

THE
PAINTED ROOM
AT THE



SINCLAIR INN MUSEUM
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE




ANNAPOLIS
HERITAGE SOCIETY

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Conservation treatment by Ann Shafel and team.

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| **Canada** 

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| 
NOVA SCOTIA
NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE

Patricia Townsend

The Nicholson Foundation

THE DISCOVERY

In the 1960s, water damage from a failed roof revealed in an upstairs room a wall covered with painted images, still visible even though harmed by the water. Since that time, it had been speculated that the other walls of the room also contained murals. A few years ago, careful investigation proved that there were indeed additional images on the other walls, beneath the layers of wallpaper.

While the artist and date are unknown, the murals may be connected with the room having been used as a meeting place for the local Masonic Lodge. A traveler staying at the Sinclair in 1848 recorded that the walls of his rooms were covered with murals. Probably by the end of the 19th century, these images were covered with wallpaper.

In the summer of 2016, a major effort by the Annapolis Heritage Society led to the expert removal of the wallpaper, revealing the stunning images for the first time in more than 125 years.



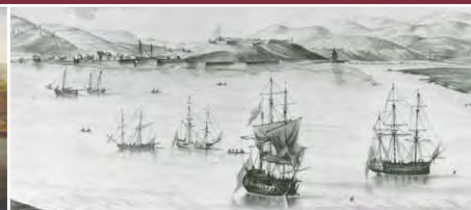
WALL PAINTING

Beginning in the 17th century young wealthy European men would undertake a traditional tour of Europe, known as the 'Grand Tour'. They would be exposed to the cultural treasures of Europe, including the painted walls of Hellenistic Greece, ancient Rome, and the great Renaissance frescoes of Italy. It became fashionable to replicate scenery on walls well into the 20th century. The technique used to paint these walls is often referred to as '*fresco secco*' – painting on dry plaster.

In 18th and 19th century Nova Scotia, many portrait painters advertised themselves as decorators to supplement their income. Some became apprentices learning to prepare wall surfaces, grinding and mixing pigments, stenciling, marbling, and painting freehand. Itinerant and community artists travelled door to door offering their services.



ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, NOVA SCOTIA
by Samuel Scott n.d.



ANNAPOLIS ROYAL
by John Henry Bastide, 1751, Nova Scotia Archives

THE TOPOGRAPHICAL TRADITION

Topographical art can be defined as realistic and detailed depictions of an area. In many ways, this form of art was part of the 'Romantic Movement' during which young gentlemen of the 18th and 19th centuries would find pleasure in capturing on paper the natural and exotic scenery found in their travels.

Many of these topographical artists were indeed landscape painters, others were military engineers such as John Henry Bastide (c.1700 – 1770) chief engineer at Annapolis Royal responsible for its fortification, 1740 to 1750. Certainly, his image of Annapolis influenced British landscape painter Samuel Scott (1702 – 1772) who travelled to North America with a British squadron prior to the outbreak of the Seven Years War 1756 – 63. Scott's version accentuates the vessels and the details of the shoreline.



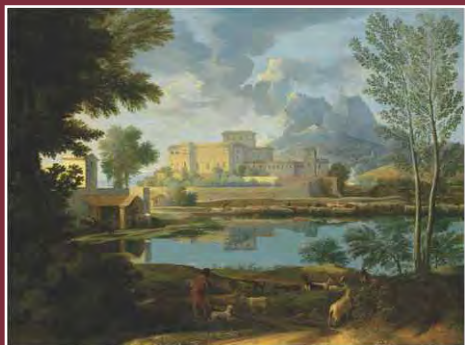
Shortly after Halifax was established in 1749, army topographers accompanied British troops to America. These officers were instructed in topographical views at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. Their objective was to capture precise views of landscape for strategic purposes in the days before the camera. Many of these topographers would supplement their income by creating publications of their images and teaching the locals how to draw and paint views.

J.F.W. Des Barres (1721 – 1824) was a cartographer (map maker) who was trained at Woolwich in this tradition. Like many of his contemporaries, he published a series of North American views, charts, and maps entitled *The Atlantic Neptune*. His image of Annapolis Royal may have influenced our mural artist, for the mountain views, boats, and the tree on the left are similar in presentation to that of Des Barres. These topographical artists would establish the early traditions of landscape painting in Canada.



ANNAPOLIS ROYAL

by J.F.W. Des Barres, 1781, Nova Scotia Archives



PAYSAGE PAR TEMPS CALME

by Nicolas Poussin, c.1651

THE IDEAL LANDSCAPE

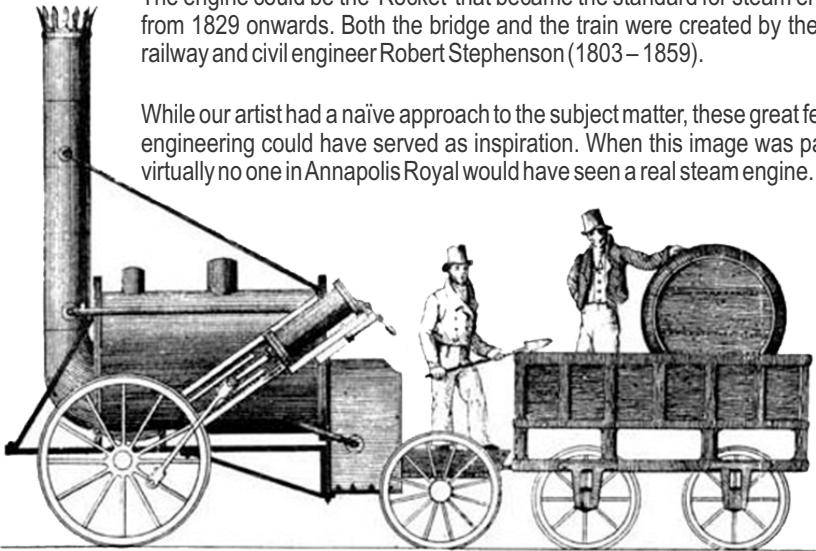
Examine the mountains and waterfall in this image. The artist used imagination to create an ideal landscape – in essence taking many aspects found in nature and perhaps the surroundings and rearranging them in order to make a picture-perfect image. This tradition in landscape painting was popularized by French artists in Italy such as Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin during the 17th century and was carried over to England with the Picturesque movement in art. In these ideal landscapes the view was ordered with a foreground, midground, and background very much like stage scenery. Usually the sides of the painting would have large rocks or trees to frame the view and lead the eye into the center of the composition. Often figures or animals would be placed in the foreground to draw one's attention and to provide scale.

THE BRIDGE AND STEAM ENGINE

Industrialization was of great interest to Victorians and images of the marvels of industry were considered as beautiful and captivating as the picturesque landscapes. Here, the train bridge is reminiscent of the Royal Border Bridge built between 1847 and 1850 over the River Tweed in Northumberland, England.

The engine could be the 'Rocket' that became the standard for steam engines from 1829 onwards. Both the bridge and the train were created by the early railway and civil engineer Robert Stephenson (1803–1859).

While our artist had a naïve approach to the subject matter, these great feats of engineering could have served as inspiration. When this image was painted, virtually no one in Annapolis Royal would have seen a real steam engine.



STEPHENSON'S ROCKET 1829



ROYAL BORDER BRIDGE - BERWICK UPON TWEED



PORTRAIT OF AN OFFICER

The most mysterious image in the painted room is the portrait of the officer. His uniform seems to be a combination of many types found during the 18th and 19th centuries. The plot thickens when we realize that the battalions located in Annapolis Royal were Foot Regiments; this officer's uniform suggests a strong similarity to that of a cavalry soldier in the 5th Princess Charlotte of Wales Dragoon Guards from 1799. Some people speculate that the officer is an early image of Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria, but he never sported this hair style known as the 'Beau Brummell.' { Brummell (1778 - 1840) was an important figure of fashion in Regency England.} Also, the moustache and the 'soul patch' under our officer's lower lip would have been more popular in 19th century continental Europe than in England.

The frame around our image is unusual because the right and left sides are not the same. This difference leads one to question whether there may be another image underneath the officer.

The style of the frame is similar to English 'Sunderland frames', very popular from the 17th century onwards. They were shallow and flat frames with many curves to compliment the flock wallpaper, hair styles, and drapery of the period. The blond gold leaf on the frames accentuated the skin tones of the figures in the paintings.



FRAME FROM THE
PORTRAIT OF
EDWARD MONTAGU,
1ST EARL OF
SANDWICH, C.1655-59,
BY SIR PETER LELY,
NATIONAL PORTRAIT
GALLERY, LONDON.



5TH PRINCESS
CHARLOTTE OF
WALES
DRAGOON
GUARDS

19TH
CENTURY
ENGRAVING
OF BEAU
BRUMMELL





MASONIC IMAGERY

Annapolis Royal is the birthplace of Freemasonry in Canada, and according to local tradition the first Masonic lodge held its meetings in this building in 1738. Frederick Sinclair, innkeeper in the 1780s and 1790s, was a member of Annapolis Royal Lodge, serving as master and then secretary until his death by suicide in 1800. During this period, the Lodge met in this building, probably in the 'Painted Room' - where conservation work has revealed possible Masonic iconography amongst the painted wall murals. In particular, arches and columns, central themes in Masonic symbolism and teachings.

Four columns, one in each corner of the 'Painted Room', are a design element originating in Egyptian temples. This is based in the belief that the sky was supported by four colossal pillars, one in each corner of the world, representing the four cardinal points of N,S,E,W. Masonic lodges to varying degrees reflect Egyptian form and design, and evidence of overpainting on the columns here suggests that they predate other portions of the wall murals.

It is a possibility the landscape in these images could be the hills of Digby and Digby Neck, the Annapolis Basin and Bear Island.

The Painted Room is an evolving story – if you want to add to the interpretation, please leave your comments in our guest book or email us at annapolisheritage@gmail.com.





136 ST. GEORGE STREET, ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, NOVA SCOTIA