Preface

en.cy.clo.pe.di.a: A comprehensive work made up of systematically arranged articles broadly covering the whole range of knowledge or treating of one particular field Funk & Wagnalls 1975

This is the third edition of this book and the first online version. Since the first two I have been able to deal with some errors and omissions and add several photographs that were not available to me earlier.

The book attempts to tell the individual stories of Archibald Brannen (1777-1827) and his Brannen descendants. It opens with the most likely story of Archibald's arrival in Barrington Township, his maturity, and his death. This subject is over 200 years old and relies on public records, oral history, and some reasonable assumptions.

After Archibald's story I have used the form of providing an entry or profile for each Brannen born in the first five generations (six generations in the case of some families). I have included adopted and or equivalent children that took the Brannen name. In the case of female Brannens I have profiled their children but not those of subsequent generations. This was necessary to maintain the focus on the Brannen name and to keep the number of entries to a manageable level. There are nine families (children of Archibald) each with a separate 'book'. These nine families contain about 550 entries/ profiles.

The Brannens are not an exceptional family. From the early days they tended to pick a career, usually fishing for obvious reasons, married locally, acquired a home, and raised a family all within a few kilometres of where they were born. Those born after 1875 were more adventurous and as they matured, we saw more ship's captains, and a movement to New England, mostly Boston. They went for seasonal employment, and then around 1900 people from the area began to settle and take full time employment in the Boston area. A community of former Barrington Township natives grew up there.

Over time some of the Brannen family stepped out of the ordinary:

Horatio Harris Brannen (1873-1917) became the most famous of the Brannens because of his heroic sacrifice during the Halifax Explosion of 1917. He gave his life to try and save the City of Halifax.

Jeremiah Bruce Brannen (1833-1904) appears to have been the first successful businessman, with much credit due to his spouse Eliza McGray (1843-1933). Jerry is credited with opening the first blacksmith shop on Cape Sable Island at Clark's Harbour. He went on the build the Brannen Wharf, the main wharf in Clark's Harbour

in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. He ran a lumber and coal business and maintained and sailed a schooner to supply his businesses.

William Minard Thomas Brannen (1867-1946) was the first to seek an artistic career. He was a photographer with a studio in Clark’s Harbour from about 1890 to 1906. He also operated a mobile photo service around the township. Almost all photographs taken in the Township in that era were products of his work.

Annis Wickwire Brannen R.N. (1894-1986) was the first Registered Nurse in the family. She graduated from Melrose Massachusetts Training School and took additional courses at Harvard. She married J. R. Corbett M.D. They moved back to Nova Scotia in 1938. Together they organized a much-needed hospital in Shelburne for treatment and major surgery. After WWII they moved to Clark’s Harbour where they established a general practice that continued until John’s death in 1974. For most of that time they provided the only medical office on the island.

Ronald Brannen M.D. (1917-2010) was the first Brannen to become a medical doctor. He graduated from Dalhousie in 1944 and practiced medicine in Barrington Passage in the late 1940’s and first half of the 1950’s.

Boit Brannen (1909-2009) was the first of the family to pursue higher education as a career. By 1951 he had been appointed assistant professor at Northeastern University in Boston. By 1962 he had achieved a Ed. D. and a full professorship at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury CT. He was the son of Sydney Norman Brannen (1877-??).

James Arthur Brannen MBE (1882-1978) was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire in the 1944 King’s Birthday Honours. He was the British Counsel for Boston MA for many years.

Wallace Brannen (1885-1961), after a career in teaching in various locations in Nova Scotia he settled in Brass Hill and was elected to the Municipal Council and the School Board. During his tenure, the Municipality undertook a major building program and consolidation of its schools.

Richard David Brannen O.D. (1936-), graduated from University of California School of Optometry in 1966. He opened a practice in Hanover NH which he maintained until retirement. He is the grandson son of Davis Emmons Brannen (1877-1922).

Herbert Charles Brannen (1944-), went to Ohio Wesleyan University and graduated from dental school at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970. After service as a dental officer in the US Air Force he established a private practice in Northern California. He is the son of Herbert Allen Brannen (1911-1982).

Judith Kathleen Brannen (1938-2013) graduated from Dalhousie University in 1959. She later studied law at the University of New Brunswick (1978-81), and practiced for ten years with Lutz, Smith, Brannen of Hampton, New Brunswick.

Too many early Brannen descendants became master mariners to list. Abigail Brannen (1813-1855) produced three sons, William Henry Swim (1839-1920), Peter Coffin Swim (1847-1933) and Benjamin Swim (1850-1917) who all became master mariners.

Luella Decker Brannen (1877-1947) appears to have become the first of many schoolteachers from the Brannen family. Her sister Lennie four years younger followed her, and younger sister Gertrude made it three from the same family.

As expected, many Brannens answered their county's call to arms. Over time an increasing number of the Brannen family moved to the United States and so you will find veterans from both countries. Of those that served many were honoured, most notably from the First World War was James Gladwyn MacDonnell MM a corporal in the 25th Battalion. He was hit by machine gun fire on August 9, 1918, and died of his wounds August 13th near Amiens. He was honoured with the Military Medal for outstanding bravery in the field, the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. He was the son of Ada Edith Elizabeth Brannen (1868-1939).

In the Second World War Frederick Archibald Brannen MM (1920-1998) was wounded in action and was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery during fighting in France and Belgium in 1944. He was presented with his medal by King George VI at Buckingham Palace after the war.

Raymond I. Brannen (1924-2020) of Company E of the 289th US Infantry was awarded the Bronze Star for bravery. He had already been wounded twice earlier in the war when on January 15, 1945, he came under fire in Beck, Belgium. After his rifle was hit by a bullet saving him from serious injury, he was able to save a man from his company by dragging him to safety and going on to single handily clear the enemy from near-by houses. Raymond went on to become a long serving pastor Pennsylvania. He was the son of Walter Brannen (1896-1960) and the grandson of Horatio Brannen (1873-1917) both heroes of the Halifax Explosion.

John Randall Brannen (1896-1918) a private in the 85th Battalion may have been the first Brannen to die in action in Europe in WWI. He was killed August 10, 1918, at the battle of Amiens.

Four sons of William (Dick) Brannen (1886-1967) of Stoney Island NS saw action in Europe during WWII. Asa Brannen (1924-1944) was killed in action in Belgium on September 18, 1944, his brother Herbert Brannen (1919-1945) was killed in Bienen, Germany March 25, 1945. They were members of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders.

The two others, Fred (1920-1998) was awarded the Military Medal and Joseph (1917-2002) came home safely.

John Peter Ferreira (1927-1946) was the son of Cleo Brannen (1907-2000). He was born in East Boston MA. He was enlisted in the USN in WW II. He was killed on Mindoro Island, Philippines July 28, 1946.

Lindsay Eaton Brannen (1919-2012) served in WWII and was awarded the Military Cross January 1945 for meritorious service in Italy.

Marjorie Isabel Brannen (1920-2012) joined the RCAF WD and served in Washington DC during WWII. Lillian Brannen RN (1922-2009) served with the army in WWII as a nurse.

It is no surprise that there is a long list of young men who were lost at sea. The early generations had little choice but to earn their living by going to sea either as fishermen or mariners. Fishing was and continues to be a dangerous career. Weather changes, and accidents far from land have taken a toll.

The first Brannen to be listed as lost at sea was the tenth child of Archibald and Mary, Joseph Brannen (1820-1845). Only twenty-five years old he drowned when a small craft he was in capsized while going to shore for bait. Twenty-one years later his only son Archibald Brannen (1841-1866) was lost a sea in a storm on the Grand Banks. He was 25 years old.

The Brannens when they became more adventurous. took seasonal work and began to emigrate to the Boston area in late 1890s. A look at the map of Nova Scotia and New England graphically shows why. Boston is the closest major industrialized city, and population was growing rapidly in that era. The transport route was through Yarmouth where a passenger ship service up to four times a week ran from 1887 into the 1950s. With low fares and rail connections from Barrington Township to Yarmouth. It was easy to get to Boston and return for family visits.

To give an idea how common this movement became my father born in 1901 had seven siblings four of them moved permanently to the US, became citizens, and raised families there. Two others spent a significant number of years in the US and had children there. Only one did not reside in the US at all.

The Boston area became a magnet because of the establishment of an expat community of people from the township which offered comfort and support for new arrivals (often relatives) ample employment opportunities, a chance for women to find employment, and it should be remembered that not every man wanted to be a fisherman or a carpenter.

To understand the behaviour of the Brannens it is important to understand what the French call *terrior,* the soil. Cape Sable Island was first occupied by the Mi'kmaq Indians, the French settled around 1655 but were removed by the British around 1756 when they rounded up the twenty families and loaded them aboard ships and burned their properties. Two groups from New England came next between 1761 and 1767. These were Quakers from Nantucket and fishermen from Cape Cod. They came for more space and its nearness to the fishing grounds. The Quakers, who were whalers, retreated after a few years while the decedents of the Cape Cod fishermen expanded.

Because of the exodus after the US war of independence a large number of loyalists, perhaps more than 12,000 came from the American colonies to Shelburne. It is often assumed that Barrington Township was settled by loyalist. In fact, despite being only about 40 kilometers away few of the loyalist came to the township and its economy remained tightly bound to the fishing industry and its connection to New England by proximity, trade, and family conn

Cape Sable Island where Archibald and Mary settled is about 13 Km by 5.5 km and was separated from the mainland by a deep fast-moving channel about one kilometre wide. Since 1951 it has been connected by a two-lane paved causeway. Prior to that, crossing to the mainland required a boat or later a ferry ride.

The Island is not practical for commercial farming. The soil is thin and rocky, but most fishermen became farmers on a small scale as importing and purchasing meat and vegetables was impractical and expensive. It was essential to be self-sufficient. Most lots were several acres, enough for firewood, grazing and hay for a cow as well as a kitchen and vegetable garden. A pig and chickens took up little room but were very important for a family. There were few oxen on the Island so most sod turning, and hay cutting was done by hand due to the rocky nature of the fields. Although gardening was difficult the Island provided ample year around supply fish, and in winter, eels. Game was abundant, both animals and birds.

The early homes were log cabins built from the trees on the lots they were constructed on. The predominate species were spruce and fir. In most cases the cabins were likely built from old growth spruce a soft wood. The earliest record of a sawmill in Barrington Township was about 1861. Prior to that lumber would have to been brought by ship from Jordan or Shelburne. It doesn’t appear that sawn lumber houses became common until after 1840. Prior to that they were the preserve of the well to do.

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