

## Toward a Poetic History of Lockeport: A Few Notes

Ex the Boston State, i.e. Massachusetts, 1762, sailed  
North to southeastern Shelburne County, Nova Scotia, where fog unveiled  
Ragged Islands—Green Harbour to Little Harbour—near enough the Grand Banks  
To found a fresh fishery, sailed north, anchored southeasterly, came grand Yanks—  
Joseph Hardy, Josiah Churchill, and Jonathan Locke, M.D., to found  
Locke's Isle, in serene Allendale Bay, half-way twixt Grand Banks fish-stocks ground  
And New England. The founders took stock of mile-long Crescent Beach (latterly  
Backing the 1954, Canuck \$50 bill), geography  
Including 15-foot-high Gull Rock islet (ideal site for a lighthouse  
And fog-horn), Cranberry Island, Carter Island (too, a first-sight-impulse,  
Lighthouse site), and knew they'd lucked out at Locke's Isle: A 15-minute, 10-knot  
Sail takes a vessel from the town wharves to open sea, shipping lanes God-wrought,  
To carry lumber and salt cod (*Slavery's* food) to the Caribbean isles,  
Ferry back molasses and rum and salt, and dispatch blueberries sea-miles  
To what's now the U.S. From Locke Isle's first mayor—Churchill—1764—  
Until Empress Victoria went to her reward, schooners seemed to soar  
Over tide and surge, scourging the Grand Banks of cod, a white fish worth pure gold,  
And tilting scales with fish-scales, so Locke's Island got rich as the fish got sold.  
Hotels soared above warehouses, but both were founded on fish-plants: 'That's where  
The gold got weighed, the poundage counted out as coinage, but mint. Who could err?  
Churches multiplied: Five steeples "people" Hall Street (but church halls are zero  
On Church Street); the Baptist chapel beamed a red beacon to lead each hero  
Of the waves home to harbour. That steepled beacon was itself an anchor

To posh Colonial, proud Georgian, and Victorian architecture.  
Xerxes Zenophon Chipman was chosen Post Master—1846.  
Gull Rock landed its first lighthouse in 1853: Height? 56  
Feet. Range: 10 miles. As of 1785, the Ragged Islands moved  
From Queens County to Shelburne County, as the government itself felt moved  
To alter boundaries. Likewise, “Locke’s Island” became Lockeport. Citizens—  
In 1870—made that choice. Two years later, Carter Isle begins  
To bright the Atlantic sky with its light—66-feet-high. Icelandic  
Fishers land at East Green Harbour—1875: The Atlantic  
Is a treasury—moneybags of oils and flesh; cod-liver-oil means wealth  
For Lockeport. By 1890, yearly sports meets show off the township’s health.  
In 1895, the first gas street light illuminated Water  
And South Streets (at their corner). But, bust follows boom. Up next is disaster.  
Fish prices tanked; fires engulfed stately homes; sails turned to ash; vessels foundered;  
The economy ran aground. Could it be the founders’ faith had floundered?  
To resolve the crisis, the township became a town, to receive fresh funds  
Provincial, as of 1907. The Coastal Railroad made its runs  
To Lockeport station at Allendale. Thus came the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
And a turn to tourism to pick up the fish slack. Electricity  
Lit up the town by 1924; railway tressels brought trains downtown;  
A historic draw-bridge fixing island to beach had to be taken down;  
A road leapt across the beach—essential for tourist commerce; but shipping  
And fisheries still require foghorns blaring and bright lighthouse beams clipping  
Between dipping heavens and leaping waves. And *History’s* unstoppable:

New Year's Day of the last Great War year—1918—the *Valmore*, able  
No more, sank down—11-tons—in Lockeport Harbour; and a World War II  
U-Boat torpedoed the fishing boat, *Lucille M*, in 1942.  
New lighthouses got erected, then automated; Lockeport streets got paved  
In 1960; the Little School where James Allen taught hundreds was saved  
As a museum. The Lockeport Sea Derby saw the record landing of  
A 315-pound Blue Shark in 1996. (Folks love  
This yearly celebration of fishing culture and lore.) Lockeport's now home  
To Nova Scotia's first Provincially Registered Streetscape, and folks roam—  
Come-From-Aways from all over—to savour the Sea Derby or enjoy  
The Harmony Bazaar Festival of Women & Song, which shares the joy  
Of South Shore feminism, in music and art. And there's Canada Day,  
Always popular, and maybe this year, more than ever? There's more to say:  
Lockeport's a town that favours sports, and its high school has scored some 44  
Provincial triumphs in basketball, soccer, and track and field. There's still more  
To say: Famed athletes include Marjorie Turner-Bailey—an Olympian,  
Walter Nickerson, the dory-rowing champion, and Ian MacMillan,  
An N.B.A. assistant coach. Even now, one third of Lockeporte folks walk  
Or bike, daily to work. For them, exercise isn't just a lot of talk.  
To conclude these notes—although *History* never ends, Lockeport's history  
Is as eternal as the sea—and the tidal shoreline of Mi'kma'ki.  
Whatever industry is borne up next from the Atlantic—like Venus  
(See Botticelli)—must thrive in a setting primordial to Venice.

**--George Elliott Clarke**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2016-17)**