

A Fairwood Island History

The name Fairwood was chosen as a combination of two families' names – Fairlie and Shaw-Wood. Previously the island was known as Richmond Island.

These were two families that had a slightly different view on life, as perhaps underscored by their family mottoes.

Paratus Sum which has been translated through generations of Fairlie scholarship as “Some Potatoes”

Godulph which has been loosely translated by the same Fairlie Scholars as “God Help Us”.

The Fairlies came from Ayrshire in Scotland. The town of Fairlie is at the mouth of the River Clyde however the family is thought to have originated in Bavelaw in the Pentland Hills south of Edinburgh when Margaret de Ros was given lands as the 'Fair Lie' of Robert circa 1310. In the 18th century they were to be found at Fairlie Crevoch near Kilmaurs, in Ayrshire. This was an area of religious ferment, and home to the famous Covenanters who had taken a dim view of established religion. Many generations of Fairlies have been ministers or connected with the Kirk.



Mary Shaw-Wood first brought her family to Pointe au Baril in 1905



Isabel Johnstone Shaw-Wood Fairlie

The Rev John Fairlie and Hannah (Fraser) emigrated to Quebec in 1876. Eventually they moved to Kingston where they brought up their large family of 9 children, 'four girls, four boys and Bill'. Thomas Urquhart was born in 1887.



Thomas Urquhart Fairlie 1887-1855

A Brief History of Fairwood Island

Five generations of the family have known Fairwood as their summer home, a place that has seen many stages of many lives and yet has itself changed almost imperceptibly over a century. Every summer when the extended family assembles for an annual group photo along the south wall of the original cottage, perhaps twenty to thirty people whose best memories include Fairwood, it is hard to imagine that our ancestors could have anticipated such a development.

In 1904, Mary Shaw-Wood visited the Pointe au Baril area and decided to build a summer home for her three children, Richard, Joe and Isabel. In 1905 she built the small house on Push-Wah north of the Ojibway. She was rumoured to be leery of too much unpredictable wilderness and preferred to have an island where she could see anyone or anything approach. Nevertheless over the following years she purchased a number of properties, including in 1908 the south point of Richmond Island which was eventually to become Fairwood.

Islands and water travel were in the Shaw-Wood blood. The Shaw-Wood family had had a colourful



Push-Wah - 1905 - Mary Shaw-Wood's vantage point

history as sea captains and privateers in the Atlantic and had property holdings from St Johns Newfoundland, Quebec City to Grenada and Guyana. Ben Wood had captained a ship on Raleigh's Guyana expedition. His descendants settled in Bermuda in 1628 and set up a shipping business, the patriotic Company, taking Adventurers to Virginia and the Caribbean.

At Pointe au Baril properties were purchased in the names of each of the children. Richard who was to die in Britain on his Sopworth machine in 1917 was given an island in Shawanaga Bay and named Olive Island after his wife. Joe owned Hopewell Island in Shawanaga Bay, Hopewell being the name given one of the Wood ships which had brought many early adventurers to Virginia. Isabel was given OK Point on Richmond Island in 1908.

Thomas Urquhart Fairlie was a young resident engineer working on the CPR line in 1908. His diaries record his work on the Sucker Bridge in Pointe au Baril and linked with the work camp "down Shaw". On August 5th at a dance at the Ojibway Hotel his diary tersely records 'met Isabel'. Belle, after whom Bellwoods Island is named, had studied music at the Sorbonne and was certainly a catch for a minister's son. But it was clear that his exuberance and love for the Bay placed Urquhart before other rivals and perhaps allowed the Wood Adventurer blood prevailed in Isabel.



Isabel Wood Fairlie with John - 1911

Thomas Urquhart was ambitious; he built their new home in North Rosedale overlooking the St Andrews School in North Rosedale. Their first son John was conceived on a trip back to the Shaw-Wood home in Bermuda and was born in Toronto in 1911. Wood Fairlie was born after the War.

The new family continued to come up to stay with Mary on Push-Wah. In 1922 Urquhart built the cottage on Fairwood. The house was built (with a well engineered clarity) by a crew of Dutch carpenters who camped on the island and put the house together with Urquhart in eight days. The new cottage was a cool dark space with small windows which were eventually cut down to the floor to let in more light. The initial effect was intended to be somewhat oriental, Japanese woodcuts and furniture assembled from birch branches.



The Main House - circa 1922

Most of the elements and Japanese prints in a photograph of the newly finished living room in 1922 are still to be found in the living room today. The cedar post rustic open veranda was eventually replaced with the split granite boulder floor and screened veranda.



The Living Room - circa 1922

Isabel's brother, Joseph Shaw-Wood lived in Peiking in a mandarin's walled palace in which he displayed and exported antiques. In a steady accretion of history, many of the artefacts found in the cottage, the Chinese lantern, Buddhas, GuanYin and other china artefacts were sent back to his sister Isabel.

FAIRWOOD ISLAND

The name 'Fairwood' has nothing to do with woods or arboriculture. Originally Richmond Island, the new name was devised as a contraction of the two families who gradually assembled the island over many years. Thomas Urquhart Fairlie and Isabel Shaw-Wood. Originally the name proposed was Woodfair but this was deemed to make unnecessary allusions to Pickfair, the estate of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks.

Richmond Island had been split into many separate parcels which were still held by the early American investors. Between 1924 and 1936, in nine separate purchases Urquhart bought out the other properties and undertook the clearing of the island.



'Fairfauld' Moved from Archers Island to Woodholme Point in 1935

Archers Island, his last purchase was bought in 1936 complete with its 1900 Sears prefab cottage which was disassembled, floated around to Woodholme Point and set up with its views up Empress Channel and down the Ojibway Bay.



Riff at side dock - circa 1935

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Alexander Michaud had his home at the east end of the island. Thomas Urquhart bought this property and allowed him to occupy it until his death. Many of the masonry walls, porches and chimneys in the island cottages were built by Michaud. (Jolie?)

The island had been logged entirely in the 1880's and shortly after there seems to have been a comprehensive fire. As a result the flat rocks were strewn with charred and overturned stumps. Some of these stumps have been rediscovered and bear the marks of the original saws and the charring of the fire. Gradually the current landscape emerged as a series of interlinked open parks of flat rock joined by the stone flanked pathways. Clearing the island and creating an extensive path work occupied Urquhart and his growing sons for many years. As a result John vowed never to lift another rock if possible. Wood however continued to create paths and causeways wrestling with gigantic boulders for many years after.

In the 1930's the tennis court was set up on one of the level cleared rocks. The granite bounce, generally true was nevertheless excessively lively, but age gradually cured the balls and 'PeachTree' racquets to a manageable degree. The nearby badminton court was strategically set up to enjoy violent west cross winds greatly enhancing the challenges of the sport.

John and Wood grew up on the island in the 1920's and 30's. Among the circle of friends were the Temples, Ohlmsteads and Carrs on the Gouinlock Island, Ugo-Igo and there are many photos of swimming parties, and boating expeditions. John went to RMC in Kingston in the same year with Jack McCuaig and Judd Kennedy.

In 1928 in a moment of some affluence Thomas Urquhart bought Riff, a 26' Chris Craft and constructed a boathouse just large enough to dock it. Riff was reputed to reach 40 mph in full throttle but thought nothing of gulping down barrels of fuel. Requiring extensive mechanical ministrations it continued in declining health until the 1950's when the engine was finally dropped from a hoist through the hull. Subsequently it carried on as a sight in the gloom of the Grosskorth hangars for some years to come.



Riff - 1928



Bathing near the new boathouse - 1928



Bathing party - circa 1928



The Family - circa 1928



Neighbouring Islanders Carrs, Temples,
Gouinlocks - Bathing - 1928



John Fairlie
circa 1928



The Family - circa 1928



South Side of House - circa 1928



John Fishing - circa 1928

Thomas Urquhart was a dedicated conservationist. In 1926 he arranged that the Richmond Island Game Preserve be set up under the Ministry of Lands and Forests. He introduced the pheasant and grouse whose descendants are still to be found today. As chairman of the Georgian Bay Association he worked to establish a policy for fisheries and a hatcheries programme.

Urquhart was also a keen gardener. He had attempted a venture in setting up a hydroponic tomato



T. U. Fairlie
circa 1935

farm in Florida. Vegetable gardens were created by claiming soil from the internal lakes. The soil, initially the consistency of concrete was eventually improved to create fecund vegetables. The sons would be left with tasks to complete, paths to clear, gardens to tend while Urquhart was down in the city. He would return on the weekends and immediately inspect advancement of the works and proclaim that not a soul has watered this garden since his last visit.



Fairwood South Garden -
circa - 1935

Urquhart was deeply interested in the historical context and convinced that Champlain and the *couriers du bois* would have passed through the Ojibway bay on their way up the coast. A Champlain cross was set up in Champlain Park on Fairwood near where there was reputed to be an Indian 'fort' or summer camp on the south shore overlooking Bellwoods Island. In 1948, for the Champlain Society, he organised a series of Champlain Crosses, including the ones in Orillia and Bala to commemorate the path of the early explorers. The monument point opposite the Ojibway had been a Shaw-Wood property.

The two Fairlie sons returned from the War and were married soon after, Wood to Marnie (Marjory) Cox and John to Anne Fyshe. Between the two families they had six grandchildren as well a Peter Saegert, the son of Anne who had been widowed by the war. All of these grew up on the island travelling across Canada on the 'Canadian' to reach Pointe au Baril for the August stay.

Joseph Shaw-Wood died in the 1952 and his Hopewell Island in Shawanaga Bay property was sold. Richards property at Olive Island, was sold by his descendents quite recently.



Urquhart, Tam, Anne, David,
Peter and John circa 1954

During the 1950's more senior members of the family, grandparents and great aunts would come for a Pointe au Baril visit and stay at the Ojibway. The smell of the varnished rooms and an undercurrent of mothballs is an evocative memory. One of the more daunting aspects of an Ojibway stay was the little box containing a coiled rope positioned beside every bedroom window. A small sheet of typed instructions explained how in the case of fire to suspend this from the window and let yourself down to the rock far below. It was tantalising to imagine Aunt Annie Fairlie, with her silver cane, or 'Daddygrand', Max Fyshe undertaking such a venture.

As each of John's sons learned to swim the channel, he was rewarded with a small double paddle boat which was assembled amidst much cursing in the basement workshop late at night on the following Christmas Eve. In the late 1950's the lake levels were very low and the boathouse cribs loomed starkly out of the water. The waters of Lake Huron were reputed to be diverted into Lake Michigan and the Mississippi. John had the docks rebuilt and boathouse lowered, an event that ushered many subsequent years of high water and submerged docks.

John loved his days on the Bay, nothing better than an expedition to the McCoys or Minks 'where men are men' in the 16' Peterborough fishing boat. He took great pride in his knowledge of the Bay, the treacherous rocks and alignments with trees and beacons to steer between them. He introduced his sons to the secret fishing spots north of the McCoys. Otherwise he would go off with Bob Carson in a similar boat.

Bob Carson's parents' island, Cheemahn, opposite the Ojibway conjures up many memories. His father had been an hotelier in Detroit and had built a substantial cottage of mysterious dark and well varnished rooms. His mother had a swollen arm and a way with cookie production which made her very popular with the young. For many years Bob's daughter Linda was a regular part of the family excursions and activities.

1964 was the year of the Chinese junk, the Mandarin Duck which had been loaned by Tuzo Wilson during his sabbatical in the Far East. Expeditions around the bay in the junk, and in particular up to Manitoulin drew out all of John's navigational skills and his families powers of endurance. Dense fogs punctuated by sudden violent storms followed the junk to every destination and every bolthole.



The Mandarin Duck - 1964

Wood and Marnie became avid sailors, Wood initially building his own Y-Flyer, Spindrift. The sailing bug took hold like a limpet and Wood bought first a Shark, Dolly, and then an Arlberg, Tigger, proposing to sail from Pointe au Baril through the Straits of Magellan.

John also had a Y-Flyer which tended to bring out some of the more latent and authoritative instincts of ancestral captains and somewhat dampened his descendants delight in the sound of flapping canvas. The Y turned turtle in every conceivable location from Fairwood to the Twin Sisters.

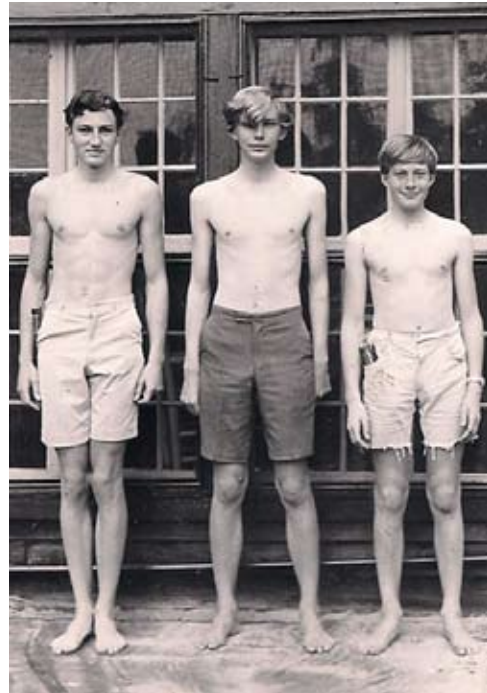
After John's early death in 1966, Anne's brother Taffy Fyshe and his children became regular summer visitors. Taffy was a tireless fisherman and woodsman and helped to create one of the most impressive woodpiles in the area. Taffy took great delight in the *après fish* social life of the bay and has left behind many legends for his descendants.



Sue Wilde, Taffy Fyshe, Charity Grant and Anne Fairlie

Wood continued to build paths and clear the island. Causeways were constructed of gigantic boulders manoeuvred into position from some distance with block and crowbar. In the 1960's he excavated 'Cleopatra's Bath tub', one pothole among a number at the east end, 4' in diameter which proved to be 20 feet deep. This is in the foreground of his daughter, Catherine's new cottage. With immense attention to detail and many sticks of dynamite Wood also built his own cottage looking up the Empress channel, quite the most solidly built structure on Fairwood.

During the late 60's the two Fairlie families of cousins, grandchildren of Urquhart and Isabel constructed an ambitious treehouse on Archers Island in the middle of Fairwood. The treehouse included six platforms, some double-decker at 20 feet above ground and including tents and cedar pole walkways. A pulley system was rigged to transport sentries to a lookout post. Denizens foolish enough to attempt a transit found themselves hurtling to the mid point of the line, suspended far above the ground, unable to muster the strength to drag themselves to either end. It was probably in an effort to resolve these design deficiencies that resulted in Tam and Ian becoming, and marrying architects. People who remember the parties and overnighing heyday (or the parental nadir) of the treehouse continue to turn up in most unexpected places.



Tam, David and Matt
in 1965 & in 1974 with Mum/Anne



During the 1980's and 1990's the next generation of children appeared. The list of people who looked forward to part of the summer on Fairwood has constantly grown. Descendants of Isabel and Thomas Urquhart Fairlie come back to Fairwood from B.C. and from the UK. The traditions have remained however and the new generation has been exposed each summer to path clearing sessions to maintain the routes that link all parts of the island.

A Fairwood Woodlands Plan has been developed which involves a cooperative agreement among the many families to maintain the path system, to create wildlife sanctuaries and replant native trees in key areas. The Fairwood.com website has been set up to share information about the wildlife, to examine and share concerns about environmental change and disease patterns.

After a century of occupation and observation, changes are very slow but perceptible. The traditions and the paths are maintained, and these have maintained the sense of the relationships of the extended family. Fairwood remains a place deep in the hearts of all of the grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren of the Fairlie and Shaw-Wood vision of a century ago.



2004



2010

A History of the Wood Family

Capt. Thomas Wood was a very successful seafarer and trader who moved to Bermuda in 1628. His father or uncle was Captain Ben Wood, the Elizabethan privateer who sailed on expeditions with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester in 1594 and Walter Raleigh 1595. Accounts of these expeditions are to be found in William Hakluyt's accounts in Voyages and Discoveries.

Thomas seems to have made his fortune in shipping the early 'Adventurers' from Bristol to Virginia and the Caribbean – Grenada and Guiana. He bought a 50 acre property at Spanish Point, Bosses Cove, and built Bosco Manor. His six sons became a seafaring dynasty. As the years passed the Woods became very wealthy holding properties stretching from South America to Newfoundland. Some say that their business practices were closely connected with the legend of the 'Bermuda Triangle'.

One of the interesting artefacts surviving from Bosco Manor is the black iron cooking pot which was shipped out to Bermuda from the BAT foundry dated 1633. It is recorded among the chattels of Bosco Manor in Thomas Wood's will.



'The Slave Pot' shipped to Bermuda by Thomas Wood at Bosco Manor Spanish Point 1633, now at 16 Dunbar Rd, Toronto

Thomas' son Joseph married a Stowe of Bermuda who had two children Joseph and Stowe Wood. Stowe Wood was the father of the three brothers, Richard, Joseph and Stowe who set up the 'Patriotic Company' around 1800. This was a great trading company and it had offices in Quebec

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Joseph Wood circa 1750 - known as 'the Honourable Joe' - he paid reparations to the new American government in compensation for privateering activities of the Patriotic Company during the American War of Independence

City (1807) Montreal (1810), St Johns Newfoundland, Philadelphia, Grenada, the Turks Islands, Trinidad and Guiana. Ships lists show that they were mainly transporting hardware from Britain to the new world and tobacco, spices, furs, skins and raw materials back to England.

Through this inspiringly named "Patriotic Company". Richard, Samuel and Joseph Wood were licenced by the British King George III to 'pick up' any American ships which plied the Atlantic. The Crown was entitled to 25% of the booty. The Woods became extremely wealthy. Unfortunately after the war of 1812, they found that their sponsor, his Britannic majesty, lived a lot further than Philadelphia. They would have become suddenly unprosperous had they not on three separate occasions married into the Shaw family of Philadelphia.

The beautiful Shaws of Philadelphia were legendary for their comeliness. (This attribute may not have been associated with the Woods – or else the Woods repeatedly chose the wrong portraitists)

The Shaws also had roots in Bermuda. Thomas Shaw was a Captain of the Endeavour transporting Adventurers to the Carolinas at the same time as Thomas Wood Sr. They were both Councilors in Bermuda in the 1670s.

The brothers were obliged to pay considerable reparations to America. Only the 'Honorable Joe'

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came up with his share of the required restitution – supposedly ‘a million pounds’.

The third brother, Stowe, was very interesting. He set up a kind of botanical experiment in Bermuda called ‘Experiment Hill’ now Mt St. Agnes. Apparently vestiges of the flora and curiosities that he brought back from his expeditions are still to be seen on the grounds there.

Richard, the oldest brother, bought the property Walsingham which is now a Hotel in Walsingham Bay – or ‘Tom Moore the Poet’s house’. His only child was Richard (Shaw) Wood.

Richard Shaw-Wood

Richard Wood was born at Walsingham and decided to take the name Shaw-Wood when he married Sarah Isabel Shaw. Sarah was the last of her line, which had included Sir Robert Shaw and the famous Boston justice Richard Hooker (Hooker’s Men – “hookers”) Her uncle, Joseph Stowe Shaw had laboriously assembled the clear title to Bosco Manor (by arranging to have his siblings



Richard Shaw-Wood 1827-1903

committed to institutions) It was through the efforts of the Hon. Joseph Stowe Wood, nephew of the Hon. Joe and executor of Joseph Stowe Shaw’s estate that the properties confused titles were cleared and passed on to Richard Shaw-Wood.

Richard must have grown up in Bermuda recognizing that the considerable wealth and position of his grand parents’ lives as traders were coming to an end. As a young surveyor for the Hudson Railroad he probably had an opportunity to develop the other great Shaw and Wood preoccupation, speculation in land. Exactly why he came to Toronto in 1863 is not clear. He moved to Oakville

and then began to establish himself on prime farm land in London in 1868, taking over an old building which he gradually built up and expanded into Woodholme. He set up Woodholme as a model farm and introduced to Ontario the silo principle from Hungary. (In some ways perhaps harkening back to his Uncle at Experiment Hill) He avoided overt political power, and though he was the first President of the Liberal Conservative Party (Conservatives) in Ontario he seems to have remained very private in his affairs.

At Woodholme he amassed the possessions of the remnants of the Wood and Shaw families. Much of the silver and glass came from the Shaws of Philadelphia.

Isabel had a photo album showing some of the rooms at Woodholme the taste being clearly baronial, with a lot of displayed weaponry. Her memories of childhood there included stories of how the family would endure the winter cold months by taking braziers into the deep reveal walls between the windows and the curtains. Richard kept building and extending the house, creating fanciful turrets and bell towers, Islamic windows, rather an eclectic assortment of details. It is curious that the ground level at Woodholme is not raised. This would be typical of Bermuda, allowing traders to roll possessions and barrels in and out, but ill suited to the Canadian winter. The massive walls of Woodholme would have been delightfully cool in a Bermudan climate.

Benjamin Shaw-Wood. Richard’s eldest son, Benjamin, was disinherited by his father. Woodholme and contents including the remaining properties were left to Richard’s sister Anna for her lifetime.

When he returned from the Boer War, Benjamin set about establishing a claim to the title of Marquis of Annandale. Many of Isabel’s stories featured some of his early life escapades – such as when he brought the horses into the dining room for dinner, then climbed the flagpole and refused to budge until he was forgiven.



Woodholme - 1903

Note: The Marquis of Annandale claim - James Johnstone of Annandale was created Lord Lochwood and Earl of Hartfell by Charles I in 1633. Three of his sons fled during the Commonwealth period and took refuge in Bermuda. William Johnstone the 4th Lord Neairn acted (piratically?) on behalf of the King of Sweden. One of his brothers married a Wood and the other brother Capt. Edward's daughter married Benjamin Wood who was the son of Capt. Thomas Wood of Bosses Cove on Spanish Point and grandson of Ben Wood, the Elizabethan sea captain.

The title became dormant in 1792 on the death of George, the third Marquis, who was described as an 'incompetent' and had no descendants. Benjamin laid his claim to the title on the basis of the Johnstone blood links that came into the family during the Commonwealth period a century earlier.



Benjamin Shaw-Wood

Benjamin left his family and went to live in Bermuda, 'with his niece Miss Ogden'. John and Anne Fairlie visited Bermuda in the early 60's and there were still recollections of 'the Major and Miss Ogden' at that time.

Woodholme never recovered from the war. It was conceived on feudal lines, pre-monetary, with many members of the family and servants living in an integrated community. Anna had camped out there alone for a few years during the War and then it was boarded up and sold to the Lawsons in 1922.

Anna Burgess Shaw-Wood died in 1934 and Benjamin the following year in London. At that time Joseph inherited the balance of the estate from Anna's house in Talbot Street.

Mimi, (Isabel Shaw-Wood) had saved many of the letters that her brother Richard sent back to her during the war and they give some insight into his experiences. He remembers nostalgically his wonderful days on Push-Wa and wishes that he was again there. He died in his Sopworth Machine very shortly afterwards. Isabel kept small pictures of her two brothers as young boys at Woodholme in a gold locket.

Uncle Joe, Richard's younger brother, was very close to Isabel, and was a glamorous influence on the family. In fact his presents from China are still evident at Fairwood Island in the Georgian Bay, Buddhist statues, the Chinese lantern etc. His antiques business in Peking, Stone and Shaw-Wood was displayed in a 'palace' - and he wrote back excitedly in the 20's of being the 'toast of Peking' in the expatriate community. Isabel had an album of photos of his palace with the furniture and carpets set out in the walled courtyards.

When Joe inherited the remainder of the properties, including the 'Burnt House' at Bosco Manor in Bermuda he contemplated moving there. He commissioned a local architect William Onions to draw up the plans for the restoration. Ultimately he decided to sell it while retaining the little island off the coast for a number of years after. Joe eventually sold off the remaining Shaw-Wood properties including ones in Grenada and in St Johns, Newfoundland.



Woodholme, London 2010