

Looking for Images of Truro, Nova Scotia's Ross and Campbell Families

This download exists to bring together parties interested in sharing family history connected to some of Truro, Nova Scotia's most extraordinary citizens. Namely:

James D. Ross (1848-1921), son of **John Ross** and **Christiana Donaldson** (1846-1877). James was the landscape architect who designed Truro's Victoria Park.

James D. Ross was the brother of **Sarah (Ross) Campbell**, who married **George Campbell K.C.** (son of **Hon. Alexander Campbell**) This couple gave birth to:

Arthur W. Campbell, a civil servant in Ottawa and author of the novel, *The Combat*

Dr. Gordon Campbell of Montreal

Andrew J. Campbell, barrister and recorder for the Town of Truro and a director of the Truro Foundry and Machine Co.

As a young man, James D. Ross studied for the legal profession in the offices of his brother-in-law, George Campbell, and Sir Adams G. Archibald. He was admitted to the bar in 1876, but he took little interest in the profession; and focused his energies elsewhere. Ross spent most of his time sitting on numerous boards and committees tasked with building up the prospering railway hub. James Ross had his hand in virtually every forward-thinking initiative in Truro during his lifetime. One particular project though, casts a great shadow over all these accomplishments and others; and that, is the creation of Truro's Victoria Park.

Ross knew the site well. His large residence, *Landsdoon*, still looms over the town and backs on to the treasured park. But long before Ross's time - in 1829 -the fabled beauty of the hidden gorge prompted Joseph Howe to seek out the little-known cascade and chronicle his visit in the most enchanting of terms. Ross later stated Howe's, "master mind, poetic and romantic genius instantly recognized the surpassing charm of the place." But it was Ross's unceasing drive and artistic taste that secured the land for the citizens and transformed it into a pastoral pleasure ground beginning in 1887 with incremental improvements added over the following decades.

Ross quietly canvassed land owners by appealing to their beneficent side while stroking their selfishness. His unorthodox style offered the argument that if citizens freely contributed a portion of their holdings; their retained lands abutting the proposed park would increase in value. He also secured monetary donations to develop the grounds using the same style, "There is no way in which you can spend money that will give you as much pleasure and satisfaction. Your contribution will induce others to give and you will get the benefit not only of your own investment, but also of the contributions of others. You will literally receive in return some 30, some 60, and some 100 fold."

It was said of James Ross that he was an unusual mind, an idealist, and a philosopher in a high degree. He immersed himself in world affairs and took great satisfaction in analyzing them. At the turn of the century Ross authored a document outlining a plan for reorganization of the British Empire and later expanded it to include a framework for an alliance of nations against war. This he delivered to the Duke

of Cornwall (later King George V) during the duke's 1901 visit to Canada. Ross's acquaintances believed his views to be upwards of twenty years in advance of the times; indeed it was two decades later that the League of Nations was formed in the wake of World War I.

The man known informally as "Park Jimmy" died in 1921 without heirs. He was survived by his sister Agnes, who died six months later. Ross's other sister, Sarah, had died in 1916. Sarah had three sons from her marriage to George Campbell, K.C., of Truro. These were Arthur W. Campbell, a civil servant in Ottawa and author of the novel, *The Combat*; Dr. Gordon Campbell, of Montreal; and Andrew J. Campbell, barrister and recorder for the Town of Truro and a director of the Truro Foundry and Machine Co.

Perhaps an old photograph of *Uncle James* still exists with the descendants of his sister Sarah Campbell, wherever they may be; and should the possessor decide to share the image with the admiring people of Truro, the good citizens of that town will surely be elated to finally lay eyes upon their dearest community builder and greatest citizen. Please contact preservation@teastlink.ca with any information on James D. Ross.



This photo is taken from the Ross monument looking toward the beginning of the Lepper Brook gorge. The monument states, "A man of rare artistic ability and an ardent lover of nature, he devoted many years of his life in developing and beautifying this park. Victoria Park itself is his monument."