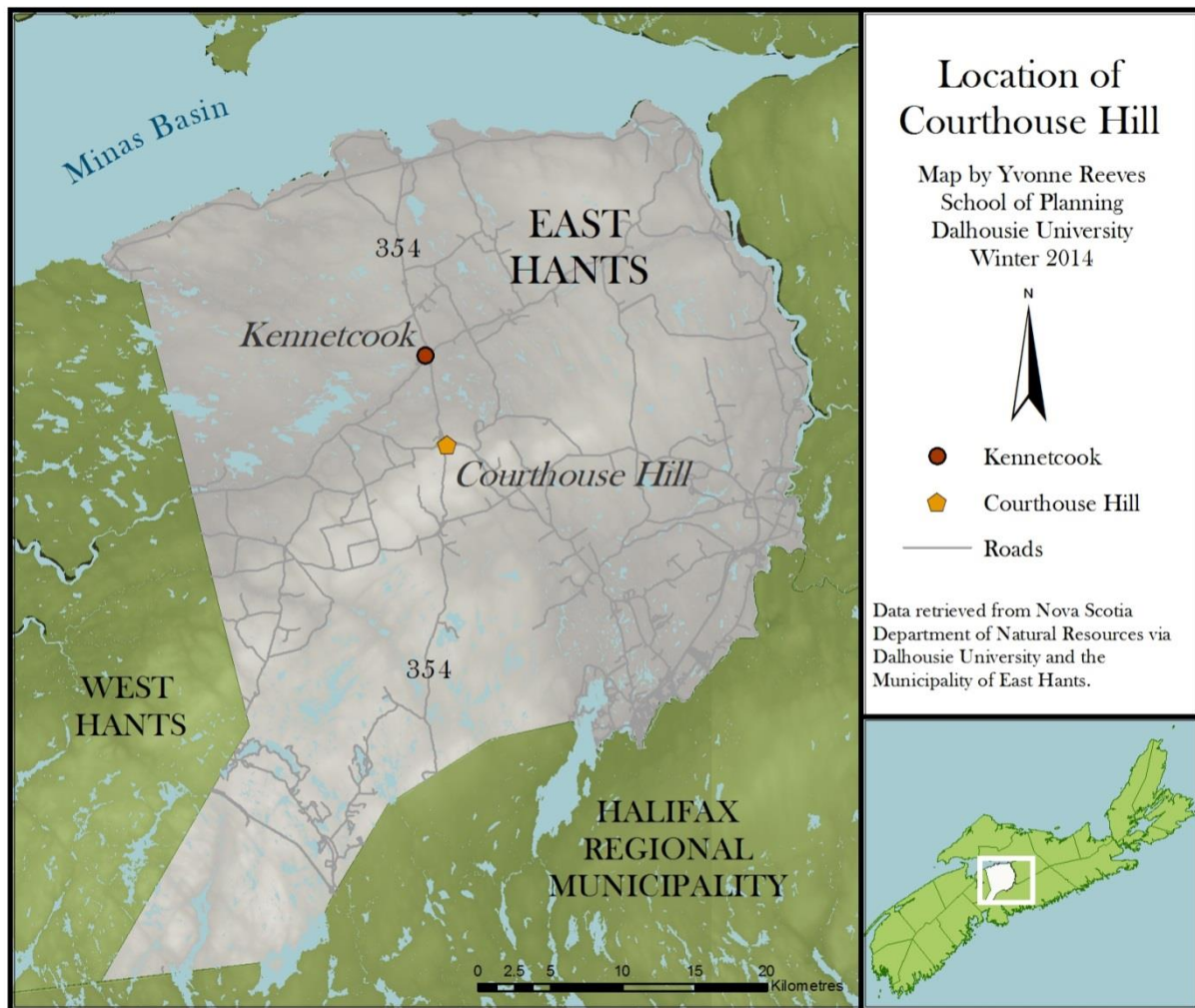


Figure 1: Location of Courthouse Hill.

⁴ Google Maps “Court House Hill, NS” Map. Google, accessed October 15, 2013 from <https://maps.google.ca/>

⁵ Municipality of East Hants. *Heritage*. 2011. Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/heritage>



Figure 2: The Courthouse Hill monument (Photo by Maxime Lapierre).

A monument currently stands on the hill and commemorates the courthouse and the centennial of the Municipality in 1880. The monument explains the views from the hill and that from the hill it is possible to see five Nova Scotian counties on a clear day: Hants County, Kings County, Colchester County, Cumberland County and Pictou County. The cultural history of the courthouse, as well as the views from the site, provide an opportunity for historic and environmental interpretation.



Figure 3: View from the monument looking west (Photo by Maxime Lapierre).

Developing an interpretation plan for cultural and heritage interpretation at Courthouse Hill is included in a list of future projects and studies in the Municipality of East Hants' *East Hants Municipal Planning Strategy (2010)*. The goal of these projects is to “facilitate and encourage planning for the social, economic, **environmental** and cultural development and growth of the Municipality.”⁶ There is clearly an emphasis on planning for the environment, as the word ‘environmental’ is bold in the original text. These projects, including developing an interpretation plan at Courthouse Hill, are also listed in the *Municipality of East Hants Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2011)*⁷.

The Government of Nova Scotia has a number of initiatives for developing cultural and environmental tourism throughout the Province including an *Interpretive Master Plan (2009)*. This plan was developed by Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage along with Nova Scotia Museum and outlines interpretation goals; the main goal that this plan identifies is to establish broad historical and natural themes for Nova Scotia. The plan ascertains that sites should be more inclusive of ethnicities and gender, incorporate both natural and historical topics, foster community involvement, and strengthen community connections to interpretative sites. The plan identifies a concern that interpretations at Nova Scotian sites are outdated and do not appeal to current audiences; the document suggests that interpretation planning at Nova Scotian sites needs to be rethought⁸.

The Courthouse Hill site, as identified by the Municipality of East Hants, presents an opportunity for interpretation for visitors to the County. This project provides information to inform a future design for the site. This includes an inventory of the human history and natural environment pertaining to Courthouse Hill and the surrounding area; how information about the place can be portrayed to visitors in an engaging, inclusive way; opportunities and constraints of the site; and recommendations for moving forward.

⁶ Municipality of East Hants. *Municipal Planning Strategy*. 2010. Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/municipal-planning-strategy-1>, 157.

⁷ Municipality of East Hants. *Municipality of East Hants Integrated Community Sustainability Plan*. 2011. Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/icsp-report>

⁸ Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage & Nova Scotia Museum. *Interpretive Master Plan*. 2009. Available: <http://museum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/images/nsimp.pdf>

Literature Review

Interpretation Planning

Interpretation is the communication of an idea, which is translated into common language that anyone can understand; the idea is communicated in a way that is interesting and engaging for an audience of visitors. Interpretation planning involves communicating ideas rather than facts. The aim of interpretation is to enlighten visitors about broad relationships; facts are only provided to support broad ideas or narratives⁹.

An interpretation plan outlines a strategy for capturing the attention of visitors in order to increase their interest in, and awareness of, a place. The intention is that visitors will leave with new knowledge or ideas and an appreciation of the place they have experienced. Interpretation planning can include planning for a building, a landscape, a cultural lifestyle, a town, an industry, an object, an event, or an activity. Interpretation planning is also associated with other initiatives such as tourism development, marketing strategies, education and schooling, recreation and arts, and local planning policies such as the renewal of an area¹⁰.

Principles of Interpretation Planning

The first book on interpretation planning, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, was written by Freeman Tilden in 1957. Tilden described six principles for successful interpretation planning which are still considered central to interpretation planning today¹¹.

Tilden's first principle is that a visitor must feel a personal connection to what is being portrayed or described at a site, for the interpretation to significantly affect their experience. The second principle states that information and facts are not interpretation; interpretation only includes information that supports a narrative being told. The third principle is that interpretation is an art form; a variety of topics including science, history, and architecture are brought together to inform visitors about a site. The fourth principle is to provoke visitors in order to capture their interest. The fifth principle is that interpretation should present a whole theme

⁹ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 3.

¹⁰ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 3.

¹¹ "Freeman Tilden: Father of heritage interpretation" Heritage destination consulting, Available: <http://www.heritagedestination.com/freeman-tilden.aspx>

supported by narratives rather than parts of a theme. The sixth principle is that interpretation presented to children should follow an entirely different approach rather than diluting the narratives presented to adults¹². Tilden's objective with interpretation planning was to convince people of the importance of a place and, sometimes, to encourage conservation. The overall message that a visitor should recognize is that the place is valuable¹³.

According to Ham¹⁴, all six principles continue to be relevant and important for current interpretation planning, though he regards three of the principles to be more important. Ham emphasizes the following three principles: provoke, relate, and reveal. Provoking is important for capturing attention. Relating to the visitor involves connecting with them to make the narrative accessible; this involves communicating the narrative in a way that visitors will understand. Revealing involves giving visitors new insight into the place¹⁵.

Another principle for an interpretation approach to communication found in the literature includes the premise that an interpretation plan must have a theme and relevant narratives to communicate an idea clearly. The interpretation should also be pleasurable for visitors, relevant, and organized. Interpretation should be pleasurable in that visitors are entertained and enjoy their experience. The theme must be relevant to the place and be presented in a context of something that visitors already know; this principle also ties in with Tilden's principle of making an experience personal for visitors. A personal experience for visitors can be achieved when the narratives show cause and effect or link human history to science. Finally, interpretation should be organized by themes supported by narratives that are easy to follow¹⁶.

¹² Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our heritage* (University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 3-56.

¹³ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 3.

Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage & Nova Scotia Museum. *Interpretive Master Plan*. 2009. Available: <http://museum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/images/nsimp.pdf>

¹⁶ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 9.

Developing a Plan

The most important aspect of developing a plan is to determine a theme, or group of themes, and supporting narratives for a place. The theme can then be referred to while developing the narratives and media; this ensures that the chosen theme is communicated properly throughout the interpretation plan. It is important to make an inventory of resources available for developing narratives¹⁷. One or more themes can then be chosen including historical and environmental aspects of the place. Ham suggests that only up to five narratives should be presented to support themes for a place; research shows that humans are limited to understanding seven, plus or minus two, new ideas at a time¹⁸. It is best to stay below that limit¹⁹.

It is also important to include the local community when developing an interpretation plan. Interpretation benefits from local knowledge of the place, and involving the community increases the suitability and sustainability of the plan. It is also important to consider local people as visitors to the site; interpretation planning for local people is different because they tend to ignore information but are more regular visitors. Involving local residents can include letting them record the heritage of a site themselves and having local events at the site. Involving residents can help a community feel involved and strengthen the community's interest in maintaining the site²⁰.

An interpretation plan must include why the plan is being developed, what will be communicated to visitors, who the visitors are, what the site has to offer, what else is going on around the site, and how and where visitors are going to be told a narrative. The plan must acknowledge that visitors come to a site with certain expectations, such as getting information about their location. Expectations must first be provided in order to gain their interest before they will recognize the theme being portrayed to them²¹. A plan must also include objectives for the

¹⁷ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 6.

¹⁸ George A. Miller. "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on our Capacity for Processing Information," *Psychological Review* 63 (1956): 81-97.

¹⁹ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 23.

²⁰ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 3.

²¹ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 7-8.

media that are to be used for interpretation. The media used must accomplish the planner's intentions for what people will know, feel, and do as a result of the interpretation²².

Interpretation Media

There is a variety of media used in interpretation planning including: guided tours, panels, leaflets, art displays, multi-media, and visitor centers²³. More recently smartphone applications, Global Positioning System technology, and the internet have also been used as media, although these technologies are not yet written about in the literature on interpretive planning. Each medium has advantages and disadvantages for communicating narratives; for example, a tour guide is often the most successful because a guide gives a personal touch and is sensitive to different visitors' needs. Employing guides, however, requires continuous commitment, investment, and organization. Panels require little ongoing commitment, costs, and organization but can take away from the natural experience of a place; this is especially true in locations where panels may disrupt views²⁴.

The aims of the media can be to orient, inform, entertain, persuade, or explain a place to visitors. Orientation helps visitors understand where they are, what can be found in the area, and where amenities are located at or near to the site. Media may tell facts for the visitors who are particularly interested in the place; although, according to Tilden's principles, facts should only be included if they are relevant to the theme and narratives. Media can also be used to entertain visitors; people are at leisure when they are visiting and should enjoy their experience. Media may also be used to persuade, or influence what people think, or even what they do; this purpose is often intended in conservation areas. Media is also used to explain a broader picture; this can be especially useful for places where visitors cannot see or experience the entire area at once²⁵.

In order for visitors to interpret the site, the media must get their attention, be enjoyable, be relevant to the audience, and have a clear structure. The Scottish Interpretation Network has a list of ground rules in selecting media to achieve the above objectives. These include being

²² James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 7-8.

²³ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 39-49.
Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 26-27.

Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage & Nova Scotia Museum. *Interpretive Master Plan*. 2009. Available: <http://museum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/images/nsimp.pdf>

²⁴ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 39-48.

²⁵ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 39.

selective and concise with the information that will be used, by picking a theme and a few narratives; this keeps messages simple and supports the creation of a cohesive design to communicate a sense of place. Another ground rule is to know who the audience is and to use a communication method that they can understand. Everyday language should be used and translations for other languages should be made available. Another rule is to use local stories as accounts about real people; this creates an authentic sense of place for visitors to experience. The Scottish Interpretation Network suggests using these ground rules to make an experience personal for visitors and link the experience to visitors' own lives; this will strengthen how they relate to the place. In addition to these rules, media should include route directions to help visitors orient themselves. The media used should be tested often to ensure that it is effective in the site interpretation²⁶.

Other forms of media, not addressed by the authors cited, involve new technologies such as the internet, smartphone, and the Global Positioning System. These emerging technologies are changing the way tourists experience an area. Tourists are now able to look up a wealth of information about a place, even before they visit it. This has changed tourists' behaviour, expectations, and interactive experiences with a place. The use of these technologies allows people to quickly share and 'store' their experiences and to solve travelling dilemmas when they arise. Tourists often have unlimited access to location information and directions, destination information and social networks for sharing their experiences as they happen²⁷.

Challenges

Many challenges for creating an interpretation plan are addressed by Carter and Ham²⁸. One of these challenges is that interpretation is not scientific or clear-cut; there is more than one answer or narrative. Another challenge is that there are as many ways to interpret a place as there are people who visit it; therefore, developing a narrative can be challenging. Each visitor will have a unique experience at a site depending on their own background, understanding, and

²⁶ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 41-42.

²⁷ Dan Wang, Sangwon Park, and Daniel R. Fesenmaier. "The role of smartphones in mediating the touristic experience." *Journal of Travel Research* 51 (2012): 371-387.

²⁸ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 3.

James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 10.

disposition at the time of their visit. Interpretation planners must also be aware of how their own experiences shape a plan and must consider who the audience will be²⁹.

Creativity, collaboration, and thoughtfulness are needed when developing an interpretation plan. The plan must balance the desires of visitors with the conservation of heritage and natural resources at the site. The requests of people who live near the site and may be affected by any changes to the uses of a site must also be considered by an interpretation planner³⁰.

Another challenge with interpretation planning is that visitors are voluntary learners and will only pay attention if they want to. It is important to engage visitors in the narratives of the place, as they have no other motivation for learning. According to Ham, a professor of communication psychology, “No topic is inherently boring or interesting”³¹. What is important is how a topic is presented³².

Conclusion

Interpretation planning looks at the environment, the human history, and the current culture of a place. A plan translates the findings into a concise theme, or themes, supported by narratives, which will be portrayed to visitors of the place. A variety of media can be used to tell the chosen theme and narratives; finding the best-suited media is up to the interpretation planner³³. Interpretation, and portrayal of a place, is an art. The interpretation planner must simplify many events, features, and stories into a theme, or themes, that will captivate visitors’ attention. The aim is for visitors to be engaged, entertained, and that they will take away a new idea or thought about the place³⁴.

²⁹ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 3.

³⁰ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 10.

³¹ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press), 4.

³² Ibid.

³³ Sam Ham. *Environmental Interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets* (Golden: North American Press).

³⁴ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our heritage* (University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 3-56.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of my project is to prepare background information and recommendations for themes and narratives that can be used for an interpretation plan. This information can be used to brief an interpretation designer for a future interpretation plan. Background information will include: the unique natural and cultural features of the site; important narratives of the site and surrounding area; how the site relates to other destinations within the municipality; prospective relating themes and narratives; media options that can tell the chosen narratives; and recommendations for moving forward.

My objectives for developing narratives and a theme for the site are to:

- Identify the natural and human history and unique, or compelling, features of the site and surrounding area;
- Identify the resources available at the site for telling stories;
- Identify current zoning and land uses surrounding the site; and
- Identify functional relationships between the site and other destinations within the municipality.

My objectives for determining possible media are to:

- Develop a list of media that are commonly used for interpretation sites similar in size to Court House Hill; and
- Develop a list of new technologies that are commonly used by tourists and could be applicable to the site.

My objectives for providing recommendations are to:

- Identify opportunities and constraints for a future interpretation plan and site design; and
- Identify future work that will add to the work completed for a future interpretation plan.

Approach

I used a pragmatic approach³⁵ for this project in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data about the site, the surrounding area, and the site's relation to other destinations within the Municipality of East Hants. Using a mixed methods approach to collecting and analyzing data provided me with a holistic understanding³⁶ of the environment and human history of Courthouse Hill.

Method

Collecting Data

In order to carry out this project I collected a variety of data. These included: municipal and provincial policy relevant to the site; federal guidelines for conserving heritage site; data about the natural environment of the site, and surrounding area; historical data about the site and surrounding area; current land uses; types of media that can be used for interpretation planning; what resources are available at the site; and the location of the site in relation to other destinations within the Municipality of East Hants.

Policy

I consulted the Municipality of East Hants website for relevant municipal policy, including the *Municipality of East Hants Strategic Plan*, land-use bylaws, and the *Municipality of East Hants' Tourism Strategy*. Relevant provincial plans that I read include the *Tourism Strategy for Nova Scotia* and the Province's *Interpretive Master Plan*. I also consulted with *Canada's Standards and Guidelines for Conservation* for recommendations pertaining to historic and environmental conservation. I used this information to identify all the policy that needs to be considered for proposing changes to the site, presented in the *Results* section of this report. I also mapped the current zoning using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data retrieved from the Municipality of East Hants to show where the municipality's zoning by-laws apply.

³⁵ David Morgan. "Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained. Methodical implications of combining quantitative and qualitative methods." (Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 2007), 1(1), 65.

³⁶ Ibid.

Natural Environment

I collected information about the natural environment of the site and surrounding area by conducting field visits to the site and using biological and geophysical databases available through the Province of Nova Scotia and the Municipality of East Hants. I collected historical information on the environment through historical maps gathered from the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources. I consulted with John Calder, senior geologist with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and expert in geo-heritage, about the geologic formations around the site and how this influenced past mining activity in the area.

Human History

I collected information on the human history of the area through archives of old newspapers and maps. I gathered this information from the Nova Scotia Archives, the Municipality of East Hants, the Historical Society of East Hants, and the Halifax Public Library. David Brown, the Director of Recreation and Culture gave insight into historic findings. I documented this information in a timeline depicting the history of Courthouse Hill.

Media

I explored possible types of interpretation planning media through an internet search and site visits to other destinations within the Municipality of East Hants. Literature on this topic and case study examples from other interpretation planning sites informed me about which media could be appropriate for the Courthouse Hill site. I also considered new technologies used at other destinations that have not yet been written about in the literature on interpretation planning. With this information I recorded suggested media options including: a written description, images, other sites that have used the media, and the advantages and disadvantages of each media.

Site Resources

I identified the available resources at the site by collecting information about the human history and the natural environment of the site as described above. These resources helped me to develop narratives and a possible theme for a future interpretation plan.

Other Destinations

I mapped the location of other destinations in proximity of Courthouse Hill using ArcGIS 10.1. I used Google maps to determine driving routes and distances between the site and each destination³⁷. The mapped destinations were chosen in consultation with David Brown; these sites are places that the Municipality of East Hants is promoting as tourist destinations.

³⁷ Google Maps “Court House Hill, NS” Map. Google, accessed February 16, 2014 from <https://maps.google.ca/>

Results

Site Overview

The Courthouse Hill site is located on Courthouse Hill Road, a dirt road running between Highway 354 and Highway 202. One sign, at the turnoff to Highway 202 from Highway 14, points towards the site (Figure 4). The next marker for the site is the road sign for Courthouse Hill Road. The monument is located right next to the road and appears small compared to the vast landscape that can be seen from the hill. The site itself is only 105m² in size³⁸; the boundaries of the site are not clearly defined on the ground. There are no amenities for visitors, such as washrooms, food, or travel information at the site.

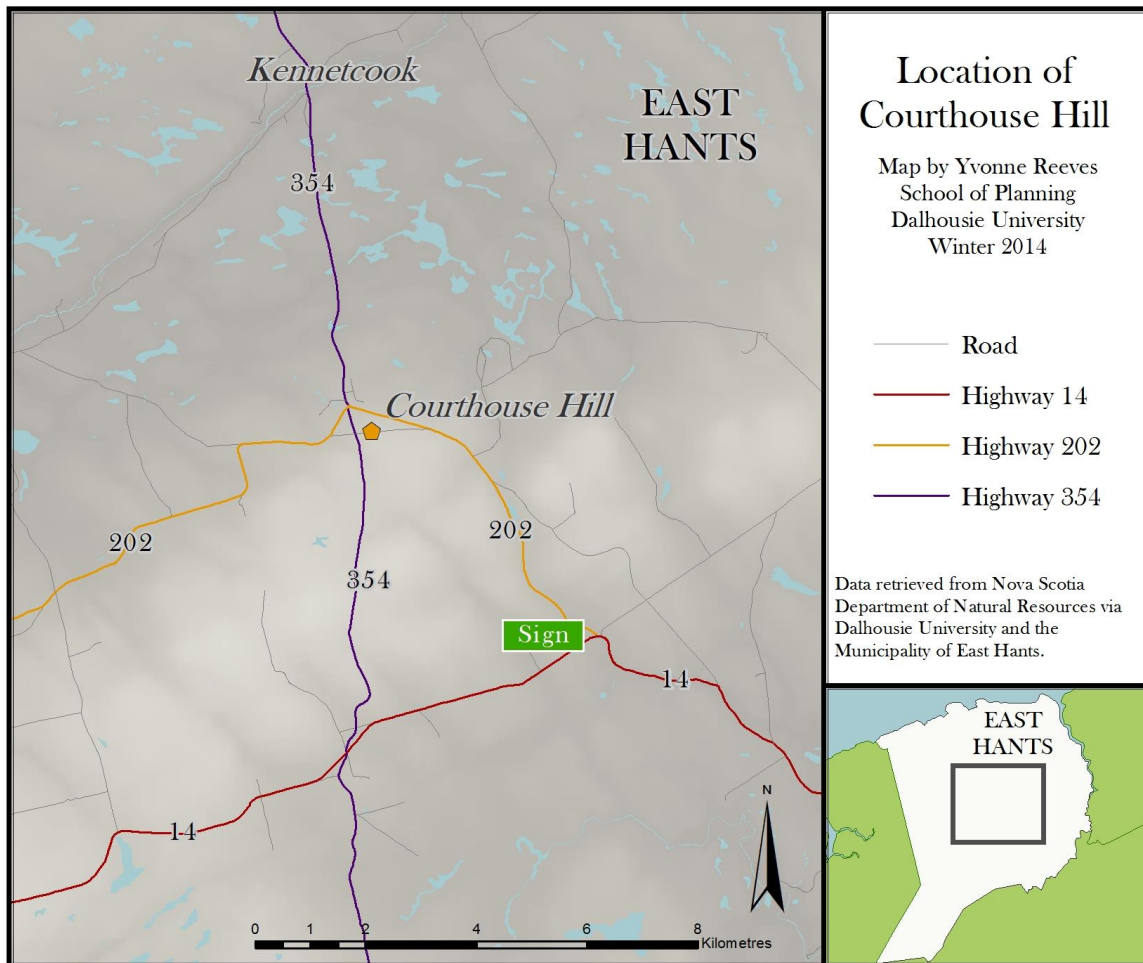


Figure 4: Getting to Courthouse Hill.

³⁸ This measurement was taken from property data from the Municipality of East Hants geodatabase.

A monument was built on the site in 1980 to commemorate the centennial of the incorporation of the Municipality of East Hants that occurred in 1880. The site has ten pillars that form a square and represent the foundation of the courthouse; the courthouse was 40 by 30 feet³⁹, which is almost twice the area that the pillars depict. The pillars are located around the edge of the site with a narrow strip of grass between them and adjacent fields. Blueberry fields surround the site on three sides to the west, north, and east of the site. The front of the monument is next to Courthouse Hill Road. To the east of the site is a gravel area that appears to be used for parking.

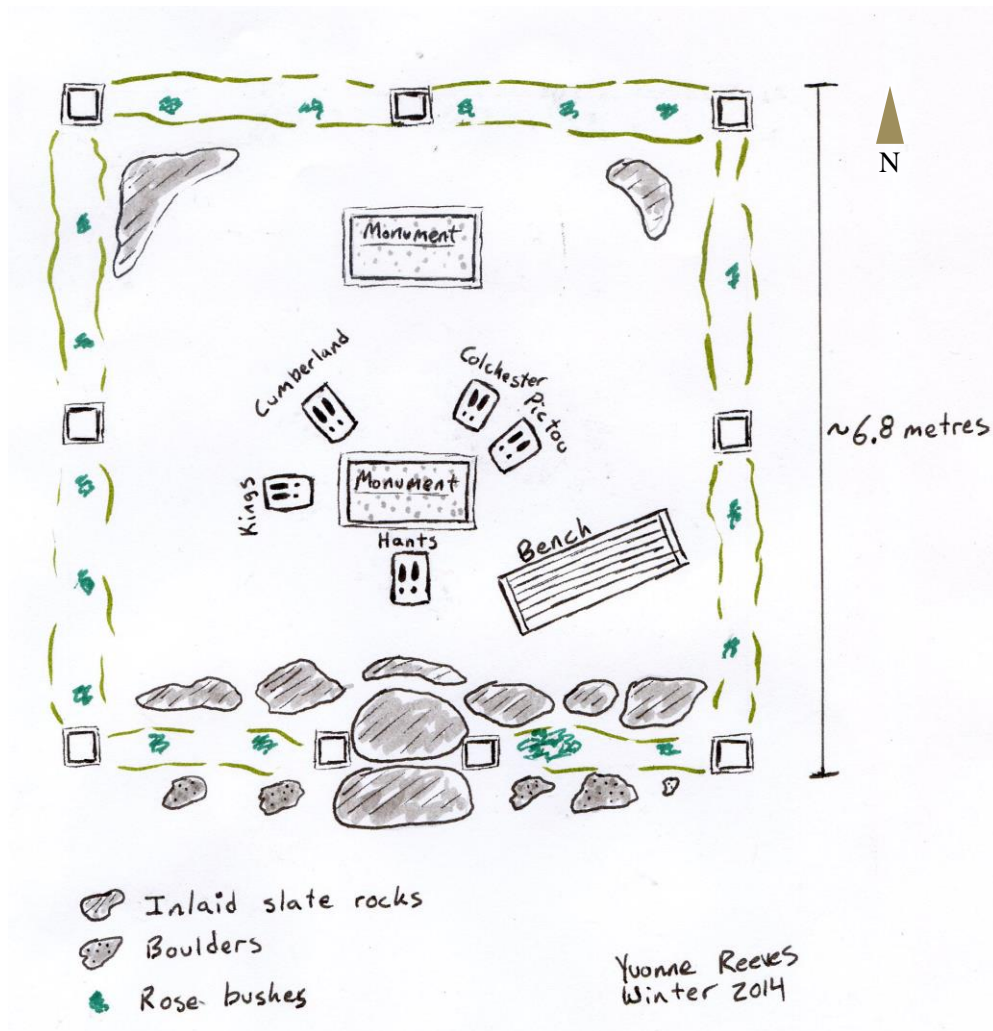


Figure 5: Plan view of the site's layout.

³⁹ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 53.

Two granite memorials have been placed at the centre of the site. One describes the courthouse and the centennial of the municipality. The other describes the view from the site and claims that the site is a “Topographically Significant Site” (See Figure 6). Five flat stones are inlaid in the ground and surround the memorials; they are carved with footprints and the names of the five municipalities that can be seen. Each set of footprints orients the viewer toward a county. To the right of a central entrance is a wooden bench that is oriented towards the northwest. Other slate slabs are located near the entrance to the monument and large rocks are placed between the monument and the road. Rose bushes are positioned between the pillars and grass covers the rest of the site.

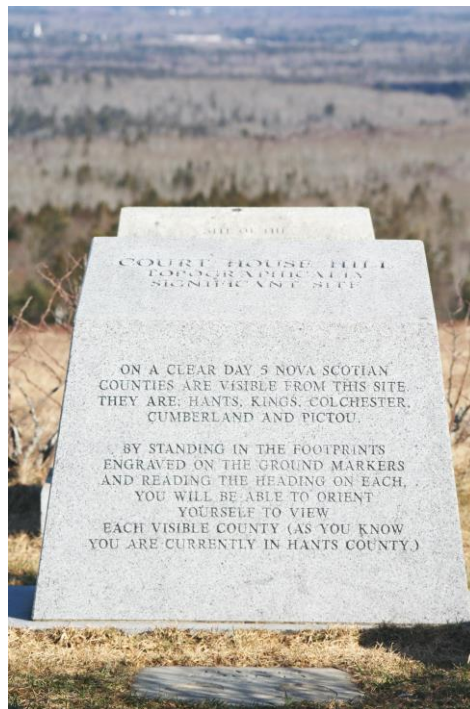


Figure 6: Granite memorials at Courthouse Hill. The memorial reads: “Court House Hill Topographically Significant Site. On a clear day 5 Nova Scotian counties are visible from this site. They are: Hants, Kings, Colchester, Cumberland and Pictou. By standing in the footprints engraved on the ground markers and reading the heading on each, you will be able to orient yourself to view each visible county. As you know, you are currently in Hants County.” (Photo by Maxime Lapierre).

The monument has had some maintenance since it was built but has not retained its original aesthetic as shown Figure 7. The pillars have noticeably been repainted; old graffiti and carvings into the wood are still visible beneath the paint. The bench is now painted white but was not painted in older photos of the site. In the photo from 1980, the rose bushes were planted in soil covered with mulch. These gardens are now overgrown with grass and the rosebushes do not appear to have grown since they were planted. The slabs of slate on the ground are also grown over. The current appearance of the site, as compared to these photos, looks to be unkempt.

The memorials communicate some misinformation about the site; for example, one memorial states that the courthouse burned down in 1954 but it is known to have burned down on July 22, 1956⁴⁰. The other memorial spells the name of the site as “Court House Hill” even though the spelling is “Courthouse Hill” on all road signs and in municipal documents. The inconsistency with the spelling of the name may be because of locals spelling the name differently, or that it had been spelled differently in the past.

⁴⁰ Municipality of East Hants. *Heritage*. 2011, accessed October 15, 2013 from <http://www.easthants.ca/content/heritage>
Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 53.
M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 25.



Figure 7: Courthouse Hill monument when it was placed on the site in 1980 (Photo retrieved from David Brown).



Figure 8: The state of the Courthouse Hill monument today (Photo by Maxime Lapierre).

Environment and Environmental History

Elevation

Courthouse Hill sits at an elevation of 171 m above sea level. Though this is not a remarkably high elevation, it is surrounded by lower lands from the southwest to the east; this gives the site a view over a large area of land. The elevation south of the site rises up higher than where the site is located and forms the horizon looking south from the site.



Figure 9: The view looking north to east from the monument (Photo by Maxime Lapierre).

View

The site is located on a north facing slope on the northern tip of the Rawdon Hills; the view spans from the southwest to the east (Figure 10). Five counties can be seen on a clear day from Courthouse Hill. These counties are Hants, Colchester, Cumberland, Pictou, and Kings. The earliest document found, for this project, that claims this range of view is a document written in 1941 by local students⁴¹. No information was found as to how this was determined in the past; however, a viewshed analysis using geographic information systems confirms that this claim is true. Figure 10 shows the result of the viewshed analysis. The view from the site encompasses the lands facing the Minas Basin but the water of the Basin cannot be seen; rather the view is of the upland areas of the five counties. These areas include the northwestern half of East Hants, the northwest of West Hants, Blomidon and the North Mountain in Kings County, the south eastern areas of Cumberland and Colchester County, and a small portion of the western tip of Pictou County.

⁴¹ M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 25.

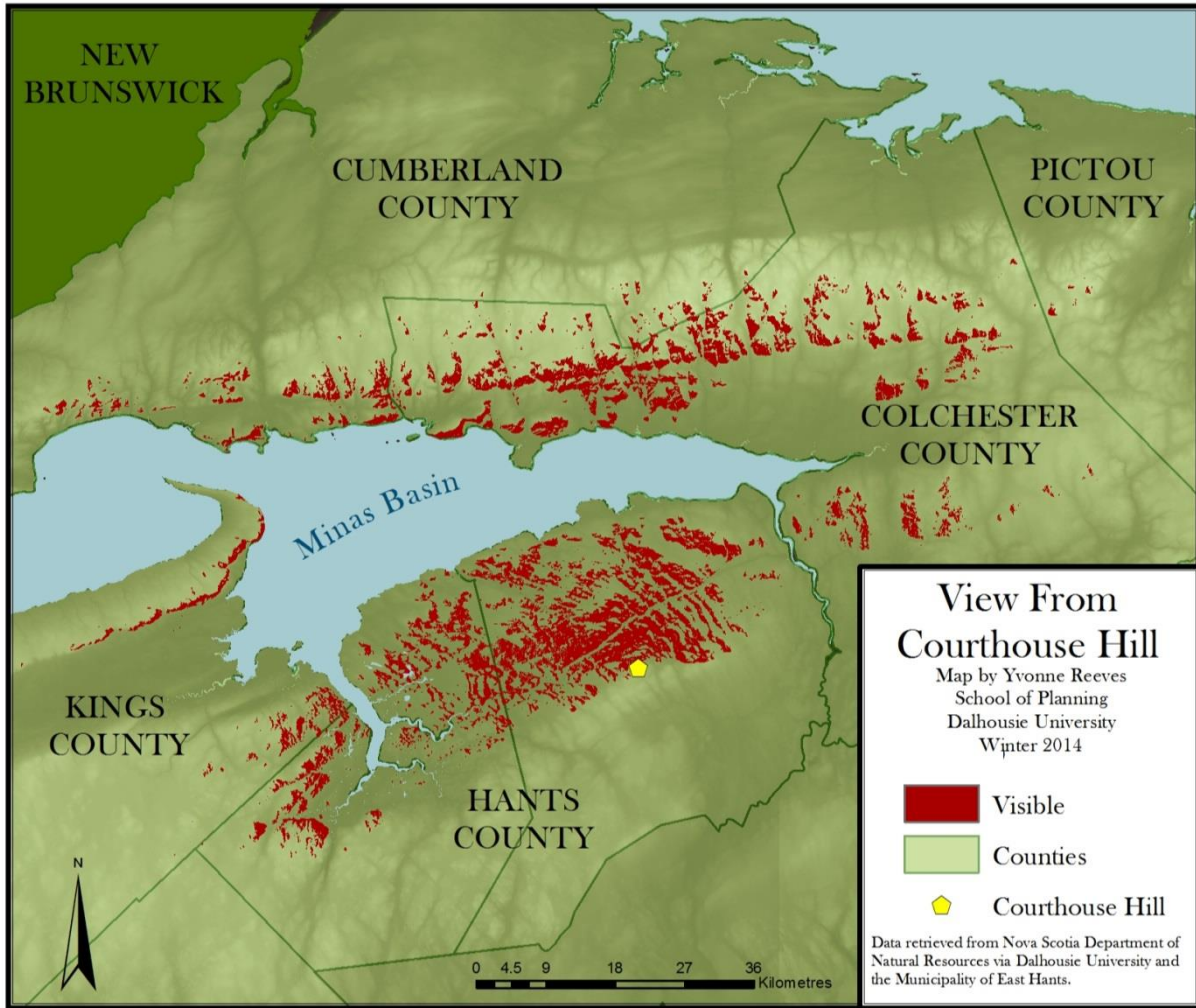


Figure 10: The result of a viewshed analysis from Courthouse Hill.

A panorama image was created to depict where each of the counties is located within the view from Courthouse Hill. Images from this panorama are located in the Appendix of this document (Figures A.1 to A.2). The panorama helps to orient the viewer as to what they are looking at.

Geology

Bedrock Geology

Courthouse hill is located above a folded, Meguma Group, slate bedrock (Figure 11) called Halifax Formation Slate⁴². This bedrock forms what is known as the Rawdon Hills, which extend southwest from the site. This slate was formed during the early Ordovician period⁴³ around 450 million years ago⁴⁴. This is around the time when the first land plants appeared on Earth⁴⁵. Quartz veins, containing gold deposits, are found throughout the slate bedrock which is a defining feature of the hills. Antimony is also located in the Rawdon Hills and is a valuable mineral resource⁴⁶.

Surrounding the northeastern side of the Rawdon Hills is softer, carboniferous sandstone bedrock called Horton Group that is more easily eroded than the Meguma slate. Windsor Group limestone is also located between the site and the Minas Basin and is a softer rock. Both the adjacent sandstone and limestone are younger rocks than the Meguma slate and were formed in the early Carboniferous period around 330 to 360 years ago⁴⁷. During this period the first ferns and reptiles appeared on Earth and the supercontinent of Pangea was formed⁴⁸. Other sandstones located between the site and the Minas Basin include: the Cumberland Group which formed around 310 million years ago when the Maritimes were located in the middle of Pangea⁴⁹; and the Wolfville Formation which formed in the Triassic period around 220 to 250 million years ago when the first mammals and dinosaurs appeared on Earth⁵⁰. The bedrock from the site progresses from old to young when moving towards the Minas Basin.

⁴² *Nova Scotia Geological Highway Map: Third Edition*. Map. Halifax: Province of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Geoscience Society, 2005.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Atlantic Geoscience Society. *The Last Billion Years: A Geological History of the Maritime Provinces of Canada*. (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 2001), 51.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ John Calder, oral communication, February 13, 2014.

⁴⁷ *Nova Scotia Geological Highway Map: Third Edition*. Map. Halifax: Province of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Geoscience Society, 2005.

⁴⁸ Atlantic Geoscience Society. *The Last Billion Years: A Geological History of the Maritime Provinces of Canada*. (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 2001), 32.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The variance in elevation in the area is due to the underlying geology. The younger, softer, bedrocks form the lowlands between Courthouse Hill and the Minas Basin and the harder slate bedrock that is more resilient to erosion shapes the Rawdon Hills⁵¹.

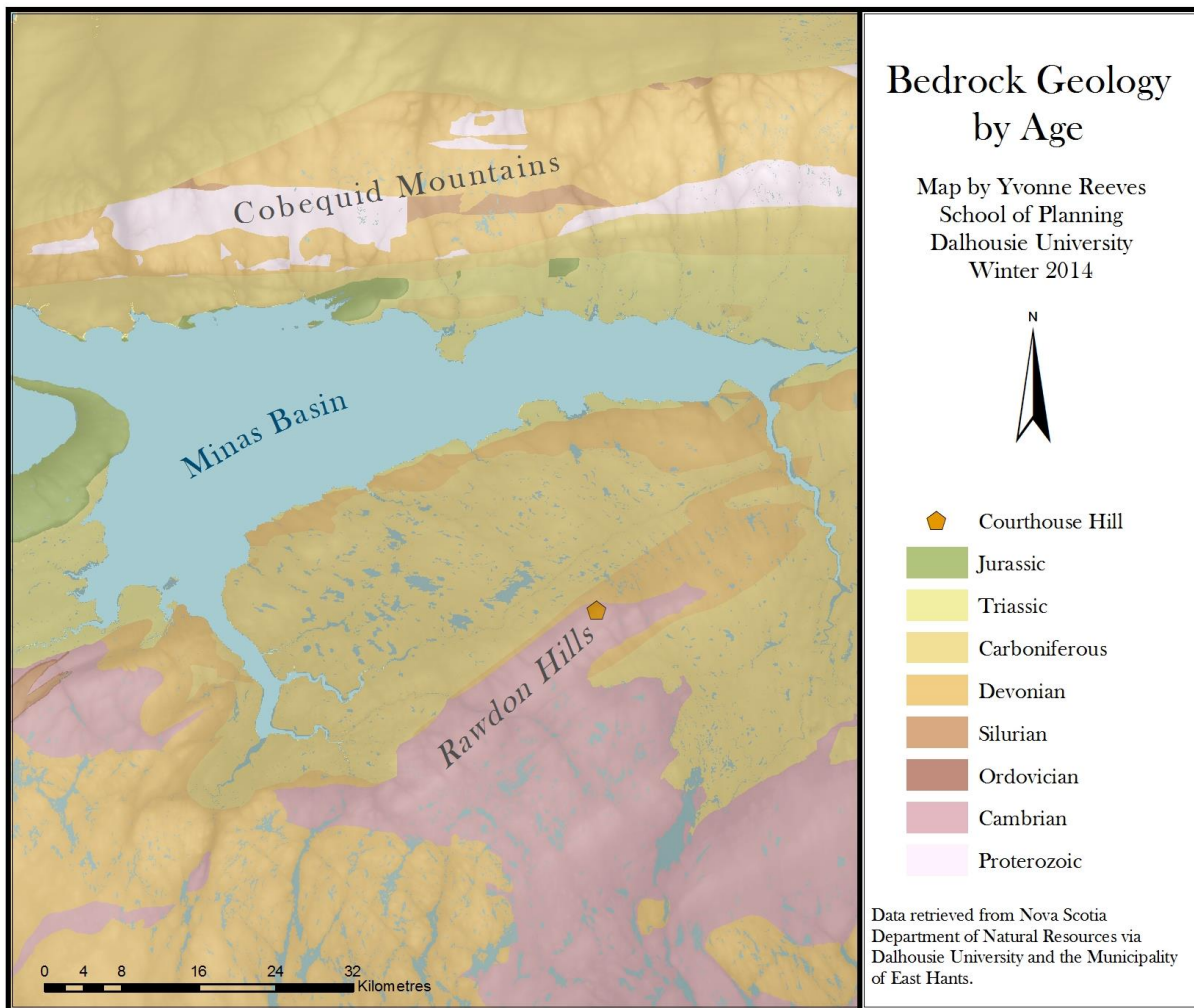


Figure 11: Bedrock geology surrounding the Minas Basin and Courthouse Hill.

⁵¹ Atlantic Geoscience Society. *The Last Billion Years: A Geological History of the Maritime Provinces of Canada*. (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 2001), 32.

Surficial Geology

The site is located on a silty till plain, as shown in Figure 12, that overlies the Meguma slate bedrock. The till in this location is known as Lawrencetown Till which has some fertility for agriculture. This till is moderately compacted and contains a mix of material from the North Mountain, Fundy Group, and Windsor Group formations⁵². This parent material was deposited by glaciers that covered the landscape up to around 12,500 years ago⁵³. The depth of the till on Courthouse Hill is not known but no exposed bedrock can be seen indicating that there is depth to the till under the site and blueberry fields.

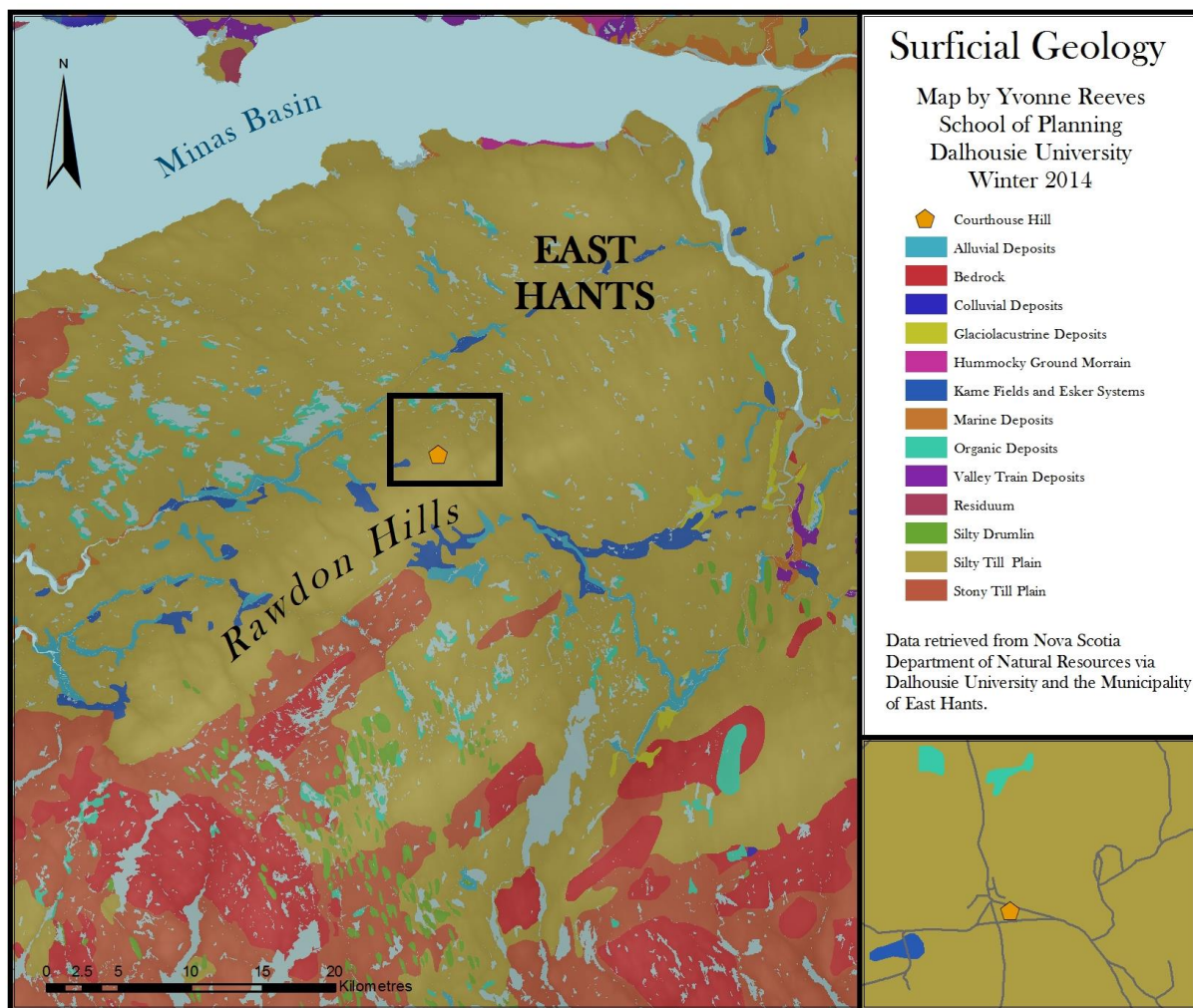


Figure 12: Surficial geology of Easy Hants.

⁵² *Pleistocene Geology Map Sheet 4: Central Nova Scotia*. Map. Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia, 1980.

⁵³ Atlantic Geoscience Society. *The Last Billion Years: A Geological History of the Maritime Provinces of Canada*. (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 2001), 173.

Slope Aspect and Wind

The Courthouse Hill monument is located on a north facing slope at the edge of the Rawdon Hills. In the northern hemisphere, northern slopes are cool because they do not receive as much sunlight as slopes that face the other cardinal directions⁵⁴. The site is also in an area that is exposed to wind due to its elevation and the open fields that surround the site. Site visits during the time frame of this project confirmed that the site is an uncomfortable place to be on a cold day. These site visits were conducted during the winter months.

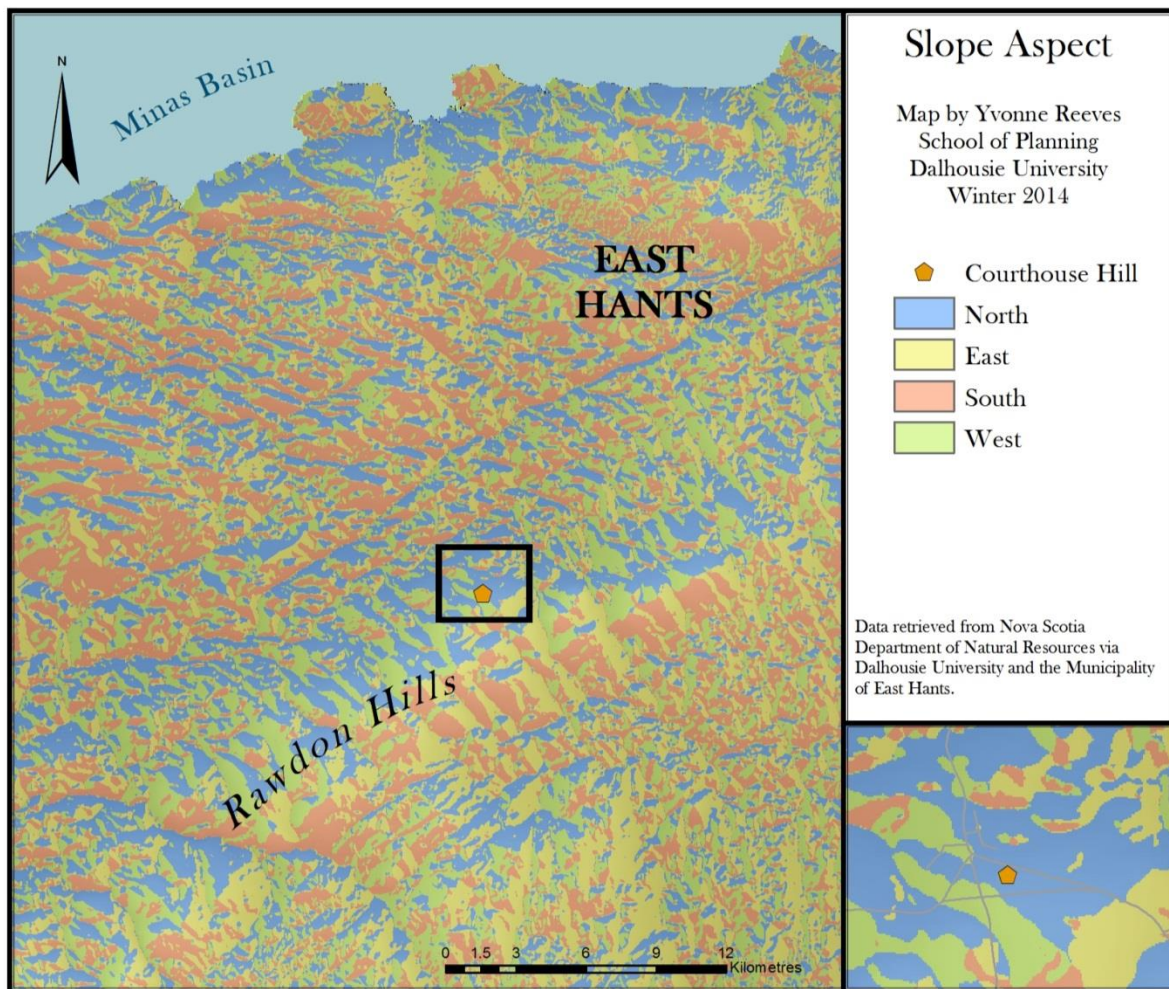


Figure 13: Slope aspect of the site and surrounding area.

⁵⁴ William M. Marsh. *Landscape Planning Environmental Applications Fifth Edition* (United States of America: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2005).

Ecodistricts

The location of the site is within ecodistrict 410 - Rawdon / Wittenburg Hills (Figure 14) as classified by the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (NSDNR)⁵⁵. This district is located along higher elevations with a cool and wet climate. More specifically, the site is located in an ecosection with the following characteristics: “well drained, medium textured soil on hilly terrain”⁵⁶. Red spruce forests and mixed wood forests are common in this ecodistrict and would be the natural forest types for the area before it was cleared for agriculture.

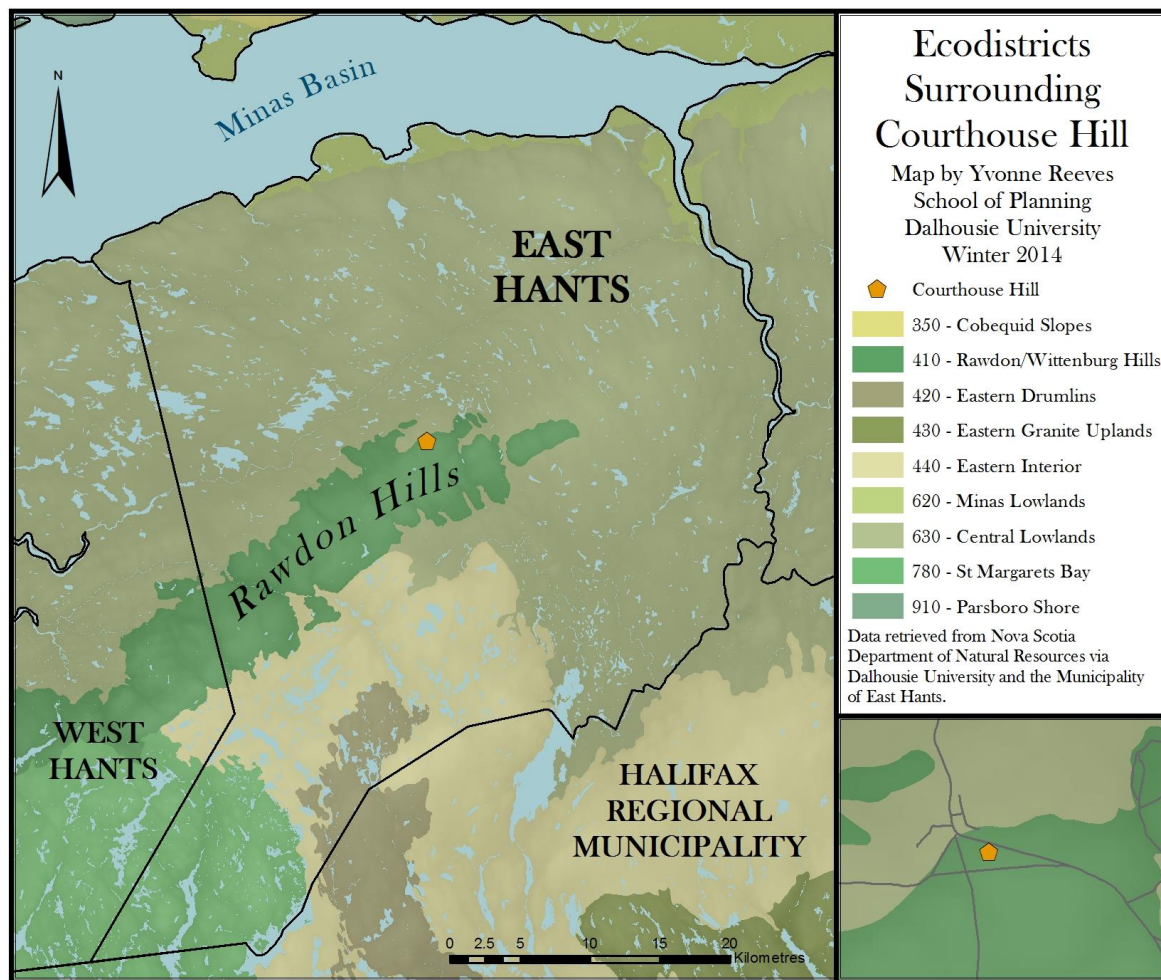


Figure 14: Ecodistricts in the area surrounding Courthouse Hill.

⁵⁵ Peter Neily, Eugene Quigley, Lawrence Benjamin, Bruce Stewart, & Tony Duke, *Ecological Land Classification for Nova Scotia: Volume 1 – Mapping Nova Scotia’s Terrestrial Ecosystems* (Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, 2003), 38.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

At the base of the hill the ecodistrict changes to 630 – Central Lowlands. The characteristics of this region are the following: “well drained, medium textured soil on hammocky terrain”⁵⁷ Both of these ecodistricts are conducive for the agricultural uses that are seen in the area.

⁵⁷ Peter Neily, Eugene Quigley, Lawrence Benjamin, Bruce Stewart, & Tony Duke, *Ecological Land Classification for Nova Scotia: Volume 1 – Mapping Nova Scotia’s Terrestrial Ecosystems* (Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, 2003), 53.

Vegetation

The area surrounding Courthouse Hill has been used for agriculture since European settlement in the area around 1820⁵⁸. Patches of cleared land are being used as agricultural fields, pasture lands, blueberry fields, housing sites, and villages. There are patches of forest throughout the surrounding area but none close to the site; this keeps the view of the surrounding area open (Figure 15). The land adjacent to the site is now a commercial blueberry field as described above⁵⁹. On the site there is low lying grass and short rosebushes that provide for a small recreational area.

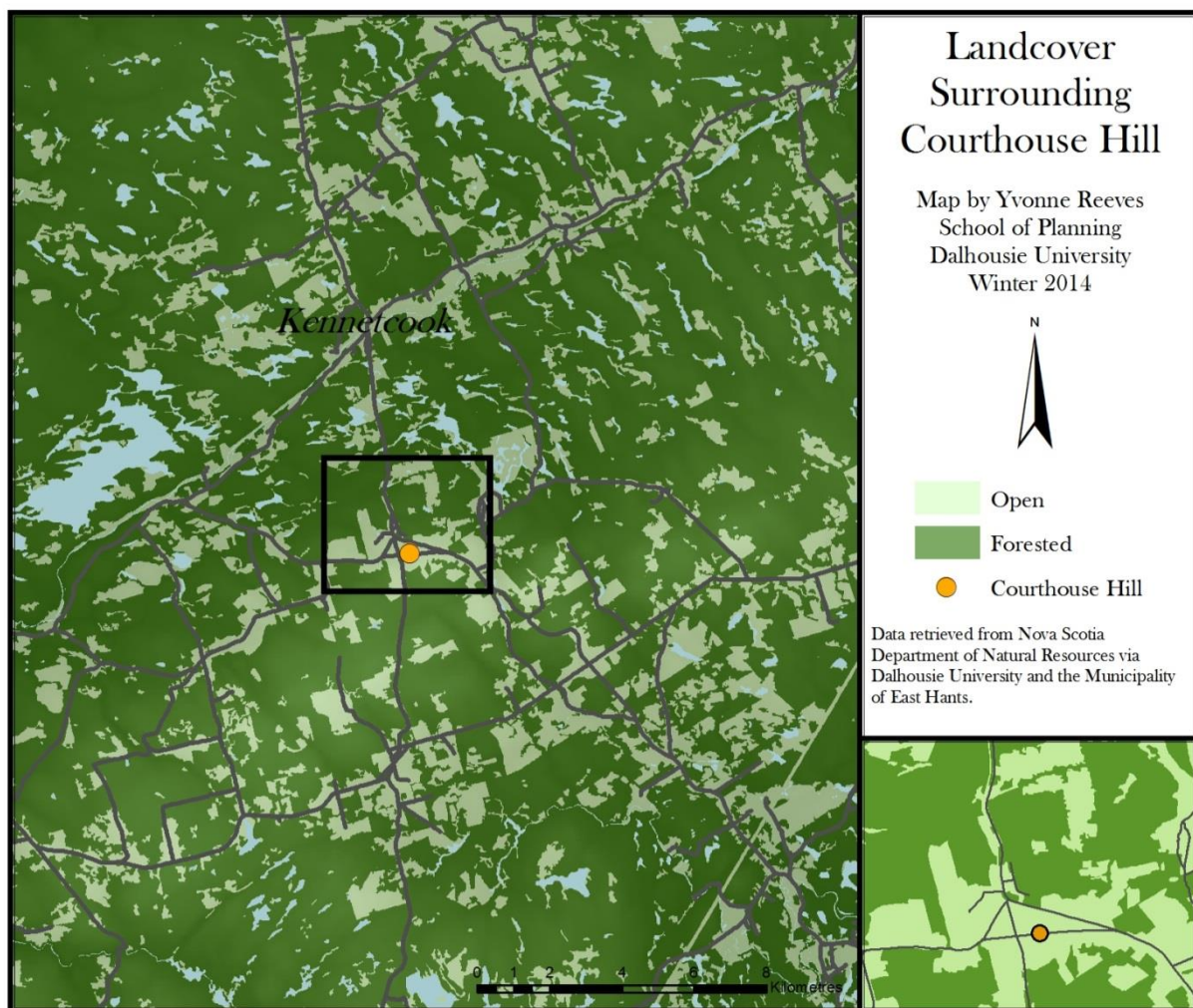


Figure 15: Forests and cleared areas surrounding Courthouse Hill.

⁵⁸ Ralph Whittier. *Notes on the early history of central Hants County* (Windsor: The Hants Journal, 1979), 3.

⁵⁹ David Brown, oral communication, February 19, 2014.

The current agricultural use surrounding Courthouse Hill is a commercial blueberry field⁶⁰. Field observations confirmed that blueberry bushes surround the site on three sides and cover a large are of the hill. Management practices used for these specific fields were not acquired at the time of writing this report; however, an examination into blueberry cultivation in Nova Scotia gave insight into how these fields may affect the landscape. Blueberries grow in acidic, well drained soils; the preference of acidic soils for blueberry production has resulted in the use of herbicides and burning to provide nitrogen to the soils⁶¹. These practices often result in soil erosion and can create barrens where blueberry fields once grew. The fields also create an inhospitable environment for taller vegetation because of the acidity of the soil⁶². Blueberry cultivation on the hill may, therefore, inadvertently keep the view from Courthouse Hill open into the future.

⁶⁰ David Brown, oral communication, February 19, 2014.

⁶¹ Dr. L. J. Eaton & Dr. Klaus Jensen. *Protection of Lowbush Blueberry Soils from Erosion*. (Province of Nova Scotia, 1997). Available: http://www.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/images/sites/wild-blueberry/pdfs/Protection_Soil_Erosion.pdf

⁶²Ibid.

Hydrology

Many streams drain off the Rawdon Hills to the surrounding, low lying areas. The streams from the Courthouse Hill area drain into Kennetcook River to the north. On the southern side of the hills, streams drain in the opposite direction. There are many falls in the area due to the drop in topography from where the slate bedrock changes to the softer sandstone bedrock⁶³. These falls supported the traditional milling industries in the area⁶⁴.

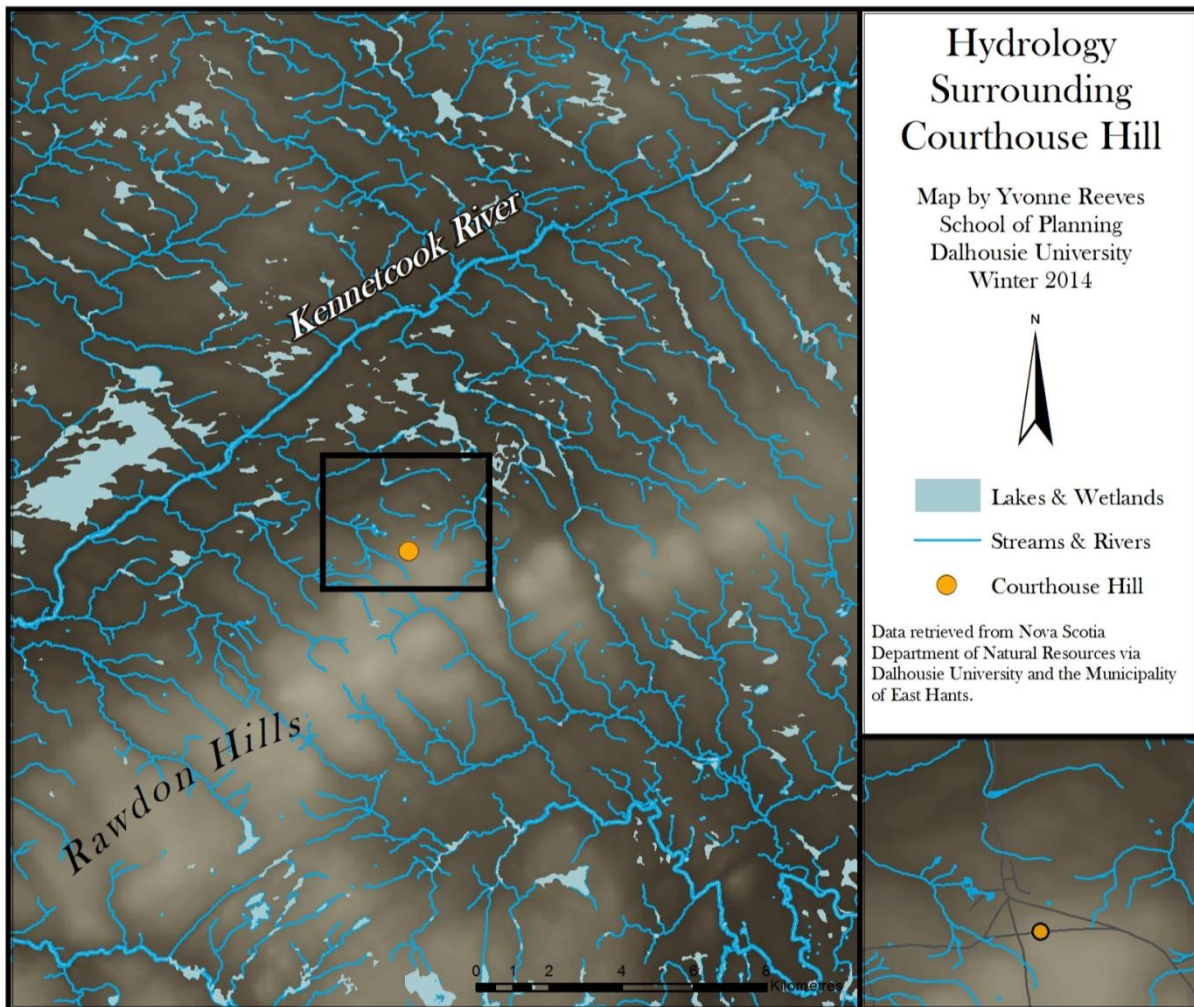


Figure 16: Surrounding Hydrology

⁶³ John Calder, oral communication, February 13, 2014.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Human History

Early European Settlement

Courthouse Hill is located in an area known as the Gore. This area was first settled around 1820 by soldiers of the 84th Regiment of Foot Royal Highlanders⁶⁵. Many of the soldiers were unhappy with their land grants and sold their land shortly after; around 40 remained in the area⁶⁶. The first settler was an Englishman named Abraham Blois⁶⁷. Properties that surround Courthouse Hill today, as identified in property data from the East Hants geodatabase, are owned by people with the name Blois; this suggests that there may be a genealogical connection between some of today's residents and the first settler.

Traditional industries in the area consist mainly of agriculture, slate mining, milling, and lumbering⁶⁸. Agriculture was the main industry after settlement of the area until slate was discovered in 1851; this resource brought more settlers to the area. A shingle mill was built across the road from a slate quarry close to Courthouse Hill. The slate from the quarry was made into roof shingles at the mill. This quarry was well used for around 12 years and many building roofs in the Gore were shingled with slate from the quarry⁶⁹. Figure 17 shows the geology of the area and the location of quarries and mills. A small slate quarry operation appears to be in use today on Slate Quarry Road; it is located 3 kilometres from Courthouse Hill. A geology map from 1899 has the slate quarry located on the other side of Slate Quarry Road⁷⁰ but at the same point along the road as the current operation.

⁶⁵ Ralph Whittier. *Notes on the early history of central Hants County* (Windsor: The Hants Journal, 1979), 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 38.

⁶⁸ M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 25.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Hugh Fletcher & E. R. Faribault. *Province of Nova Scotia, Hants County, Kennetcook Sheet No. 65*. Map. (Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, 1899).

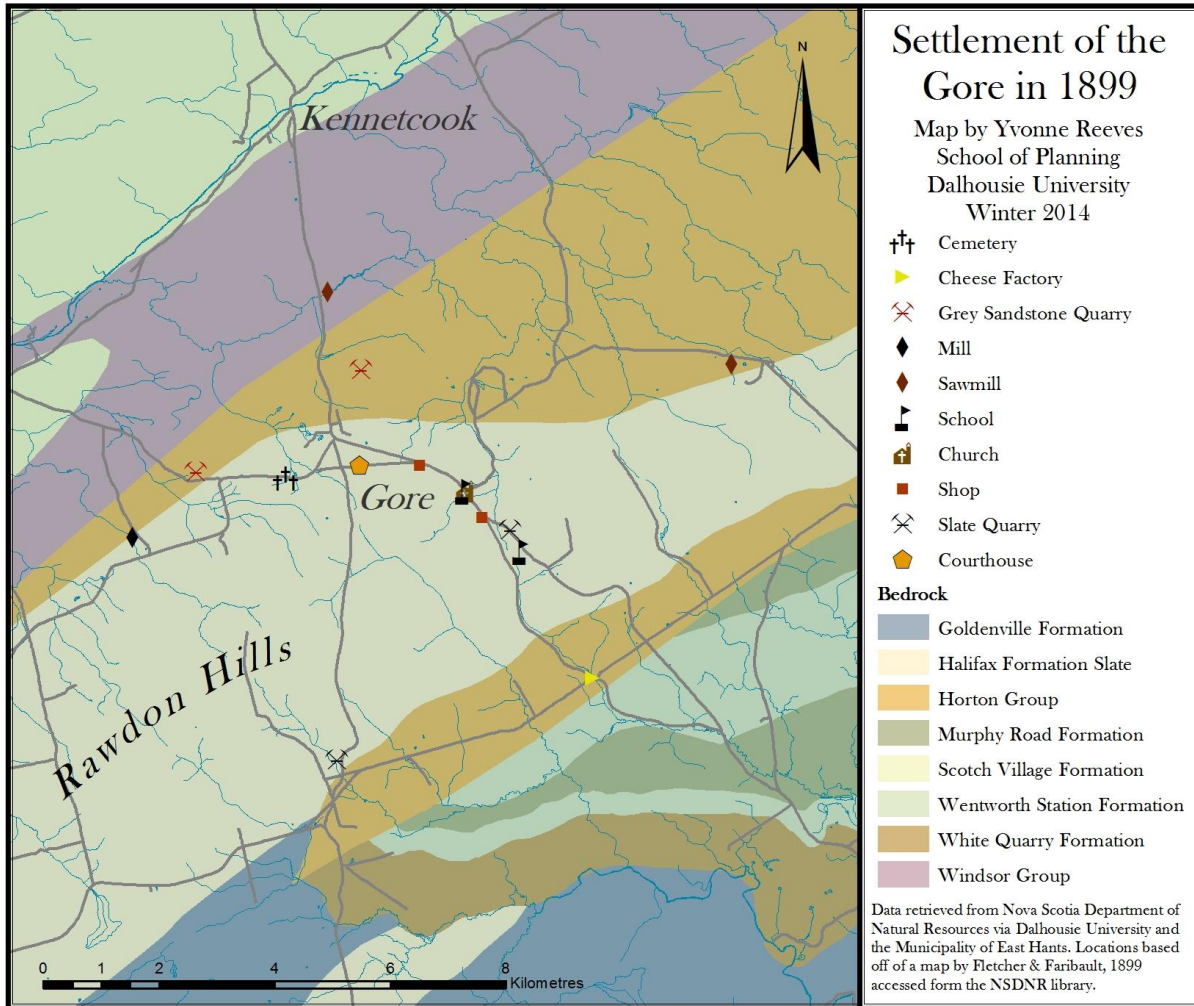


Figure 17: Settlement of the Gore, 1899.

Other mills in the area were a grist mill and a board mill. Another industry that was in the area at the time was a cheese factory which started in 1892. Farmers of the area held shares in the factory and brought their milk to the Gore. It was only in operation for six years⁷¹.

⁷¹ M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 25.

Courthouse

The courthouse was built on what was formerly known as “Judgement Hill”⁷² and is now known as Courthouse Hill. The courthouse was located here because of its central location within the municipality of East Hants⁷³. Courts by Justices and council meetings for the municipal councillors were held here for 40 years between 1867 and 1907. The building burned to the ground on July 22, 1956⁷⁴. A detailed timeline of the courthouse and the activities that took place there is located in the appendix (Figure A.6).

Courthouse Details

One picture of the courthouse is thought to exist but was not located during the time of this project. A detailed description, however, of the courthouse was written by Mrs. Ernest Wallace in the *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*⁷⁵. According to her description, the courthouse had a slate roof; these shingles came from a shingle mill and slate quarry close to the hill. The building was made of wood with one entrance and ten windows. The dimensions of the building were 40 by 30 feet with an 18 foot post. A fence surrounded the building.

The courthouse had very little furniture; in 1878 only six chairs and some benches were listed as being in the courthouse. In 1877, a water closet was built and in 1881, an office chair with a cushion and a washstand were purchased⁷⁶.

By 1889 the courthouse was in need of repairs to the doors, windows, and roof and by 1892 the fence was in need of repairs; Council recommended that the building be repainted in 1892. Council also proposed that the roof be replaced with cedar shingles in 1897. No information was found about if these repairs were done to the building. By 1911 the Council recommended selling the building and did so in 1916.

⁷² M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 38.

⁷³ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 51 – 57.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Later Uses of the Building

The building was sold to the Orange Lodge of Gore in 1916 and was used as a lodging house⁷⁷. The Orange Lodge was a Protestant society of men who swore an oath of allegiance to the Crown. The society has been traced back to Ireland where the first lodges opened, and to William, the Prince of Orange, and King of Great Britain and Ireland who defeated James II, a Catholic King in 1690 at the Battle of Boyne⁷⁸. The first lodge in Nova Scotia opened in Halifax in 1799. By the early 1900s there were over 100 lodges in the province and as many as 4,303 members. The society held an annual parade on July 12th to celebrate the Battle of the Boyne. Some lodges also celebrated Guy Fawkes Day on November 5th. Lodges had anywhere from 30 to 200 members each. The chapter that used the courthouse in the County of East Hants was called “Gore” and the lodge number was 2573⁷⁹. No specific information about the Orange Lodge of Gore’s activities at the courthouse, or within East Hants, was found at the time of writing this report.

According to a document written by local students in 1941, the society The Sons of Temperance was using the building as their division hall at this time⁸⁰. No connection between this society and the Orange Lodge at the courthouse has been located at the time of writing this report. The Sons of Temperance society was concerned with the abuse and consumption of alcohol and thought it to be the cause of many societal troubles⁸¹. The movement was international throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of the first Sons of Temperance divisions in Canada opened in Pictou County, Nova Scotia in 1827. The fraternal society tolerated a moderate use of alcohol at first but soon became a political movement calling for prohibition⁸².

⁷⁷ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 51 – 57.

⁷⁸ Brian McConnell, *Orange Lodges of Nova Scotia*. Available: <http://www.ulster-scots.com/uploads/1448532959671.PDF>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 25.

⁸¹ Graeme Decarie, *Temperance Movement* (Historica Canada, 2013). Available:

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/temperance-movement/>

⁸² Ibid.

Current Settlement Pattern

The land surrounding Courthouse Hill has traditionally been used for agriculture⁸³ which is evident today with the property boundaries shown in Figure 18; most of the land is covered by large properties. We also see that some properties have been subdivided into smaller parcels next to roads where residential buildings have since been built.

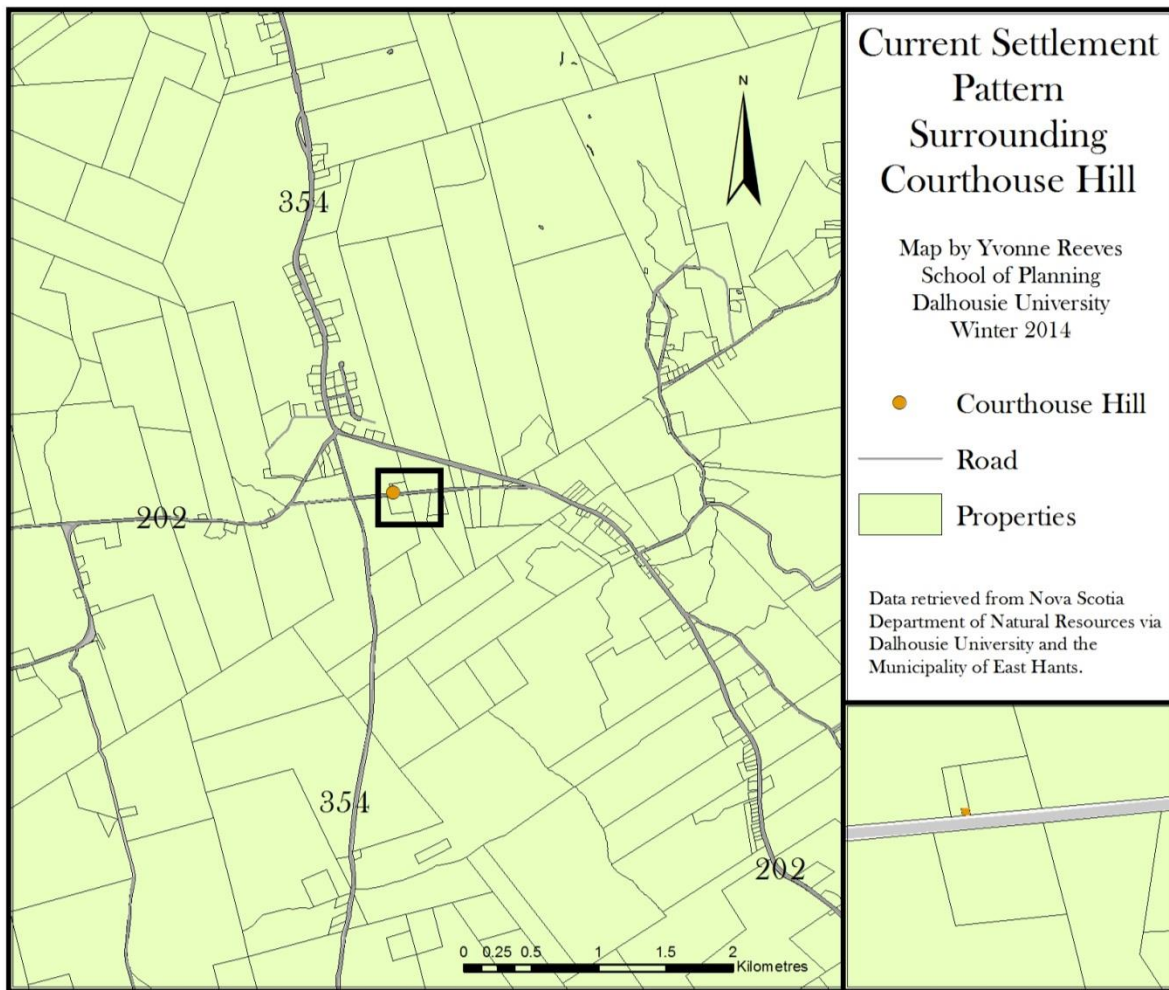


Figure 18: Property boundaries.

⁸³ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 51 – 57.

The lot purchased for the original courthouse was one half acre and was purchased from Henry Blois of Gore⁸⁴. Note that his surname is the same as the first settler to the area, Abraham Blois⁸⁵. The current Courthouse Hill lot, however, is only a fraction of the original size at approximately 105 metres square. This small parcel is owned by the Municipality of East Hants. Two lots less than an acre in size surround the north and east sides of the site; one or both of these could, therefore, have been part of the original land purchased for the courthouse.

Current Land Uses

Agriculture is still prevalent in the area and blueberry fields cover many of the hilltops in the surrounding area. Agritourism is also being promoted at Courthouse Hill farm, which is located at the base of Courthouse Hill. A corn maze and haunted house take place on this farm from the end of September to the end of October⁸⁶.

A commercial blueberry picking operation is currently taking place on the lands surrounding the Courthouse Hill historic site⁸⁷. The blueberry bushes are low lying plants and do not disrupt the view of the five counties; the view has, therefore remained clear and unobstructed in recent years. The current use of this land works in harmony with preserving the view from Courthouse Hill.

An airstrip is located uphill from the site and is a Transport Canada Licenced Airfield⁸⁸. It was an abandoned lot before the land was purchased in 2003 by Jack and Jocelyn Parlee. By 2006, the Parlees had acquired a Transport Canada Flight Supplement Designation CCY4. The airstrip is 1750 by 60 feet and caters to small planes⁸⁹.

In addition to the airstrip, an open field campground is also located on this lot. The Parlees are aiming to boost ecotourism in the area and their website promotes the view of the five counties and the view of a clear night sky that is unobstructed by light pollution⁹⁰. An annual

⁸⁴ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 51 – 57.

⁸⁵ M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 25.

⁸⁶ Courthouse Hill Farm Ltd. *Nights of Gore Haunted Corn Maze*. Available: <http://www.nightsofgore.com/home.html>

⁸⁷ David Brown, oral communication, February 19, 2014.

⁸⁸ Jack Parlee & Jocelyn Parlee. *CCY4 East Gore Eco Airpark*. Available: <http://eaglespitchecocamping.webs.com/ccy4eastgoreecopark.htm>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Jack Parlee & Jocelyn Parlee. *CCY4 East Gore Eco Airpark*. Available: <http://eaglespitchecocamping.webs.com/ccy4eastgoreecopark.htm>

kite flying festival takes place at the campsite and is organized in partnership with the East Hants Department of Recreation and Culture⁹¹.

The Courthouse Hill site also draws people and uses to the area. It serves as a historic site and tourist destination for visitors. In addition to this, the site is frequented by local youth that are looking for some seclusion; the site is known as a “make out” spot in the Municipality⁹².

⁹¹ David Brown, oral communication, February 19, 2014.

⁹² Ibid.

Site in Relation to Other Destinations

The central location of Courthouse Hill within East Hants places it among many destinations. The destinations included in this project were listed by the East Hants Department of Recreation and Culture in *A Guide to Community Recreation Services for East Hants Residents*. The destinations range in the activities they provide and include: hiking trails, historic landmarks and museums, local art galleries, and natural wonders.

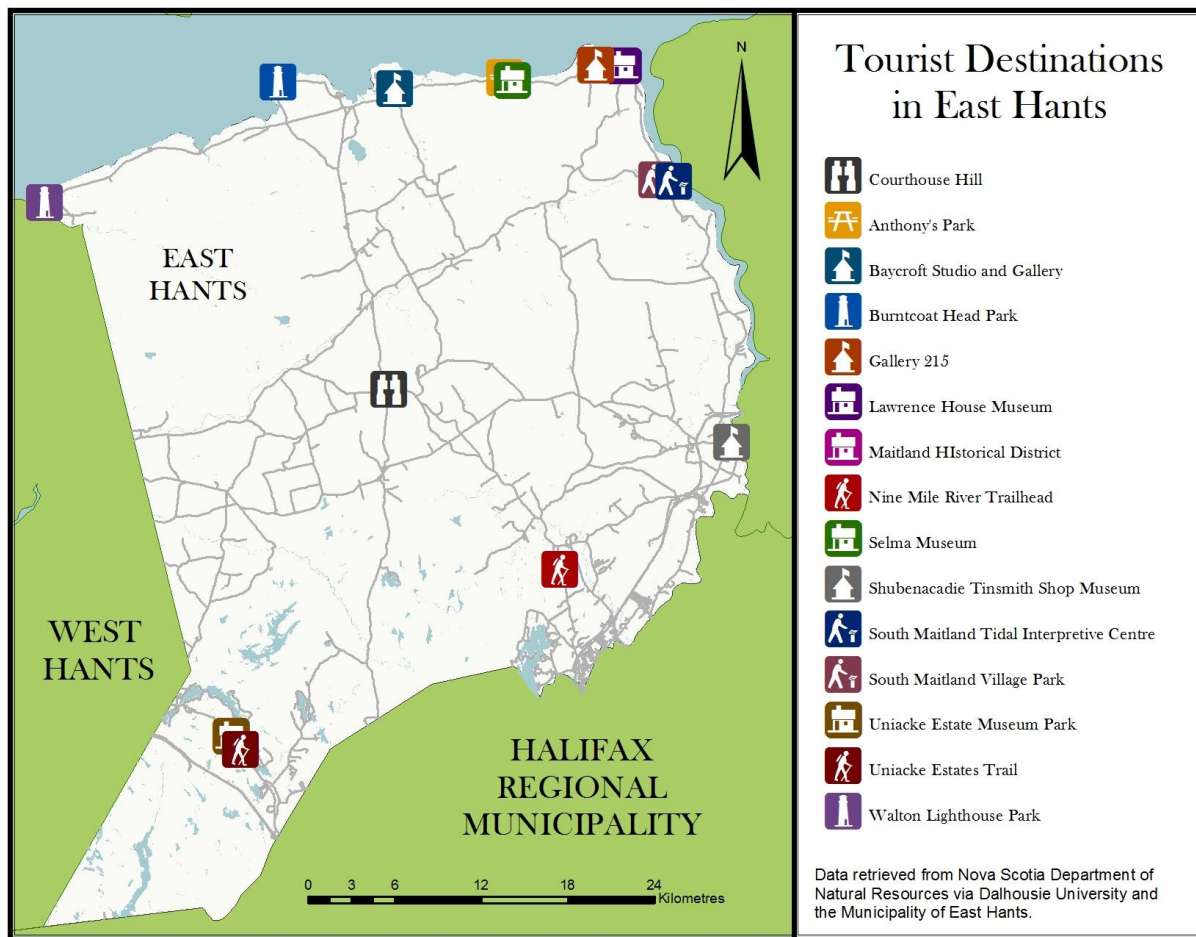


Figure 19: Other destinations in East Hants.

Many of the destinations in East Hants occupy sites at the perimeter of the Municipality (Figure 19). Courthouse Hill is unique in its location within the Municipality because it is at the centre of the other destinations. Unfortunately, because most of the other destinations are located along the coast and in low-lying areas, they are not within the view plane from Courthouse Hill. The following is a list of the destinations included in this project and their driving distances from Courthouse Hill by road⁹³:

- Anthony Park – 32km
- Baycroft Studio and Gallery – 24km
- Burntcoat Head Park – 26.5km
- Gallery 215 – 39km
- Lawrence House Museum – 40km
- Maitland Historic District – 39km
- Nine Mile River Trailhead – 15km
- Selma Museum – 32.5km
- Shubenacadie Tinsmith Shop Museum – 29km
- South Maitland Tidal Interpretive Centre – 32km
- South Maitland Village Park – 32km
- Uniacke Estate Museum Park – 39km
- Uniacke Estate Trail – 40km
- Walton Lighthouse Park – 57km

⁹³ Google Maps “Court House Hill, NS” Map. Google, accessed February 16, 2014 from <https://maps.google.ca/>

Policy Considerations

Municipal Policies

The Municipality of East Hants has an interpretation plan for Courthouse Hill listed as a future project or study in the *East Hants Municipal Planning Strategy*. The future projects and studies are meant to address issues, concerns, and opportunities with a proactive approach to long-term planning for the Municipality. The Courthouse Hill project is listed as one to “Prepare a plan to enhance viewing and natural and human heritage interpretive experiences available at Courthouse Hill and to maintain the quality of viewing and interpretive opportunities over the long term⁹⁴.” The planning strategy aims to promote tourism and eco-tourism in East Hants without compromising the community identity of the places and people living there. The plan aims to strengthen tourism with a regional identity and to promote long term economic stability. The commercial and economic development section of the plan identifies projects and sites that the Municipality intends to enhance or upgrade. “Providing adequate signage to promote the Courthouse Hill Site” is included in this list⁹⁵.

Another municipal policy that is relevant to this project is the *Municipality of East Hants’ Tourism Strategy*⁹⁶. The strategy is meant to provide a framework for tourism to grow and prosper whereby the Municipality will provide leadership but allow for the entrepreneurial skills of the community to drive growth. It recognizes that volunteers and businesses drive the tourism sector of the Municipality. It identifies that a link between attractions and destinations will promote a cohesive identity for the municipality and that collaboration and cooperation between communities should be encouraged. It also recognises that destinations, and the Municipality’s identity, should be based in the natural beauty, culture, and heritage of the East Hants and its destinations. The guiding values of the plan are to celebrate natural and man-made assets, promote appreciation of the environment, promote tourism, encourage experience based tourism, encourage collaboration, and recognize the need of basic infrastructure for visitors. The plan identifies four pillars for supporting tourism in the municipality including: leadership and

⁹⁴ Municipality of East Hants. *Municipal Planning Strategy*. 2006. Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/municipal-planning-strategy-1>, (14) 5.

⁹⁵ Municipality of East Hants. *Municipal Planning Strategy*. 2006. Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/municipal-planning-strategy-1>, (9) 17.

⁹⁶ Municipality of East Hants. *Tourism Strategy*. 2009. Available: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://www.easthants.ca/content/tourism-development-strategy>

facilitation to ensure quality and consistency between sites; brand development to identity a common image, or identity, for the municipality; premier attractions that will draw people to the municipality; and marketing and promotion.

Zoning

The land use by-law in the municipality has the areas surrounding Courthouse Hill zoned as Agricultural Reserve (AR) and Rural Use (R4) as shown in Figure 20.

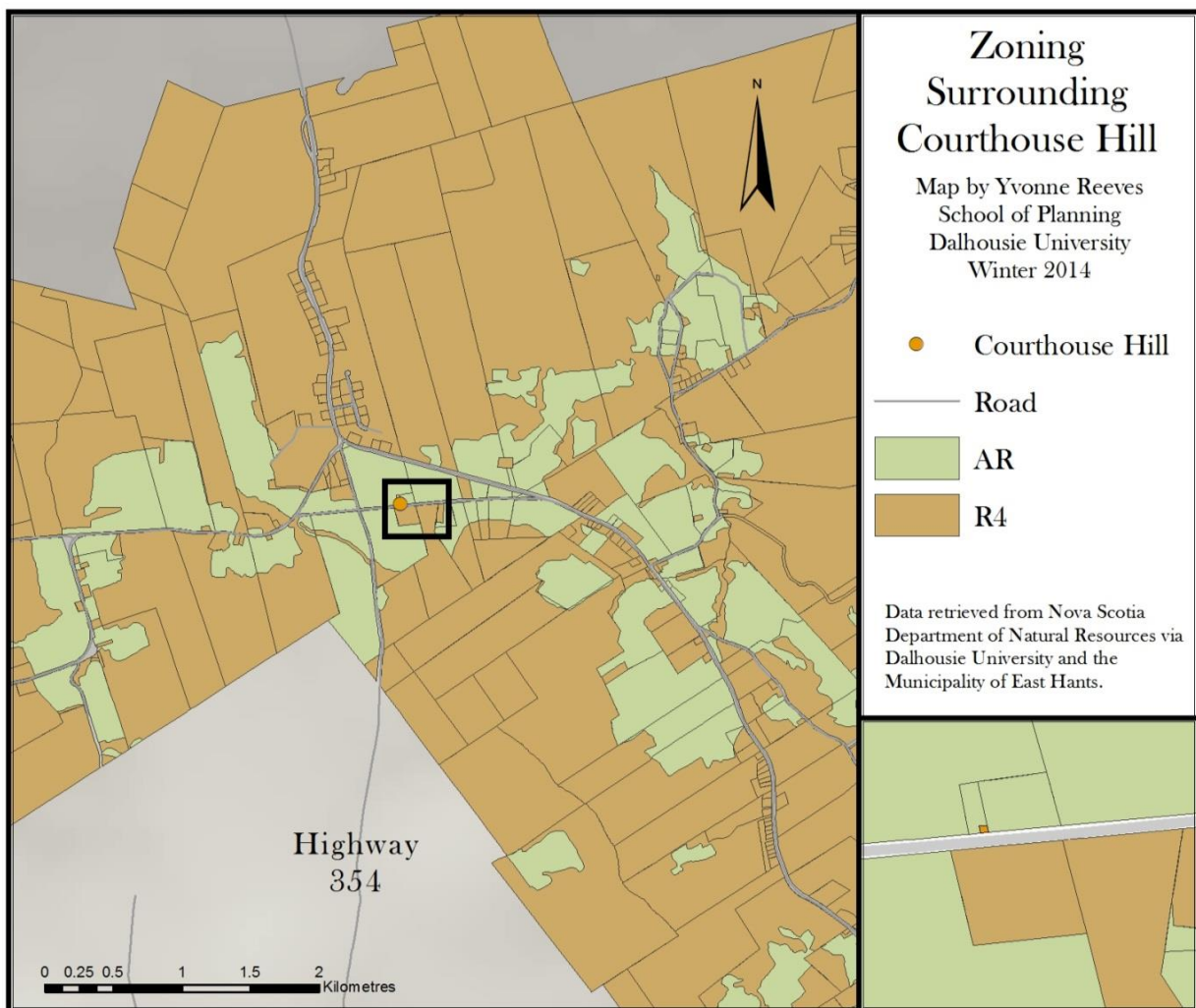


Figure 20: Current zoning for the area surrounding Courthouse Hill.

Permitted uses in the Agriculture Reserve (AR) Zone include: any agricultural uses and agriculture related uses, retailing of farm goods, agricultural equipment buildings and accessory structures, bed and breakfasts, forestry uses and structures, existing commercial and residential uses, and farm dwellings. Permitted uses in the Rural Use (R4) Zone include: dwellings and cottages, mobile homes, agricultural buildings, institutional uses, local commercial uses, agricultural related commercial activities, resource based industries, golf courses, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, and farm dwellings⁹⁷. Many uses are permitted in both of these zones.

Provincial Policies and Guidelines

The Province of Nova Scotia's *A Tourism Strategy for Nova Scotia* that identifies the importance of the tourism industry in the Province⁹⁸. It recognizes that tourism plays an important role for local economies throughout the Province and that there is a potential for the industry to grow. The strategy outlines a framework for the Province to work in collaboration with the tourism industry and to promote Nova Scotian residents as ambassadors for the Province. It identifies five priorities to guide the direction of tourism growth in the Province including to: provide leadership to the industry and promote collaboration among Nova Scotians; promote inspirational marketing of the province as a whole; use evidence based decision making to identify opportunities for growth; encourage high quality experiences at destinations to exceed visitor expectations; and improve access to sites throughout Nova Scotia. The strategy identifies that the Province would like to lead the tourism industry in technology by building a digital strategy for tourism and increasing the use of digital communication tools as interpretation media⁹⁹.

The Province of Nova Scotia's *Interpretive Master Plan* was developed in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Museum¹⁰⁰. The plan aims to guide interpretation of sites within the Province. It recognizes that the Province has a unique natural and cultural heritage that is

⁹⁷ Municipality of East Hants. *Land use by-law*. 2006. Available: <https://www.easthants.ca/content/land-use-by-law/LAND%20USE%20BY-LAW%20COMBINED%20-%20NOVEMBER%202011.pdf>

⁹⁸ Government of Nova Scotia. *A Tourism Strategy for Nova Scotia*. 2013, Available: www.novascotia.ca/econ/tourism/docs/Tourism-Strategy-Final-2013.pdf

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage & Nova Scotia Museum. *Interpretive Master Plan*. 2009. Available: <http://museum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/images/nsimp.pdf>

important to residents and interesting to visitors from around the world. The plan stresses that understanding the resources available in the Province are important for a renewal of tourism throughout the Province. The identified resources include heritage properties, natural heritage sites, special places, and artifacts. The plan outlines four goals for interpretation at Nova Scotian sites. These are to: contribute to a common identity of Nova Scotian Heritage; ensure long-term success of the heritage division; ensure that interpretations are authentic, relevant, and inclusive for visitors; and to follow best practices for interpretation. The plan lists best practices as: catering to different learning styles and using multiple modes of communication and encouraging audience participation and involvement with their experience. Guidelines are provided on interpretation planning in the Nova Scotian context¹⁰¹.

¹⁰¹ Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage & Nova Scotia Museum. *Interpretive Master Plan*. 2009. Available: <http://museum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/images/nsimp.pdf>

Federal Guidelines

Canada's Historic Places is a collaboration between the Federal Government, the Provinces and Territories¹⁰². They developed a *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* that provides guidance on heritage conservation and planning for the use of historic places. The plan considers conservation to be an umbrella term that includes preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic sites. The plan lists general standards for heritage conservation that aim to preserve the character defining elements of historic place. Character defining elements include the materials, location, form, uses, and cultural associations of a place that define the places identity¹⁰³. The guidelines in this document include the following:

- Do not remove or alter character defining elements that are a part of the historic place;
- Recognize and conserve character defining elements that have evolved over time and add to the heritage of the place;
- Do not use elements from another historic place or property that does not relate to the site. This will create a false identity and historic sense of the place;
- Find a use for the site that doesn't require a change to its character defining elements;
- Limit the damage or loss of archaeological resources that may be on the site;
- Evaluate the existing conditions of the site to determine if intervention is needed to preserve the current character defining elements;
- Maintain the character defining elements over time and replace deteriorated or missing parts of those elements;
- Repair rather than replace existing elements at a site if possible. If not, match the form, material, and detailing of the original element; and
- Make any new additions to a site visually and physically compatible with what exists on the site already¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰² Canada's Historic Places. *Standards and Guidelines for the conservation of historic places in Canada: second edition*. 2010. Available: <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Canada's Historic Places. *Standards and Guidelines for the conservation of historic places in Canada: second edition*. 2010. Available: <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx>

Synthesis

Many interesting stories about Courthouse Hill and the surrounding area have informed this project. The aim with an interpretation plan is to use these stories to engage visitors with Courthouse Hill and leave them with a new understanding about the place, the surrounding area, and the Municipality of East Hants. To do this, the plan requires that a theme, or themes, be chosen and that the themes are supported by narratives¹⁰⁵. The view from the monument is the fundamental resource that the site has to offer for communicating stories about the place to visitors. Another resource that the site has to offer is its central location within the Municipality of East Hants.

In the following section, this project identifies reasons why a new interpretation plan is an appropriate project for the site. It also identifies potential themes and stories, opportunities for a successful plan, constraints to be considered, and possible media that could be used. These are all recommendations for the Municipality of East Hants in moving forward with an interpretation plan.

Reason for an Interpretation Plan

The Municipality of East Hants is aiming to promote tourism and ecotourism throughout the Municipality in a way that promotes economic stability and adds to the quality of life of residents. The Courthouse Hill site is centrally located in the Municipality and in relation to other destinations. It could become a launching point that encourages visitors to travel to other areas that can be seen from the hill, but must attract more visitors to be able to do so.

Currently, the site appears untidy; Figure 21 shows graffiti on one of the pillars. The current interpretation media, the monuments, have inaccuracies in their account of the place. The year that the courthouse burned down is inaccurate and Courthouse Hill is spelt “Court House Hill”. In addition, the memorials are made of granite, which is a material that is not naturally found in this area of Nova Scotia and does not represent the place; this is contrary to the guidelines listed by Canada’s Historic Places¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁵ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 39-48.

¹⁰⁶ Canada’s Historic Places. *Standards and Guidelines for the conservation of historic places in Canada: second edition*. 2010. Available: <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx>



Figure 21: Graffiti on one of the pillars. Other graffiti has noticeably been painted over.

The footprints on the site point in the direction of each county but do not describe the view (Figure 22); the county names would mean very little to a visitor who is unfamiliar with the area. The site's interpretation of the place can be improved upon by adding to, or redesigning the site with media that conveys more to visitors about the site and surrounding area.

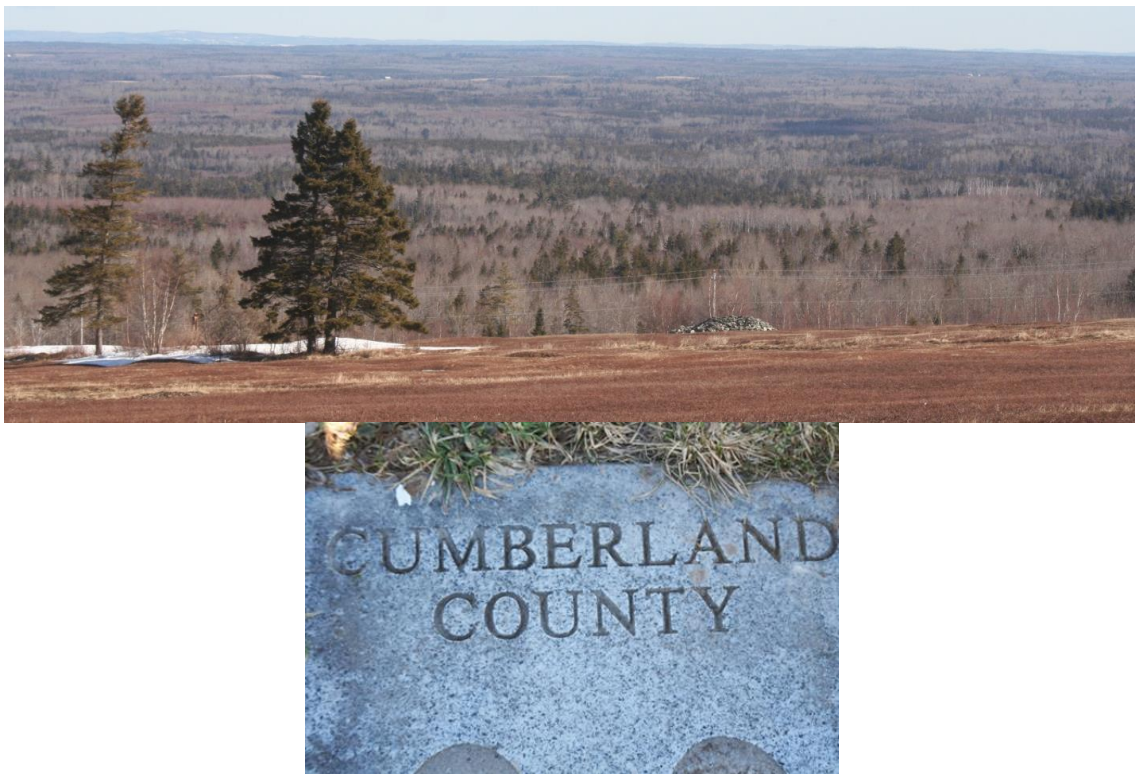


Figure 22: View looking forward from the Cumberland County footprints.

Potential Themes

Two potential themes that can be used in a future interpretation plan were chosen for this project. They are the geology of the area surrounding the Minas Basin and the courthouse that once stood on the hill. The *East Hants Municipal Planning Strategy* identifies that the natural environment and human history are both important for an interpretation plan for the site¹⁰⁷. The Province of Nova Scotia in *A Tourism Strategy for Nova Scotia* also identifies the natural and human history of the province as overarching themes that are important for communicating to visitors coming to the Province¹⁰⁸.

The first theme explored for this project is the distant past and the geology that shaped the surrounding landscape. The view from the site presents a unique opportunity for describing the geologic formation of a vast landscape that surrounds the Minas Basin and forms the Rawdon Hills. Within the view from the site, a diverse array of geologic features can be seen.

The second proposed theme, which incorporates the human history of the site, is the history of the courthouse. The courthouse stood on the site but also played a decisive role in how the surrounding area and Municipality was managed between the years of 1867 and 1907¹⁰⁹. This time period can be used to describe the human history for this site.

¹⁰⁷ Municipality of East Hants. *Municipal Planning Strategy*. 2006. Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/municipal-planning-strategy-1>, (9) 17.

¹⁰⁸ Government of Nova Scotia. *A Tourism Strategy for Nova Scotia*. Available: www.novascotia.ca/econ/tourism/docs/Tourism-Strategy-Final-2013.pdf

¹⁰⁹ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 51 – 57.

Potential Stories

For the purposes of this project, potential stories that could be used to inform the above chosen themes are described below. These chosen stories are based on the natural and cultural features of the site and area that emerged during this project.

The stories used to depict the geology of the site and area revolves around the bedrock geology. The bedrock shapes the landscape of the Rawdon Hills and areas surrounding the Minas Basin that can be seen from Courthouse Hill. The stories revolve around each type of bedrock including at what point in the Earth's history each type of bedrock formed. To show this profound history, Figures A.3 to A.5 in the Appendix display portions of a panorama that was created to tell this story. The panorama shows the view from the site with the type of underlying bedrock superimposed on top of the image. Each type of bedrock is described with a caption describing the underlying bedrock and how tectonic processes formed the landscape.

The stories used to describe the human history of the area revolve around the courthouse that once stood on the site. A timeline is located in the appendix (Figure A.6) that shows the history and use of the courthouse over time. Another story that emerged from the theme of the courthouse involves mandatory road work that was done by men over the age of 21. This is a story that may intrigue visitors. A concern of the Justices of East Hants, at the time the courthouse was being used by the courts, was for men who did not fulfill their mandatory 30 hours of roadwork for the year, as well as Surveyors of Highways who were unable to enforce the statute of labour. One surveyor was notified that he might even be prosecuted for another man not performing his road duties. A description of these events is written in detail in the *Historic Nova Scotia Quarterly*¹¹⁰.

¹¹⁰ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 55 – 57.

Opportunities

The view from Courthouse Hill presents a unique opportunity for visitors to learn about the land that can be seen from the site and to orient themselves within the Municipality and the Province. This view has remained unobstructed because of a blueberry operation that operates next to, and downhill, from the site. The blueberry bushes are low and cover the majority of the hill.

Another opportunity is presented by the community members and businesses located near the site. Nearby businesses are already working towards promoting tourism on Courthouse Hill. The owner of the neighbouring airfield, and campsite, is working towards promoting the site and area for eco-tourism¹¹¹. The Courthouse Hill Farm is also working towards bringing people to the area with autumn corn mazes¹¹². These are possible partnerships that the Municipality can explore when creating an interpretation plan for the site.

To enhance the authenticity of a future interpretation plan, residents with the last name of Blois could be interviewed about the family's history. The first settler to the area was named Abraham Blois¹¹³ and the land purchased to build the courthouse was bought from Henry Blois¹¹⁴. Several property owners in the area share the same surname. They may have additional family stories that would enhance the authenticity of stories used to describe the area.

¹¹¹ Jack Parlee & Jocelyn Parlee. *CCY4 East Gore Eco Airpark*. 2010, Available: <http://eaglespitchecocamping.webs.com/ccy4eastgoreecoairpark.htm>

¹¹² Courthouse Hill Farm Ltd. Nights of Gore Haunted Corn Maze. Available: <http://www.nightsofgore.com/home.html>

¹¹³ M. Campbell, *Hants County History and Geography School Project 1941*. (Nova Scotia: West Hants Historical Society), 25.

¹¹⁴ Ernest Wallace, *The History of the Municipality of East Hants* (Nova Scotia Historic Quarterly, vol. 8, 1979), 55 – 57.

Constraints

There are three main constraints for an interpretation plan for Courthouse Hill. First, there isn't enough area to add amenities, such as a washroom or food service on the existing lot; these types of amenities would help to attract visitors to the site¹¹⁵. Secondly, the Municipality does not own the land adjacent to the site and cannot prevent the building of structures that may obstruct the view from the monument with the current zoning. The zoning (AR) on the hill allows for the building of dwellings, mobile homes, equipment buildings, greenhouses, farm feed stores, animal kennels, and welding shops. If any of these structures were to be built close to the Courthouse Hill site, the most valuable resource of the site, the view, would be lost.

The third constraint of the site is that it does not have internet access for new technologies such as smartphones. This is a service that has changed tourist behaviour and allows visitors to look up information about where they are and how to get to other destinations¹¹⁶. Many innovative media have been created using smartphone applications that convey interpretation about a place to visitors. The lack of an internet connection prevents visitors from being able to use these technologies. According to David Brown, the Municipality has provided a Wifi connection for another area of the Municipality with the same issue; East Hants could do the same for the Courthouse Hill site.

¹¹⁵ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 39-48.

¹¹⁶ Dan Wang, Sangwon Park, and Daniel R. Fesenmaier. "The role of smartphones in mediating the touristic experience." *Journal of Travel Research* 51 (2012): 371-387.

Media Options

Panels and Signs

Description

Panels and signs are a traditional form of media used for interpretation planning. They allow for a visual representation of the stories and surrounding area along with written description of the story that is being portrayed. They welcome visitors in place of a tour guide and can also offer information on directions and instructions about touring a site¹¹⁷.

Examples

There are numerous examples of panels that have been created for interpretation purposes. The images below show a few examples of panels and signs that display information about views. Clear panels can be used to overlap information onto the existing view, like a viewfinder, as was done in Scotland (left). Low-lying panels, as shown in the image on the right, avoid blocking views.



Figure 23: Example of clear and low-lying panels¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 43.

¹¹⁸ Susan Cross. *Photographing panels at Scara Brae, World Heritage Site, Orkney*. [image, far left]. Available: <http://susancrosstelltale.com/2012/12/27/six-things-that-help-interpretation-panels-communicate-better/picture-40/> Lachlan. *Perspex panels with photos showing the exact spot in the past*. [image, far right]. 2011, Available: <http://lachlanaam.blogspot.ca/2011/12/matter-of-interpretation.html>

*Advantages*¹¹⁹

- Inexpensive over the long term.
- Does not require much ongoing maintenance.
- Can be low to not obstruct views or clear to add to the view.
- Commonly used at other destinations within the municipality.
- They provide interpretation at any time of the day and on the spot that interpretation is needed.

*Disadvantages*¹²⁰

- May be vandalized.
- Cannot be tailored to individual visitors' interests.
- Will weather over time.
- The materials used for panels must be selected carefully and work in harmony with the feel of the place.
- It is difficult for large groups to crowd around a panel.
- Panels become boring and outdated for local residents and regular visitors to a place.

¹¹⁹ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 43.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Structures and Art Pieces

Description

Art and sculptures can be used to represent a feature of a site. They often depict an element of the site that is no longer there or act as memorials of the past¹²¹.

Examples

An example of an art structure used for interpretation planning is the Benjamin Franklin “Ghost House” in Pennsylvania. A structure of the frame of his former house and print shop was built as part of the interpretation of the site as shown below¹²². Another example of art used to interpret a place is the “Fisherman’s Monument” at Peggy’s Cove, Nova Scotia. The monument is carved out of the granite bedrock and illustrates the seafarer history of the Province¹²³. This example uses local materials, was created by a local artist, and it is incorporated with the setting and human history of the site; it is an example of an authentic interpretation of a place.



Figure 24: Art displays used for interpretation planning. Benjamin Franklin's “Ghost House” (left) and Fisherman's Monument (right).

¹²¹ James Carter, *A Sense of Place: An interpretive planning handbook* (Scotland: Scottish Interpretation Network), 43.

¹²² Visit Philadelphia. *Benjamin Franklin Museum*. 2014. Available: <http://www.visitphilly.com/museums-attractions/philadelphia/benjamin-franklin-museum/>

¹²³ St. Margaret's Bay Community Association. *Peggy's Cove*. Available: http://www.st-margaretsbay.com/peggys_cove.html

Advantages

- Art displays are visually stimulating and can capture the attention of visitors.

Disadvantages

- Communication through art may be more abstract and difficult for all audiences to understand.

Smartphone Applications

Description

New technologies that are now available through smartphone applications are a new form of media that is emerging for interpretation planning. Applications can provide tourists with a range of information about the place they are visiting, including directions to other destinations and information about nearby amenities. Applications can be designed to be interactive with the user and the place they are visiting¹²⁴. East Hants and the Government of Nova Scotia have identified that more interactive experiences for visitors are a desired at historic sites¹²⁵.

Examples

The Municipality of East Hants has already begun to use new technology through the use of postcards that have a barcode on the back. The barcode can be read by a smartphone and directs the user to a website that provides information about places to visit, eat, and sleep in the Municipality.

Another tourism application that has been used in the City of Toronto is a history application called *Toronto in Time*¹²⁶. Using this free application, tourists are directed to various historical sites in the city and are provided with historic photos and written histories of each location. They can follow specialized tours based on themes of their own interest¹²⁷.

¹²⁴ Dan Wang, Sangwon Park, and Daniel R. Fesenmaier. "The role of smartphones in mediating the touristic experience." *Journal of Travel Research* 51 (2012): 371-387.

¹²⁵ Municipality of East Hants. *Tourism Strategy*. 2009. Available: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://www.easthants.ca/content/tourism-development-strategy>
Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage & Nova Scotia Museum. *Interpretive Master Plan*. 2009. Available: <http://museum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/images/nsimp.pdf>

¹²⁶ Toronto in Time. *Tales of the city, told in words and images: about Toronto in Time*. Available: <http://citiesintime.ca/toronto/about/>

¹²⁷ Ibid.



Figure 25: Toronto in Time application shows historic photos next to the current place¹²⁸.

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide an interactive and informative experience for visitors. • Can direct visitors to other locations and provide directions. • Can be used to promote tourism throughout the Municipality. • Can be updated regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all audiences will have access to the technology or knowledge of how to use it. • May be difficult to portray a concise theme for the site if too much information is made available. • Technical difficulties could occur. • Internet access would need to be provided at the site.

¹²⁸ Toronto in Time. *Tales of the city, told in words and images: about Toronto in Time*. Available: <http://citiesintime.ca/toronto/about/>

Augmented Reality

Description

Augmented reality applications create a virtual enhancement of the real world through a screen on a smartphone or tablet. Layers of digital data are added to the camera function of the phone and are triggered by an image, sound, or the Global Positioning System (GPS)¹²⁹.

Examples

One function used for tourism is the use of the Global Positioning System to display where the user is in relation to attractions and amenities within a designated distance from their location. A symbol on the screen shows the location of desired destinations imposed on top of the image captured by the device's camera. Figure 26 demonstrates how this technology could be used to explain features within the view of Courthouse Hill.

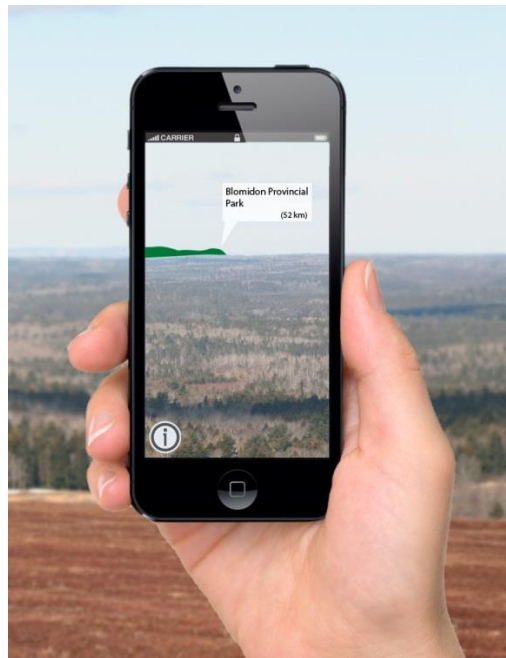


Figure 26: Example of how an augmented reality application could show the location of Blomidon Provincial Park as seen from Courthouse Hill (Image by Yvonne Reeves).

¹²⁹ CrackBerry. *Layar augmented reality browser*. 2014, Available: <http://crackberry.com/layar-augmented-reality-browser-arrives-blackberry-app-world-blackberry-7-devices>

Another use of this technology is the creation of 3D figures or structures that are displayed on a screen to show a virtual account of what once existed in a location. Another use of this technology allows for the user to take photos of the virtual world image superimposed onto the real world as captured by the devices camera¹³⁰.



Figure 27: Augmented reality photograph tour with Abraham Lincoln¹³¹.

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows for an interactive experience for visitors.• Captured images can be uploaded to the internet and promote the site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not all audiences will have access to the technology or knowledge of how to use it.• Technical difficulties could occur.• Internet access would need to be provided at the site.

¹³⁰ PRWeb Online Visibility from Vocus. *Travelbrains augmented reality self-guided tour*. Available: <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/3/prweb8239331.htm>

¹³¹ Ibid.

Conclusion

This project explored the human history and natural features of the Courthouse Hill site and surrounding area to provide background information for a future interpretation plan. This inventory of background information informed recommendations for moving forward with an interpretation plan. Recommendations include potential themes and stories that could be used for a plan, and media options that can be used to convey these to visitors. A synthesis of the findings also revealed opportunities and constraints that the Courthouse Hill site has to offer. The Municipality of East Hants identified that they want to develop an interpretation plan for the site in the *East Hants Municipal Planning Strategy*¹³². The aim, as identified in this plan, is to rejuvenate the site by improving the natural and human heritage interpretive experiences available and to preserve the view into the future.

¹³² Municipality of East Hants. *Municipal Planning Strategy*. 2006. Available: <http://www.easthants.ca/content/municipal-planning-strategy-1>

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Appendix

Figure A.1: View of the Five Counties from Courthouse Hill, Looking Southwest to North

Figure A.2: View of the Five Counties from Courthouse Hill, Looking North to East

Figure A.3: Geology of the Landscape as Seen from Courthouse Hill, Looking Southwest to North

Figure A.4: Geology of the Landscape as Seen from Courthouse Hill, Looking North to East

Figure A.5: Geology of the Landscape as Seen from Courthouse Hill, Looking East

Figure A.6: Courthouse Timeline

View of the Five Counties from Courthouse Hill

Looking Southwest to North

Images by Yvonne Reeves, Winter 2014

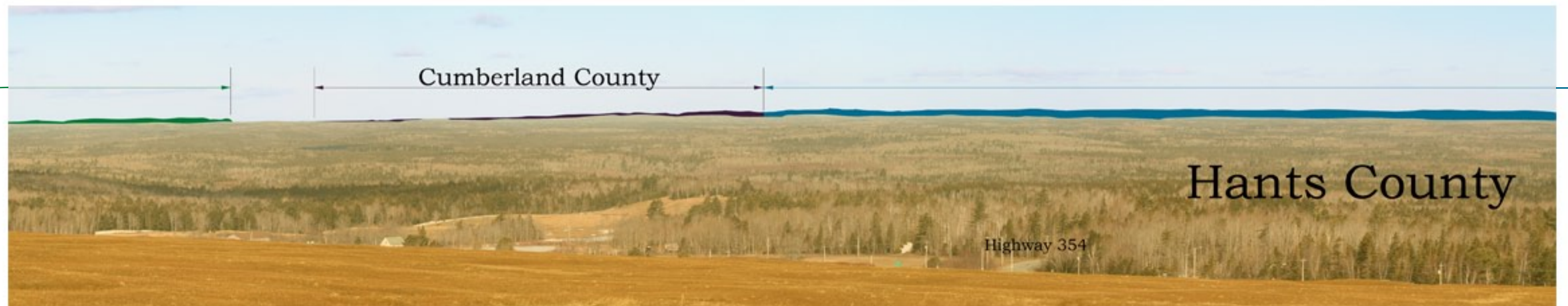


Figure A.1

View of the Five Counties from Courthouse Hill

Looking North to East

Images by Yvonne Reeves, Winter 2014



Figure A.2

Geology of the Landscape Seen from Courthouse Hill

Images by Yvonne Reeves, Winter 2014

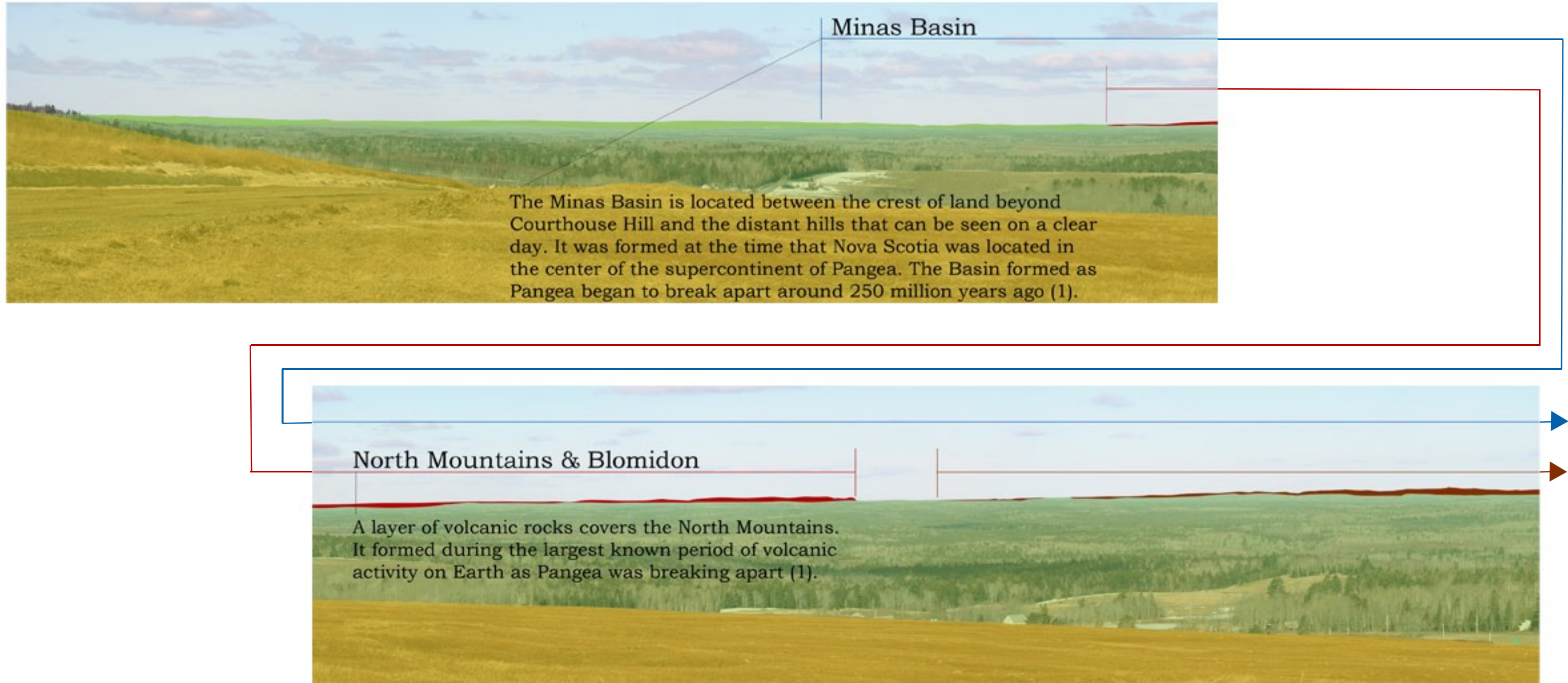


Figure A.3

Geology of the Landscape Seen from Courthouse Hill

Images by Yvonne Reeves, Winter 2014

Cobequid Mountains

The Cobequid - Chedabucto Fault system runs along the side of the Cobequid Mountains closest to the Bay of Fundy and is a remnant of the breakup of Pangea (1). The Cobequid Mountains north of the fault have matching bedrock types to Great Britain. The other areas that can be seen from Courthouse Hill have matching bedrock types to Africa (2). These three modern landmasses were once all located at the center of a supercontinent (1).

Sandstone Bedrock

Courthouse Hill is located on the northern tip of the Rawdon Hills. The hills are comprised of slate bedrock know as Halifax Formation Slate (3). The slate is a harder bedrock than the surrounding sandstones and the hills stand strong above the softer sandstones that have eroded away over time (4).

Slate Bedrock

Figure A.4

Geology of the Landscape Seen from Courthouse Hill

Images by Yvonne Reeves, Winter 2014



Courthouse Timeline

By Yvonne Reeves, School of Planning, Winter 2014

Sources:
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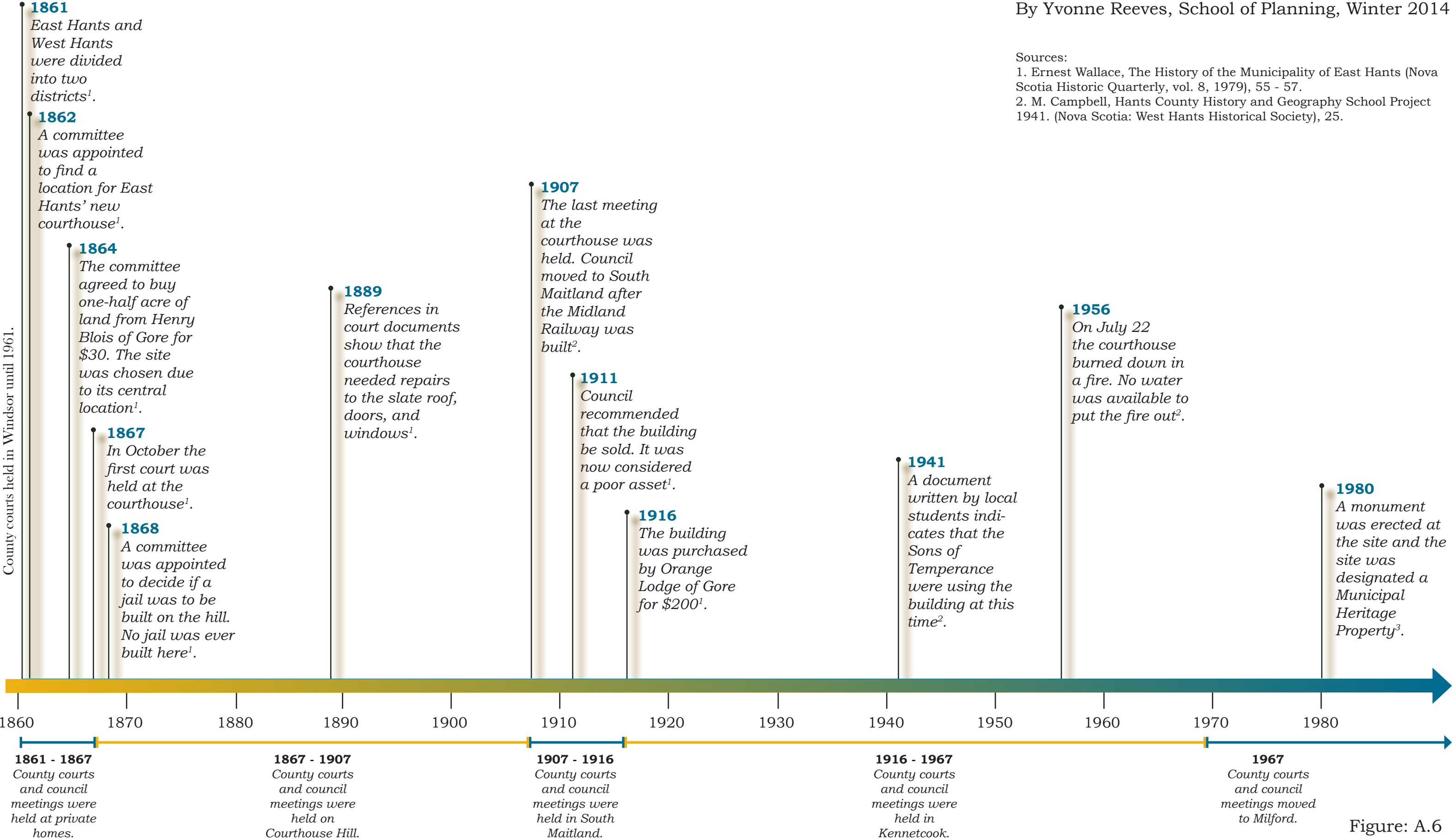


Figure: A.6