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Southcott Awards

1990

Davis House

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The house was built by Eli Davis between 1850 and 1855. It is known that the house was enlarged twice using second hand material, but when these alterations took place is unknown. The house, though imposing in photos, is in actual fact rather tiny, consisting of a small parlour, dining room, kitchen and three bedrooms.

Eli Davis was both a fisherman and a boat builder, and evidence of his latter trade is evident in the construction of the house. The hip roof, or knee'd roof, cambered beams (to give greater headroom in the centre of a room), dowel jointed floor joist and evidence that the house was constructed "off level" and not plum would indicate a knowledgeable builder, more at home with boat building than that of house building.

In 1989 Rev. Wayne Cole and his wife Rosalyn Cole decided to restore the Davis House. Upon investigation, it was found that the house had settled into the ground, the sills were badly rotted, the floors had dropped, exterior clapboard had deteriorated beyond repair, as had most of the windows; the roof leaked badly and both chimneys were at peril of collapsing.

Seeing the Heritage value of their property, Wayne and Rosalyn Cole decided to approach the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador to seek designation and financial assistance. On May 15, 1989, the Davis House was officially designated as a Registered Heritage Structure by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and a restoration grant was provided to assist in the mammoth task of restoring the Davis House.

The first task was to hire a back-hoe to dig a 4' trench to enable both the replacement of the rotted sills and permit jacking up of the house and levelling floors. The two chimneys were dismantled and 90% of the brick was salvaged for two new chimneys.

The windows, most of which were 6 over 6, had to be replaced as well as the clapboard showing a 3" course. The roof was stripped of both asphalt shingles and the old spruce shingles and replaced with new cedar shingles also showing a 3" course. During this exterior work, interior work progressed, removal of original furniture for storage, stripping walls of many layers of wallpaper and the replacing of rotted floorboards.

During all this work, the Coles received advice and encouragement from their friend and mentor, William MacCallum. William, an architect, is well known to many of us here today for his splendid work with Victoria Hall here in the city, for which he was recognized with a Southcott Award Certificate.

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