



Change Islands, Newfoundland & Labrador

Stages and Stores Restores Historic Torraville Fishing Stage and Cottage

The Stages and Stores Initiative:

The small historic outpost community of Change Islands was devastated by the closure of the North Atlantic cod fishery. With an unemployment rate over 40 per cent, the area's greatest export was its people, who left to find work elsewhere. Another export market began to develop for salvaged materials from heritage fisheries architecture, and the community of Change Islands began to see its heritage literally disappearing off the piers.

"My wife Maureen Woodrow and I purchased a 100 year old saltbox house in Change Islands in 2000. One day, we were looking across the tickle at a beautiful, hundred year old, three-story, red ochre fishing stage being dismantled for its used lumber and realized what we had to do to create both employment and restore the heritage fishing properties – we started the Stages and Stores enterprise" - Herbert Bown, President.

In 2002, Stages and Stores bought the Torraville fishing stage and residence – the fishing stage was in grave need of repair and would have collapsed in a year or two if not repaired; the residence had fallen into a rather dilapidated state; and the wharf had been completely destroyed. The residence and fishing stage was restored and the ferry wharf rebuilt to heritage restoration standards and guidelines. The new wharf provides a central docking facility for sailing and power boats visiting the community.



The project was undertaken by the Change Islands Stages and Stores Heritage Foundation supported by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador with additional assistance from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). The project was approved and supported by the Town Council of Change Islands and all construction material was purchased through local companies and all the restoration labour activities were performed by four local residents creating much needed employment to help offset the closure of the cod fishery.

The Torraville Property (Cottage and Fishing Stage), Change Islands was designated a Registered Heritage Structure on May 2, 2004 by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Newfoundland Historic Trust also, presented the Southcott Award to the Stages and Stores Heritage Foundation for the restoration of Walter Torraville's Fishing Stage and Ferry Terminal. Both structures have also been included in the Newfoundland and Labrador's Provincial Register of Historic Places.

"We would like to thank you for establishing a Heritage Foundation for the preservation of our historic stages and stores. You are to be commended for taking this initiative for showing such an interest in our community. Your new business is a wonderful way to promote our community" - Town of Change Islands.



The residents of Change Islands have responded very positively during and after the restoration of the Walter Torrville Property. Many individual resident small projects continue to be undertaken to restore/repair and paint existing structures (stages, stores, wharfs, flakes, outhouses, etc.) in the community. We have well over 200 stages and stores on the islands, many of which are still in use – so much work still needs to be done. Many residents of the Town expressed their pleasure to see Walter Torrville's fishing stage & ferry terminal, one of the oldest structures in Change Islands, being restored – especially given the historic significance of the fishing stage being the town's first ferry terminal.

"Walter J. Torrville (referred to as "WJ") was a merchant who built his house on this property around 1900; it is likely he built the stage also around that date. His business was located just to the east of this stage (near the current slipway which is now on the east side of the existing bridge/causeway). Although WJ was not a fish merchant, he did collect and buy cod liver oil for a good number of years from this stage. You can still smell the oil in the floorboards. The stage had flakes and board walkways on the east side connecting to another store that he had there." From a conversation on March 5, 2003 with Eric Bown of Change Islands, born in 1925.

Who was involved?

- Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador [www.heritagefoundation.ca; 709-739-6592] The Foundation, an invaluable source of information for historic restoration, supports and contributes to the preservation and restoration of buildings of architectural or historical significance. It operated many programs (e.g. the Fisheries Heritage Preservation Program, funding assistance, advice and guidance, standards and guidelines)
- Newfoundland Historic Trust [www.historictrust.com; 709-739-7870] Restoration projects, Southcott Award, publications, etc.
- Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) [www1.serviceCanada.gc.ca; 1-800-622-6232] Funding assistance
- Association of Heritage Industries Newfoundland & Labrador [709-738-4345] Training and workshops
- Parks Canada [www.historicplaces.ca and www.pc.gc.ca; 1-866-632-6183] Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada
- Department of Canadian Heritage [www.pch.gc.ca; 1-866-811-0055] Capacity building for heritage organizations
- Newfoundland & Labrador Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation [<http://www.newfoundland-labrador.com>; 709-729-0659] Funding programs, advice and guidance
- Stages and Stores Heritage Foundation, Inc. [www.stagesandstores.com; 613-233-3040 or 709-621-5555] Restoration and preservation of the unique fishing heritage buildings of Change Islands
- Town of Change Islands [www.changeislands.ca; 709-621-4181] Advice and guidance



The Project by the Numbers

- Federal funding: Human Resources Development Canada – \$13,800
- Provincial funding: Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador – \$5,000
- Stages and Stores Heritage Foundation, Inc. Funding – \$3,000
- Private funding: Owners – \$14,200
- Funding Distribution: Labour – \$20,000; Materials – \$16,000
- Work Time Allocation: 40 weeks over 2 years
- Workload: 4 local residents over 2 summers



What Makes the Project Special?

- (1) **Architectural Features:** Both the Walter Torrville fishing stage and the cottage structures have a very unique “round” roof design. The cottage is the only one of its kind on Change Islands built as a bungalow (cottage) in the early 1900s. Also, the cottage sun porch design is quite unique and beautiful in its simplicity. The “round” roof on the Torrville fishing stage is unique for a fishing stage and is the only single story fishing structure of its kind left standing in the community.
- (2) **Significant Person:** Fred Chaffey, who still lives on Change Islands for at least six months a year, was instrumental in establishing the first freight and ferry service and terminal at the Walter Torrville fishing stage on November 18, 1968. Also, Fred operated the first ferry service between the South End of Change Islands to Farewell on the December 9, 1979 and ran it until June 1988. Fred is a respected icon in the community of Change Islands and is a tremendous source of historical and cultural information about the town, its people and significant events.
- (3) **Historically Significant Event:** The Torrville fishing stage and wharf is of significant heritage merit because it was the first ferry terminal building on Change Islands running between Cobbs Arm, New World Island and Change Islands from November 18, 1968 to December 8, 1979. The crossing time from Cobbs Arm to Change Islands, when weather conditions permitted, could take about 1 hour and sometimes a complete day. The first trip of the first modern ferry from the South End of Change Islands to Farewell took place on December 9, 1979 – it was also operated by Fred Chaffey and ran until June 1988. The current modern ferry, the Earl W. Windsor can accommodate 70 vehicles and crosses from Farewell to Change Islands in about 20 minutes.
- (4) **Cultural Political, Economic Context:** The establishment of the first freight and ferry service linking Change Islands to the mainland of the island of Newfoundland had an immediate and long lasting effect on the cultural, political and economic well-being of Change Islands. The sense of isolation was alleviated forever having both positive and negative impacts on most facets of the lives of all residents of the community. The community and the province benefit from the creation of local employment (two local residents and a summer student), the contribution to the growth of the tourist industry bringing much needed additional commerce to the town, the promotion of the restoration and maintenance of heritage structures, and the creation of addition employment for local residents who provide the arts and crafts sold in the Burgundy Squid Café and Craft Shoppe.
- (5) **Landmark:** The site of the Torrville fishing stage and cottage has been an important landmark in the Town of Change Islands for over one hundred years. Now with the restoration of the 100 year old Torrville fishing stage and wharf (ferry terminal), this important structural landmark so illustrative of the bygone cod fishery and the first freight and ferry link from Change Islands to the mainland of Newfoundland can once again remind both citizens and visitors to Change Islands of its importance and significance to both their past and future cultural and economic endeavours.
- (6) **Creative and adaptive re-use of the buildings (fishing stage and residence):** Since 2004, the Walter Torrville fishing stage has served as the headquarters for the Stages and Stores enterprise and operates the Burgundy Squid Café and Craft Shoppe. The Torrville residence (cottage) is now a rental vacation facility (the Torrville Heritage Cottage) made available to meet the needs of long term vacationers to Change Islands who are interested in learning vacations, marine hiking trails, and the islands beautiful historic heritage fishing premises, private houses and public buildings. Customers have responded well by visiting the Burgundy Squid Café and Craft Shoppe to relax and talk, enjoy the boating activity in the Main Tickle, watch the children swim and dive, and partake of good café food made and served by local residents. They also help support the on-going activities of the Stages and Stores heritage restoration projects throughout the town.
- (7) **Community Survival:** The Walter Torrville’s fishing stage and ferry terminal is of great significance to the history of the Town of Change Islands, to all residents of island communities, and to the province and country as a whole. It will help portray the unique way of life of island



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Project Contacts

- Stages and Stores Heritage Foundation, Inc. [www.stagesandstores.com; Herbert Bown at 613-233-3040 or 709-621-5555]
- Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador [www.heritagefoundation.ca; Dale Jarvis at 709-739-6592]
- Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) [www1.service Canada.gc.ca; 1-800-622-6232]
- Town of Change Islands [www.changeislands.ca; Town Clerk at 709-621-4181]