

# Interpretation Planning Purcell's Cove Granite Quarries

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### Introduction

Purcell's Cove is a small community located on the western shore of the Northwest Arm in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The focus of this project is on the industrial history of the Purcell's Cove granite quarries. The heritage of this site is significant for the founding of Halifax and the history of Nova Scotia. Historically, quarrying was an important activity at Purcell's Cove. Granite quarries located at this site supplied the building material for historic structures in downtown Halifax including the Town Clock, St. Mary's Basilica, and the Halifax Citadel. The industrial railroad built to service these quarries is the earliest known railroad in Eastern Canada. Interpretation planning is about connecting people with places. This project follows an interpretation planning process to identify character defining elements of this area.

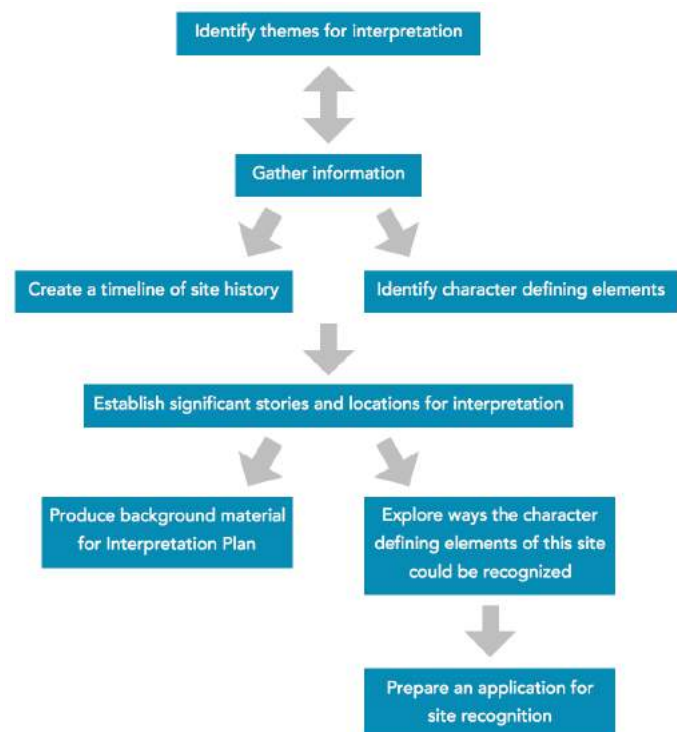


(Nova Scotia Archives, 1916)

### Project Goals

1. Gather information to identify significant themes and stories
2. Establish significant stories, locations, and character defining elements
3. Review municipal, provincial, and federal approaches that recognize industrial heritage
4. Prepare a background report and complete application for site recognition

### Project Method



## Results

There are three distinct granite quarries at Purcell's Cove: Queens Quarry, Purcell's Cove Quarry, and Coughlan Quarry. The license to Queens Quarry was granted to Gustavus Nicolls, Commander of the Royal Engineers at Halifax, in 1826.<sup>1</sup> The railroad tracks connecting Queens Quarry to the wharf below were constructed in 1834.<sup>2</sup> Given the historical significance of these quarries, I reviewed municipal, provincial, and federal approaches that could recognize the heritage value of this site. I prepared a list of character defining elements of the granite quarries which must be retained to preserve its heritage. I made this list based on historical records, site visits, my acquired knowledge of quarrying methods, and insight from local experts. The character defining elements I identified include the site of the historic railroad tracks, shims and wedges left in the rock, drill holes, quarry cuts, quarry pits, and a rock wall foundation. Features were recorded using GPS coordinates and mapped using ArcGIS.

Shims and Wedges



Quarry Pit at Coughlan Quarry



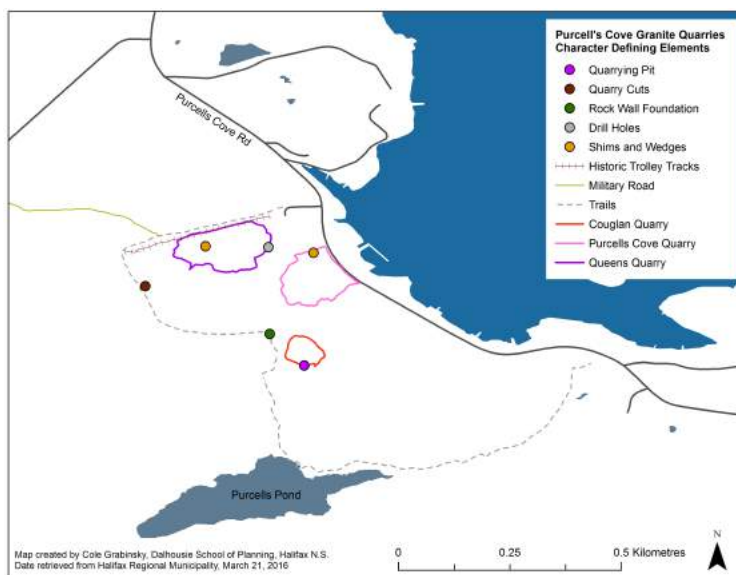
Quarry Cuts in the Granite



## Synthesis

Land ownership and zoning are the main constraints to heritage conservation at the Purcell's Cove quarries. Many historic artifacts are situated on private property. To protect the character defining

elements of this area from future development, I have prepared an application to the Maritime Archaeological Resource Inventory and made a list of recommendations. The history of the quarries, stunning views of the Northwest Arm, access to hiking trails, and proximity to Halifax make Purcell's Cove an ideal location for interpretation planning. Purcell's Cove has a rich cultural, geologic, and industrial heritage which deserves to be protected into the future.



<sup>1</sup> John W. Regan, *Sketches and Traditions of the Northwest Arm* (Halifax: McAlpine Publishing Company, 1908).

<sup>2</sup> Elsie Millington, *Purcell's Cove: The little place that helped build Halifax City* (Victoria: Desktop Publishing Ltd., 2000).