

# Victoria Hall, Fortune: Show and Tell/Adaptive Reuse Report



Heritage NL

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## Introduction

These notes represent the results of a “Show and Tell Night” facilitated by Heritage NL in Fortune on July 15, 2021 to discuss possibilities for the future of Victoria Hall Masonic Lodge #1378. The building was handed over to the Town of Fortune in 1996 when the lodge was disbanded and some members joined the Grand Bank lodge. The building and surrounding land were designated a municipal heritage site by the Town of Fortune on June 19, 2006 due to the site’s historic, cultural and aesthetic value. A group of interested residents approached the Town with a proposal to find an adaptive reuse for the property. Guided by an understanding of the building's communal value, Heritage NL met with this group of residents who discussed future uses and shared stories and memories of Victoria Hall.



*Image: Victoria Hall circa 2006.*

*Source: Heritage NL.*

## Heritage Value of Victoria Hall

Victoria Hall Masonic Lodge #1378 is a wooden, two storey structure with a low pitch gable roof. Located on Church Street in Fortune, NL and built circa 1883-84, Victoria Hall once served as the

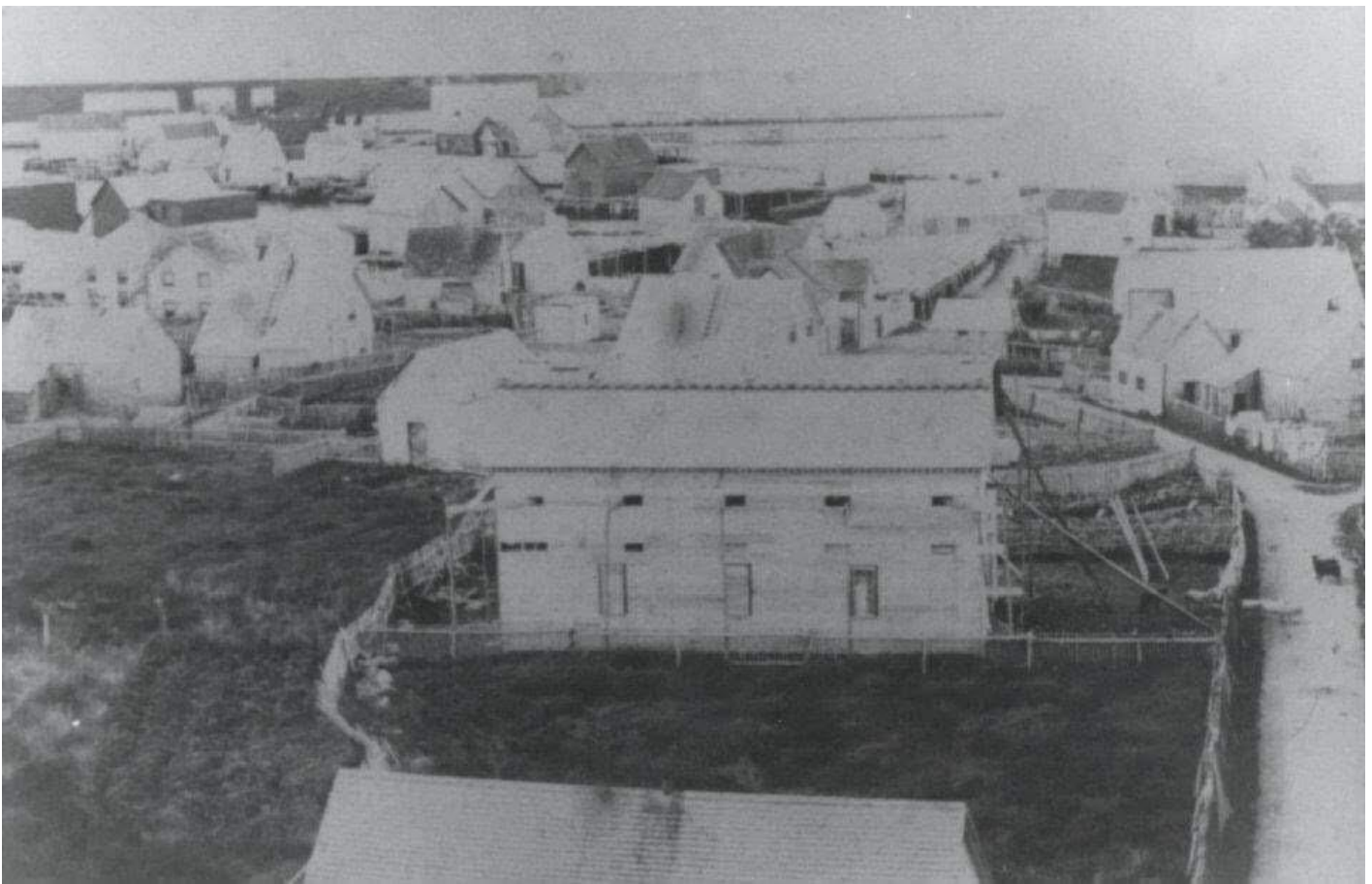


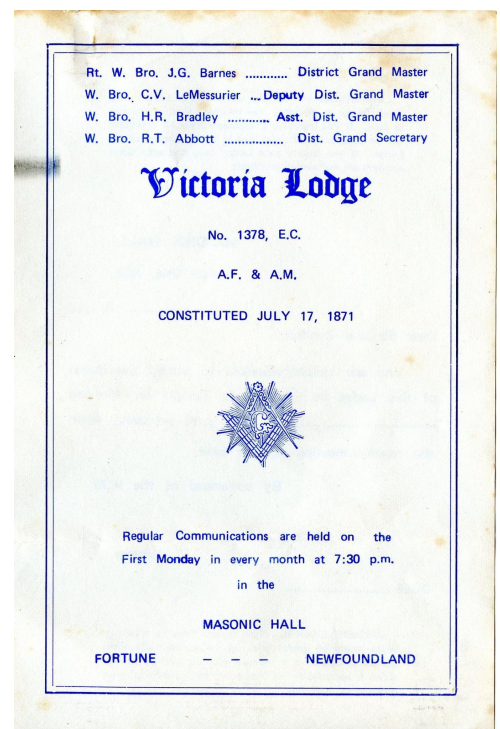
Image: Victoria Hall under construction, circa 1883-84.

Source: Fortune Then and Now Facebook Page.

meeting place for Fortune's Masons. Victoria Lodge #1378 was constituted on July 17, 1871 under Master James P. Snook, and predates the lodge in neighbouring Grand Bank which was started as an offshoot of Victoria Lodge. Victoria Hall was home to Fortune Masons from the time of its construction until 1996, when membership had declined and Victoria Hall was closed.

The building was designed by Henry J. Haddon, a respected figure in Fortune's history. Before the construction of Victoria Hall, meetings were held in his home. Haddon played an instrumental role in the social and cultural development of the community. He initially came to Fortune to pursue a teaching career but resigned in 1863 to become the town's Justice of the Peace.

While its exterior is practically devoid of ornamentation, some Masonic symbols remain on the front facade, including a



Masonic insignia inset and a Masonic “G” insignia on the front porch. This symbolism speaks directly to Masons and indirectly to other citizens who may not know the exact meaning of the symbols but realize their associations with Freemasonry.

The two covered, open porches consisting of a roof supported by two triangular windbreaks, are common in many places in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Scalloping provides a quiet, decorative detail to the front porch while the side porch is unadorned. The associated fenced yard is typical of land use patterns within the town of Fortune. While many outports show a linear arrangement of dwellings oriented towards the ocean, Fortune presents a grid-like arrangement. As a result, most dwellings had a small parcel of associated land, often accentuated with a fence. With the evolution of building styles and the expansion of the town’s residential area, this pattern of land use harkens back to an earlier period in the town’s development.

## Changes to the building



*Images: Left circa 1913 and right circa 1973 showing Mansard roof on Victoria Hall.  
Source: Fortune Then and Now Facebook Page.*

Early pictures show the original Mansard roof. Oral history recounts that this roof was blown off during a windstorm in the 1980s, and a low pitch gable roof replaced it. Masons were in the building for a meeting and recall that members went downstairs and continued with the night’s events. Early pictures also show a symmetrical placing of windows on the two longer facades and different porch styles. However, not enough pictures exist to get a true picture of what the building originally looked like. Shadow marks under the existing exterior and interior sheathing may provide a more complete picture of the early building.



*Image: Enclosed porches, 1989.  
Source: Decks Awash.*



## Uses over time

Victoria Hall is the only historic institutional building close to its original style left in the community. It is valuable due to its architectural provenance, its association with Masonry in the region, and the shared memories local residents have of the building.



*Images: Fortune Masons, dates unknown.  
Source: Left courtesy of Jeffrey Elford, right found at Victoria Hall.*

Its main use was a fraternal lodge, but many other activities took place there. When a lodge, the second storey was a members-only, men-only area. The downstairs was available for public use. Member fees and rental income were used to maintain the building. Weddings, anniversaries, and other receptions were held there, as were dances and Boy Scout meetings. When the Salvation Army school burned down circa 1957-58, classes were held there for a time. When workers at the Lake Group fish plant went on strike, Victoria Hall was used as a strike pay pickup location. A community museum was located in the building for a few years after the lodge closed and most recently it has been used by the Town of Fortune as storage space.

## Memories

A recent call on Facebook for memories of Victoria Hall resulted in a flurry of responses. People remembered attending Masonic meetings, SUF dances, school dances, birthday parties, school, and Boy Scouts there. Others recalled playing in bands for dances, attending wedding showers, having wedding receptions, getting childhood vaccinations there, working at the museum, cutting the



*Image: Boy Scout meeting, 1957.  
Source: Fortune Then and Now Facebook Page.*

grass outside, or helping to shingle the roof. There's no doubt that memories and stories of the building and its various uses are shared by many residents across generational lines. These memories and stories add to the value of the building.

One vivid memory came from Philip and Kay Mavin about a certain elimination dance that took place at the Hall,

*Philip Mavin: My memory of the hall was, I was very young and we went to a dance one night and it was an elimination dance. I was dancing with my older sister and the elimination was that if you were going steady you had to get off the floor. I had just started going out with Kay at the time, she's my wife now, and I didn't get off the floor. The next thing that he called I had to get off the floor. It was only the two couples there and I really wanted to win and I didn't but if I knew all the grief I was going to get the next day I would have never have done it.*

*Kay Mavin: Of course everyone who came to school had to tell me, you and Phil aren't going steady, you aren't going steady because he didn't get off the dance floor!*

*Philip Mavin: Nope, Phil and Kay broke up!*

*Kay Mavin: We were all of 13.*

*Philip Mavin: The 14th of August this year (2021) we'll be married 50 years so it worked out. I didn't eliminate her. So it worked out nice.*

## Opportunities and Strengths

### Building/siting:

- pre-existing kitchen and washroom facilities
- two storeys with separate entrances that could be used independently
- green space surrounding the building
- potential for parking spaces at ferry office next door
- located adjacent to main road running through the community

### Community

- receives 6,000 to 10,000 visitors per year (many travelling to the French islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon)
- limited facilities to keep visitors in the community longer
- need for small to medium sized rental space

- lack of space for existing youth and senior groups
- needed community services could be a good fit

### **Suggestions for adaptive reuse (from meeting with community group)**

- Youth/Seniors resources (CYN, 50+, Girl Guides)
- Gym
- Artisan group
- Function space/rental space
- Market space
- Pub

## **Adaptive Reuse Proposals**

Successful adaptive reuse options should consider three factors:

1. Will the new use generate revenue to contribute to building maintenance?
2. Will the new use complement existing resources in the region?
3. Will the new use strengthen the region's amenities or meet a need?

The suggested options will identify possible uses to generate revenue to maintain the historic structure over the long term. Regular investment in building maintenance from funds generated will ensure that the lodge maintains its structural and architectural integrity for many decades to come. The best possible use is year-round community use that meets community needs. Seasonal uses that take building history into consideration can compliment these year-round uses. Memories and stories associated with the site show that it was very much a community building and that it was valued by the residents of Fortune as a place where community events occurred. It is suggested that, regardless of its final use, a place be found in the building to commemorate the legacy of the Masons and that, where possible, historic items remaining in the building be incorporated into any new interior design.



*Image: Masonic imagery in Victoria Hall, 2021.*

*Source: Heritage NL.*





*Image: Second storey, Victoria Hall, 2021.  
Source: Heritage NL.*

## Multi-use Second Storey

Victoria Hall presents a good opportunity for a multi-use facility. It is proposed that the second storey be rented out at a reasonable yearly fee to community groups currently without a space to call their own. A primary tenant could use the space on a daily basis and as needed for evening activities, while other tenants could use the space for weekly meetings on other evenings.

The Community Youth Network has been identified as an organization in need of office/event space. Other groups such as the Girl Guides and the 50+ Club could use the space after hours. Access to the upper storey could be provided by the side door that opens close to the interior stairs leading to the upper floor. A stairlift could make the upper storey fully accessible. The exterior stairway could be rebuilt to provide an emergency exit. The use of basic, portable room dividers could demark meeting space from permanent office space. The washroom facilities on the upper storey could be upgraded and a small kitchenette area consisting of a sink, countertop, and space for an apartment style refrigerator, could be created. Storage lockers could be constructed to allow evening renters space to keep materials in the building. The daily tenant would pay a reasonable yearly rental fee. For those groups using the space for weekly meetings, a small yearly

fee would be appropriate. Some organizations have programs that members can avail of to help with rental fees. Small fundraising drives could help cover the costs for other organizations. The main purpose of rental fees would be to cover basic utility costs for the space.



*Image: First floor, Victoria Hall, 2021.  
Source: Heritage NL.*

Several options for the first floor were discussed at a community meeting – a community gym, a pub, and a multipurpose rental space. All three options could utilize the existing open space design. Washroom facilities and the kitchen area would require upgrades and some reconfiguration of space at the rear of the room.

### **Community Gym/Fitness Centre**

Funding is available for community groups to purchase gym equipment and several communities around the province currently have community gyms. Funding is also available to host fitness and wellness classes. This approach would require minimal changes to the first floor. A monthly membership could be charged to cover utility costs. Staff may be needed during opening hours or a schedule of volunteers to oversee the facility.



**Examples:**

- Father Val Power Complex, Riverhead, St. Mary's Bay (open almost 30 years)
- St. Anthony Health and Fitness Center



Image source:

<https://www.grenfellassociation.org/story/st-anthony-health-and-fitness-center-enhancing-health-and-wellness-to-fit-any-lifestyle/>

**Pub/taproom**

A pub was suggested as another possible use. This would require a dedicated staff, along with upgrades to kitchen facilities. The logistics of such a venture would be more suited to an entrepreneur who would lease the space and run the pub. As a licensed facility already exists in the community, a focus on local breweries might be a more attractive/less commercially competitive option. Craft breweries are enjoying huge success and the Burin Peninsula is one of the few regions without a brewery.



Image source: <https://www.facebook.com/baccalieutrailbrewco/>

While the building may not be suitable for a full brewery, potential exists for it to be converted to a taproom. A taproom could offer a variety of craft beer from around the province along with a selection of easily prepared pub food. Given the high volume of tourist traffic in the area,

particularly those travelling to Saint Pierre and Miquelon, a taproom would provide a unique space in the region and an opportunity for travelers to stay longer.

### Examples:

- Baccalieu Trail Brewing Company, Bay Roberts  
<https://www.facebook.com/baccalieutrailbrewco/>
- Proposal for a “Taproom + Picnic + Accommodation” adaptive reuse for the Greenspond Courthouse  
<https://heritagenl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Greenspond-Courthouse-Feasibility-Study-2020.pdf>

### Artisan Market



Image source: <https://www.facebook.com/SomeGoodMarket/>

A third option could be an artisan market, with the option of an artisan guild being headquartered on the first floor. Markets of this type have become increasingly popular in the province. Several communities now run weekly markets which have proved successful. Both the first floor space and the green space outside (when weather permits) could be used for this purpose. To start, monthly markets could be offered November to April and biweekly markets from May to October. These could be held one day on a weekend. Depending on popularity, the frequency could be increased. From 15-20 tables could be set up inside and the outside area could allow for as many. Individual vendors would pay for use of a table and a nominal admission fee could be charged. In keeping with the use as a market, a community artisan guild could be promoted and the space used for that purpose throughout the week.

When the space is not being used for market purposes, it could be rented out for events as it was in the past. It would provide a unique small space rental and would be in keeping with the building's heritage.

**Examples:**

- Farm and Market, Clarendville <http://www.farmandmarketclareville.ca/>
- Some Good Market, Brigus <https://www.facebook.com/SomeGoodMarket/>
- In Orkney, Scotland, the Sanday Community Craft Hub was set up by a group of makers who created amazing things they wanted to share. There are now 52 members of the Hub, all from the area, producing work from photography, art, wood turning, knitting, crochet, weaving, patchwork, and jewellery. They are open three days per week, including the weekend, and offer refreshments in a very small cafe area.  
<https://www.facebook.com/sandaycrafthub>

## Building condition

While in fair condition, some extensive restoration and repairs are required, specifically to the floor supports. Sections of exterior cladding and trim need repair and several windows that were removed or covered over could be replaced to bring the building back to its original condition. The interior would require the most upgrades, including most of the walls, ceilings, doors, electrical and plumbing. As a municipally owned building, a variety of funding sources might be available to aid in restoration and repurposing (see Appendix I).

## Possible future work: Oral Histories

Oral histories can add a rich layer to our understanding of the past by providing first hand accounts and a variety of different perspectives/voices. These can help fill in gaps and personalize a community's history beyond mere facts and dates. Oral history projects are most effective when they are well-planned and focused (i.e., dealing with specific topics). Involving youth in the collecting of oral histories can be a good way of creating intergenerational sharing. Seniors get validation through sharing their knowledge with young people and youth learn about their community's past. There are a variety of tools for collecting oral histories and sharing the results that include:

**Formal oral history projects** involving researchers/interviewers and the audio or visual recording of targeted residents (e.g., of older people engaged in a specific economic activity or way of life) See our online handbook at <http://www.ichblog.ca/p/oral-history.html>



**Oral history “Memory Mug-ups”** where seniors are invited to a session to share their stories. These can often be followed up by individual oral history sessions. See our guide at [https://www.mun.ca/ich/resources/MUG\\_UP.pdf](https://www.mun.ca/ich/resources/MUG_UP.pdf)

**Hosting a “Photo Scanning Party”** and followup events is a good way to get locals to share vintage photos from the community. Scanning stations are set up at a public space, people bring photos to be scanned on site. Then at a later date, an old picture night can be held, showing the photos and collecting more information on photo contents.

**Digital Storytelling Videos** incorporating collected audio and photos is a way to share local stories through social media/town website. See: <https://youtu.be/BMJKcrgMePc>

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## **Appendix I – Resources for Community-based Heritage Initiatives**

There are a wide variety of programs and resources that can support initiatives to protect, safeguard, and develop community heritage assets. These include:

### **Heritage NL**

Offers programs and services to preserve historic places and safeguard intangible cultural heritage:

- assistance with municipal designation programs and heritage protection measures
- technical assistance on heritage preservation
- assistance with inventorying tangible and intangible heritage resources
- assistance with developing and implementing oral history projects and projects that celebrate, transmit and develop intangible cultural heritage resources
- For more information on our programs see: [www.heritagenl.ca](http://www.heritagenl.ca) or contact us at 709-739-1892

### **Government of Newfoundland & Labrador**

*Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation*

**Cultural Economic Development Program (CEDP)**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/funding-programs/culture-economic-development-program-cedp/>

**Cultural Events Fund**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/funding-programs/cultural-events-fund/>

**Tourism Market Readiness Subsidy Program**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/funding-programs/tourism-market-readiness-subsidy-program/>

**Tourism Season Extension Program**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/funding-programs/tourism-season-extension-program/>

**Community Healthy Living Fund**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcar/recreation-and-sport/financial-assistance/community-healthy-living-fund/>

***Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills***

**Job Creation Partnerships**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/ipgs/lmda/jcp/>

**Wage Subsidy Programs**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/ipgs/employ-support/foremployers/wagesubsidy/>

***Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs***

**Community Enhancement Employment Program**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/mpa/ceep/>

**Municipal Capital Works**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/ti/mi/funding-programs/>

**Gas Tax Agreement**

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/mpa/for/gta/#agree>

**Government of Canada**

**Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities.html>

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**New Horizons for Seniors Program**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/new-horizons-seniors.html>

**Canada Cultural Spaces Fund**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/cultural-spaces-fund.html>

**Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage Fund**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/building-communities.html>

**Young Canada Works**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/young-canada-works.html>

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