

Page 31 - Company Houses in "Kolonia"

ISSUE: Issue 57

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1991/6/1

son; Alex Noble, painter; and Dennis Ryan, blacksmith. An item contained in a booklet published for the seventy-fifth an? niversary of St. Mary's Polish Church seems to confirm this ar? ea of Sydney as a convenient central location for Steel Plant of? ficials because of its close prox? imity to the steel works. The nota? tion states that the Bonny View Hotel often housed dignitaries as? sociated with the steel Plant. In 1903 the hotel was owned by Mrs. Jane Drummond and was located not far from Kolonia, on the corner of Brow and Jamieson streets. The building still stands today and is a private residence. To attest to the shortage of ac? commodations in Sydney during the early years of the twentieth century, the 1903 Business Di? rectory also lists thirty-eight other hotels in Sydney, one year before it became a city. By 1907-08, MacAlpine's directory lists, for the first fime, families of Eastern European extraction living in Kolonia, interspersed with Eng? lish-speaking families. This would correspond with the large influx of Polish and Ukrainians into Sydney in 1906. The city directory for 1914 indicates that the transition from an English-speaking population to a population consisting entirely of Eastern Europeans was complete. In this directory, there isn't one family living on Ferris or Bryan Streets, west of Roberts Street, who has an English sounding name. It is probably around this time that the area was given the name "Hunkey Town." This term, in ail likelihood, was not coined in Cape Breton. There is abundant evidence that most company towns, or ar? eas with company houses, had sections in which mostly immigrant workers lived. Gwendolyn Wright in her study. Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America, writes: "Settlements of Slavic labourers, known as 'Hunkeyvilles' in most company towns, of? ten had the most severe overcrowding problems." What connotation does this name have for an area? Is it a disparaging term or merely descriptive? Of course, it would label an area as being of immigrant stock, and more particularly, of Eastern European extrac? tion. What would the residents think of such a name? Tommy Chmiel and the Dziubeks passed it off as being unimportant but there is evi? dence among the later generations that the term was not appreciated. What did the English speaking community think of the name? Frank Murphy, who grew up on Henry Street, east of Victoria Road, states that it was only a term to describe the area. He believed that the Eng? lish speaking and foreign speaking peoples of the Pier were allies against a common enemy • the rest of Sydney. This would be in keep? ing with the physical divisions of the city into the "Pier" and "Town." Paul MacEwan wrote in Steelworkers and Miners: "To this day only a single street, which passes over the steel plant by a long overpass, connects these two halves (of Sydney)." The homes in Kolonia did not reflect the symmetry that bred the sameness and uniformity so characteristic of the company houses on Victoria Road, Richmond Street, and Park Street. In Kolonia, there are several different distinctly identifiable sizes and styles of homes. Ann Dziubek and her husband, the late Stephen Dziubek We will deal here with only one of these homes, as a typical repre? sentative of all • the home of the Dziubek family. This building had one side of the double family dwelling vacant, which



allowed for more exploration. It also gave an opportunity for comparison since the upper floor of the vacant side, except for the addition of a bathtub, has not been altered since Its construction. There existed in Kolonia a pride of home. Many of the Polish and Ukrainian immigrants were of peasant stock and, in many cases, the homes they left behind In their native lands were inferior to those found in their adopted homeland. Many of the second and third gen? eration Polish and Ukrainian families speak of Kolonia as a very close knit society. The residents were very protective of what they had and were willing to defend it. Many of the properties were divided and fenced to further define the property lines. Tommy Chmiel told of more than one confrontation his father had with a neighbour over a disputed boundary. In many cases, these homes provided shelter for more than one fam? ily at a time. Many family members and friends newly arrived in Syd? ney would share housing until they became self-sufficient and could set up on their own. This was a common phenomenon throughout in? dustrial North America. Joseph Dziubek, who arrived in Sydney in 1912, stayed with Michael and Frances Paruch on Henry Street until he could obtain housing of his own. In turn, Joseph Dziubek provided shelter for his brother, Stefan, who arrived in Sydney from Poland in 1930. Oceon Jlentols'td. Contractors Equipment Compressors Welders Drills, Saws Call: Lawn & Garden Equipment Tillers Sod Cutters Air Eators GLACE BAY General Engine Hoists lacks Tow Bars 849-1616 & Much More... South (Campbells Comer) - P. O. Box 265 -- 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO CAPE BRETON ??tie ffllitliiren*0 At5 S'orieto Of Qlape Breton INTAKE HOME STUDIES PROTECTION FOSTER HOMES ADOPTION' problem identification; referral support services; crisis intervention all ages, in permanent homes CHILDREN IN CARE I Suite 7, Provincial Building, 360 Prince Street, Sydney, Nova Scotia B1P 5L1 (562-5506) I SINGLE MOTHERS counselling; THE COMMUNITY'S RESPONSIBILITY IS TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN I counselling; support "A UNITED WAY SERVICE AGENCY"