

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 5, 2011

**Halifax, Nova Scotia:** Despite its prominent location much closer to Europe than most ports in the New World, the economy of Halifax has seldom been prosperous except in wartime. It has been a strategic place, however, and transatlantic steamship companies with service from Canada to the British Isles (Cunard Line and Canadian Pacific) used Halifax as their North American destination through the winter months when ice in the St. Lawrence River prevented shipping from reaching Montreal. Served by both the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways, the latter operated Halifax's finest hotel near the station, the *Nova Scotian*. Unfortunately, however, Halifax is a long distance from everywhere. The rail mileage to Montreal, for example, is 840, almost the distance from New York to Chicago (just over 900).

Halifax was developed in response to the French and Indian Wars to counter France's important fort, Louisbourg, on Cape Breton Island. The Battle of Quebec in 1759 practically ended France's claim to all of Canada. In the early days of the American Revolution, when George Washington drove the British from Boston in the spring of 1776, the entire force sailed for Halifax, where the British regrouped for the assault on New York. All during that war, it served as a staging area for the campaign against the Colonials. Much later, during World Wars I and II, Halifax, with its modern port and shipbuilding facilities, prospered as a most strategic location for transatlantic shipping. In the 65 post-war years, the development of tourism has been Halifax's most successful venture.

My first experience with Halifax was in 1936, when I visited with my parents and Mary Passmore on a six-week motor trip in my dad's 1934 Packard Twelve limousine. Trapshooter John E. McCurdy, a department store owner in Sydney on Cape Breton Island, had been a regular at the Yorklyn shoots, and he had told us of the beauty of his native land and encouraged us to visit. After a few days on Cape Breton, including Louisbourg and the Cabot Trail, we visited Halifax and stayed at the Lord Nelson Hotel opposite the public gardens. Nova Scotia had embarked on a major road-building campaign, and nearly everywhere we went, there was a lot of dust and "washboard" road surfaces. The latter proved a match for the big Packard, and the brace rods that tied the radiator to the firewall broke off from the extreme vibration. My father found a shop in Halifax that brazed the broken rods. Before we left Nova Scotia, we crossed the Minas Basin by ferry, and the weight of the 6,000-pound Packard broke the ferry's boom that lifted the car onto the deck. After it bounced and narrowly missed other objects and people, the ferry's captain set sail and was able to repair the boom before we landed at Parrsboro, our destination. No time could be lost because the 50-foot tides dictated that the crossing be made only when the tide was in.

In 1979, the Transcontinental Reliability Tour for cars 1914 and earlier, which had begun in Key West, ended in Halifax. Brent Campbell and I had the only steamers. We both had trouble but made it to the end at the Nova Scotian Hotel. Our Model 87 first developed cracked rims that had to be replaced on the Blue Ridge Parkway and suffered a broken rear axle as we crossed the Allegheny River near Oil City, Pennsylvania. Despite these problems, the last 66 miles from Truro to Halifax was run off in 90 minutes flat, including the last two miles through Halifax city traffic. In 1981, I was in Halifax again with my friends Pownall and Peggy Jones, where we stayed near the harbor and took in the tourist attractions of a modern city.