

Mortimer House

Five years ago, an old building referred by many names was torn down due the damage it had sustained over the years. Many were shocked that a building over 200 years old was taken down, but the funds needed to take care of the dying building were just too much. But that doesn't take away it's interesting history, as it had gone through many owners and has had several name changes over the two centuries.

The original owner was Edward Mortimer, who travelled from Scotland to Pictou in the 1780's. He started working in the lumber business, and quickly came to own and operate several successful natural resource firms. He became a leader in the community as a member of the Pictou militia and a member of the House of Assembly. His influence earned him the nickname 'King of Pictou'. While he was once one of the richest men in Nova Scotia, he was deep in debt and died penniless in 1819. His widow continued to live there until 1834, at which time it was sold to Edward Smith.

Smith was a well-to-do employer for the Hudson's Bay Company. Smith is said to have named the residence Norway House. After Smith died, the house found its way to Donald Smith, another successful HBC employee who later became the company's principal shareholder. He later was dubbed Lord Strathcona. In his storied career, he helped found the province of Manitoba, was a member of Parliament and co-founded the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Eight years after Strathcona died in 1922 the house was purchased by the Odd Fellow and Rebekah groups and turned to a private residence for Odd Fellows and their families. It wasn't until 1975 that the home became open to the public, but by then there was a need of repair. In 1985 there were plans to build a new home and abandon the old house; by 1999 there was a new Odd Fellows home. Mortimer House became an inn for a few years until it closed in 2003 and a target of late night visitors and vandals, until it's demolition in 2013