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William Harris-Architect of Broughton The following is a chapter from Robert C. Tuck's book Gothic Dreams; The Life and Times of a Canadian Architect. William Critchlow Harris. 1854-1913. Born in England in 1854, William Critchlow Harris, Jr., moved with his family to Prince Edward Island two years later. In 1870 he went to Halifax as an indentured apprentice to architect David Stirling. Robert Tuck has identified 116 buildings designed and built by Harris • as well as several designed with others, and 67 designed but never actually built. Tuck writes: "In Cape Breton Island William extended his activity. His first commission was St. John's Anglican Church in North Sydney in 1902, and it led to others • Anglican churches at Sydney Mines and Whitney Pier and a Roman Catholic Church in North Sydney. He designed a business block in North Sydney for A. C. Bertram which later became the town hall, and at least one dwelling house, at 102 Pierce Street. But a number of architectural competitions he entered resulted in disappointment: churches in Sydney Mines for the Methodists, New Aberdeen for the Roman Catholics, and Sydney and Glace Bay for the Presbyterians, were built to designs by other architects; the Anglicans decided not to proceed with construction of a new Christ Church, Sydney; the Bank of Commerce decided not to use his plan for their new bank in Sydney; John Burchell did not construct his proposed business block in Sydney; and W. Wambolt bought a disused church and converted it into a movie house after William had produced beautiful drawings for a Romanesque Revival Style 'Unique Picture Theatre.'" While most of Harris's work for Cape Breton never got off paper, it led to his most elaborate commission • the short-lived mining community of Broughton, It may have been William Harris's work in Cape Breton which brought him to the attention of officials of the Cape Breton Coal, Iron and Railway Company. In any case, they hired him in 1904 as architect for a small city of 10,000 to 12,000 people they planned to build in the forest a few miles inland from Mira Bay on Cape Breton's Atlantic shore. If the ambitions of the Company had been fulfilled, a whole community in which nearly every building had come from the drawing board of William Harris would have been created in the wilds of Cape Breton; as it was he was involved in one of the most spectacular fiascos in the history of Nova Scotia. Today there is nothing left of this town, which was named Broughton after "Broughton Hall" in Cheshire, England, the country seat of Horace Mayhew, the president of the Company; the forest trees have grown tall around the crumbling cellars of the close to 50 buildings actually constructed on the site. The first reference to Broughton in Harris's surviving correspondence is a letter to Robert dated 8 January 1905, in which he said he had sent plans for an hotel at Broughton to Thomas Lancaster, the general manager of the Company. The following spring William took up residence in a farmhouse belonging to a Mr. Martell at Mira Bay, and he spent the summer making drawings and supervising construction of the buildings in the new town. Initially, the Cape Breton Coal, Iron and Railway Company was a local Cape Breton firm without much capital. In 1902 Lancaster, an Englishman who had had some experience in mining, got together



with George Jacques, a mining engineer, and together they began explorations in the Cape Breton coal field. After a time they concentrated their attention on the Cochran's General Office, Broughton, Cape Breton. Architect. Wm. Harris' (21)