

# Research Reports

## Rapports de recherche

### Making a House a Home: Company Housing in Cape Breton Island

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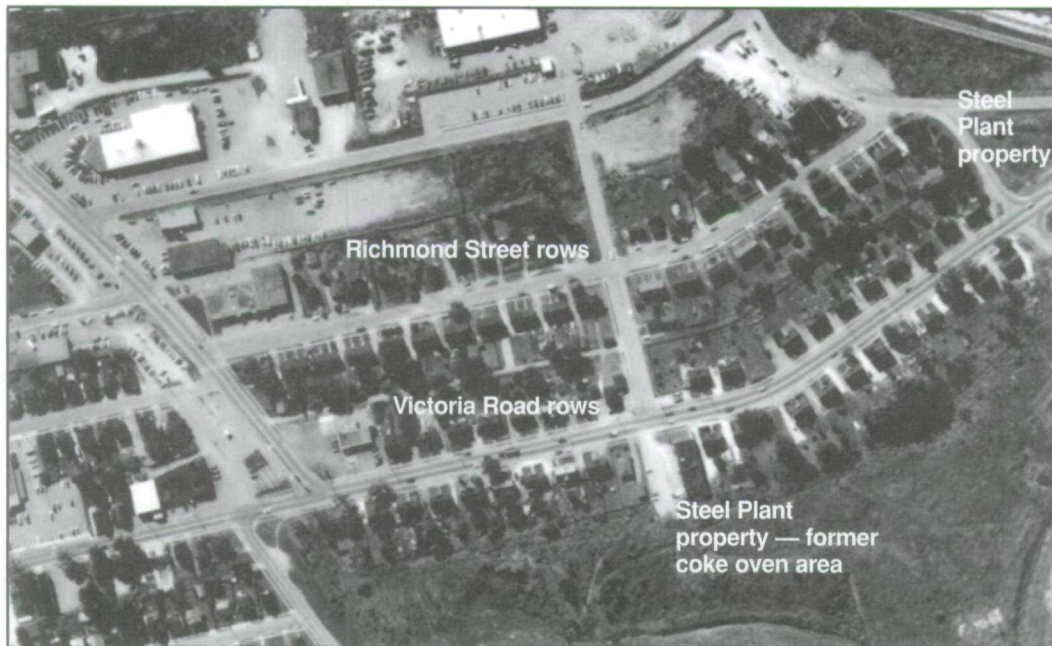
Alistair MacLeod, who sets many of his short stories in Cape Breton Island mining towns, describes the community in "The Return":

*Then there is the mine silhouetted against it all, looking like a toy from a Meccano set; yet its bells ring as the coal-laden cars fly up out of the deep, grumble as they are unloaded, and flee with thundering power down the slopes they leave behind. Then the blackened houses begin and march row and row up the hill to where we stand and beyond to where we go.<sup>1</sup>*

When writers or journalists describe mining or industrial towns, the houses of the workers inevitably appear as bleak, blackened abodes where life is eked out in close proximity to the mine. Even though housing for industrial

workers is an important part of Atlantic Canada's material landscape, little scholarly attention has been given to these structures. The buildings tell a story about the working people who made this region what it is today, a story sometimes ignored by history books glorifying captains of industry and our military and political leaders.

In the late nineteenth century, the Canadian federal government's National Policy encouraged industrialization. The resulting boom in the Atlantic region radically changed the built landscape of many Nova Scotia communities.<sup>2</sup> Entire neighborhoods of workers' housing emerged in towns and cities, their housing patterns very different from the region's traditional vernacular styles. Some



**Fig. 1**  
Aerial photograph showing the Richmond Street and Victoria Road row housing (Courtesy GIS Laboratory, University College of Cape Breton)

were built by private individuals and contractors. Most were developed by the coal and steel companies or by the owners of mills, factories and lumberwoods operations. They flourished in towns such as Amherst and Stellarton, Nova Scotia, Wabana and Aguathuna, Newfoundland, and Marysville and Grand Falls, New Brunswick.<sup>3</sup>

Much work needs to be done to record and analyze the company housing of this region. This paper examines only one small part of the process, focussing on the way in which individuals have transformed their prefabricated, company-built houses into "homes." This exploration can give us an understanding of individual and community aesthetics. It helps to explain the way in which people renovate, personalize and transform their living spaces into meaningful places. As architect Alice Gray Read states: "The house is anonymous and mute. Only when it is touched by an owner, lived in and made over inside and out does it begin to bear the identity of its occupants."<sup>4</sup>

In attempting to understand the individual and community aesthetics at work, I have here examined one neighborhood where company-built housing is predominant: the Richmond Street and Victoria Road area of Sydney, within the section of Sydney known as "Ashby"<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 1). In this discussion I hope to provide a clearer sense of how this row housing, built on a grid pattern next to the Sydney Steel Mill, has been personalized and transformed over time.

With the establishment of the Sydney Steel Plant by DISCO (Dominion Iron and Steel Company) in 1899, and Sydney's concomitant economic boom, construction of workers' housing began in earnest. Sydney's population grew from 3 200 in 1899, to 9 900 in 1901, and 22 000 in 1913.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1896 and 1900 more than 3 600 immigrants came to Cape Breton seeking work in the coal and steel industry.<sup>7</sup> The establishment of the Sydney steelworks followed the vast expansion in the Cape Breton coal industry. Henry Melville Whitney of Boston formed the Dominion Coal Company in 1893 by purchasing several smaller private coal mines that had been in operation since the mid-nineteenth century. In this year he also obtained a 99-year lease of the unworked resources of the coal fields.<sup>8</sup>

This rapid industrialization of Cape Breton Island brought about many changes to Sydney. One author has said that in this transition, the small independent producer was displaced by wage earners: "Sydney had become predominantly a community of wage labourers..."<sup>9</sup> Problems facing the city at this period included a lack of housing to meet demand, insufficient water and sewage infrastructure, and abysmal streets and roads. The working class had a difficult life. Low wages, poor working conditions, 13-hour night shifts, 11-hour day shifts (with no pay for overtime) was the lot of the Sydney steelworker of the day.<sup>10</sup>

In a talk to the Canadian Political Science Association in 1913, Bryce Stewart describes Sydney's company housing. To summarize his study, there were too few houses to meet the needs of the incoming population. In 1909 the Dominion Iron and Steel Company, for example, owned 142 houses; yet there were 303 applications on file with the company for housing.<sup>11</sup> Most of these applications were from families; single men made their homes in large boarding houses, in "shacks," or in other working class homes as boarders. Around the steel plant and coke ovens a variety of ethnic groups lived in company-owned housing, including Austrians, Russians, Poles, Italians, West Indians from Barbados, Newfoundlanders and native Cape Bretoners.

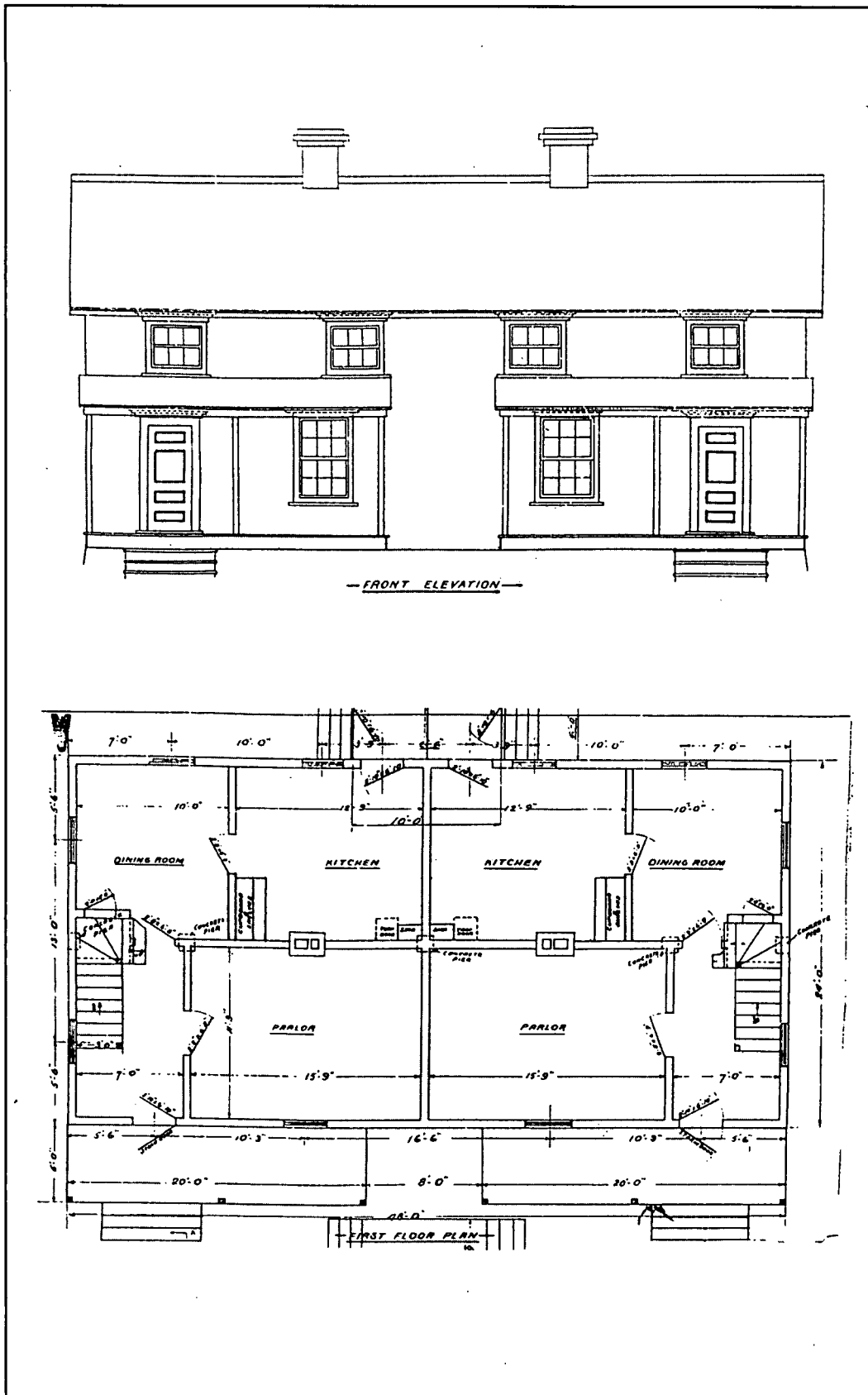
In my study area of this one Sydney neighborhood, fifty-five duplexes were constructed between 1903 and 1913, twenty on Richmond Street and thirty-five on Victoria Road (Figs. 2 and 3). The streets of the area are named for the four counties of Cape Breton Island — Inverness, Richmond, Victoria and Cape Breton. The Victoria Road row is located adjacent to the steel plant's coke ovens (dismantled in the recent modernization of the Sydney Steel Plant, but still posing a present-day industrial hazard).<sup>12</sup> The Richmond Street rows, likewise, are close to the former bar mill of the steel plant and a short distance from one of the plant's main entry gates.

**Fig. 2 (top)**  
Richmond Street row houses

**Fig. 3 (bottom)**  
Victoria Road row houses



**Fig. 4**  
 Floor plan and front  
 elevation of Richmond  
 Street houses (Beaton  
 Institute, University  
 College of Cape Breton)



**Fig. 5 (top)**

*Kitchen as it appears now, John Murphy house, Richmond Street*

### Richmond Street Row Houses

The plan of the twenty Richmond Street duplexes originally included a front room, 15'9" by 11'3" (4.8 m x 3.4 m), with a coal-burning fireplace, a small dining room, 10' by 12'9" (3 m x 3.9 m), and a kitchen, 12'9" by 12'9" (3.9 m x 3.9 m) to the rear (Fig. 4). The upstairs contained four small bedrooms, two being 11'4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " by 11'3" (3.5 m x 3.4 m) in size and two being 11'4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " by 9'6" (3.5 m x 2.9 m) in size. A verandah 6' by 20' (1.8 m x 6.1 m) was built at the time the houses were constructed.

Each kitchen contained a sink and a trap door leading to the unfinished cellar (Fig. 5). A built-in corner cupboard resembled the ubiquitous British Isles "sideboard," so common in old world communities of Scottish, English and Irish settlers.<sup>13</sup> John Mannion points out that large wooden dressers with bottom

drawers and shelving on top were the most outstanding feature of Irish peasant furniture at the time of migration to the New World.<sup>14</sup> This built-in cupboard with two enclosed lower cupboards and four exposed upper shelves was roughly 4' (1 m) wide and 8' (2.5 m) in height. The lower cupboards were 3' (0.9 m) in height and width; the upper shelves were spaced 15" (38 cm) apart and were 15" (38 cm) wide. Sigurd Erixon points out that this form of kitchen furniture had descended in Europe from the court sideboards of an earlier aristocracy.<sup>15</sup>

Each front room had a coal fireplace 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (50.2 cm) wide by 26" (66 cm) in height, with an iron fender in front (Fig. 6). It sat on a concrete foundation. A concrete wall laid in a dug-out trench provided the foundation on the front and rear. Present-day concrete end walls were put in by owners of the homes after 1948, when these homes were purchased from the steel company. A concrete pier provides support in the centre of the house. Joists are 2" by 8" (5 cm x 20 cm) in 5' (1.5 m) lengths while upright studs are 2" by 4" (5 cm x 10 cm) in size; a 1" by 6" (2.5 cm x 15 cm) wall plate separates the ground floor wall from the upper storey wall. Rafters (2" by 6" (5 cm x 15 cm)) are joined at the peak and are supported by a 2" by 4" (5 cm x 10 cm) tie beam. Rough sheathing of 1" (2.5 cm) board covers the entire structure. On the roof there were originally two layers of tar paper covered with wooden shingles but these were replaced by asphalt shingles in the 1940s. The rest of the outer walls have one layer of wall paper followed by 1" sheathing and a layer of wooden shingles.

The backyard was fenced in by the owner and contained an outhouse, a coal and coke shed, and a back service lane that is still evident in the landscape (Fig. 7). A resident recalls one use for this landscape feature:

*In the old days like that before the city started garbage disposal, garbage collection, we used to just take our garbage and throw it over the back fence there all winter. And then in the spring of the year the company would send probably six or eight men from the general yard and a truck and shovels and they would clean her from one end to the other. Sometimes it would take weeks, but they would clean here from one end to the other, and when you'd have her clean you'd start it over again for next year...<sup>16</sup>*

Ashes from stoves were also deposited in these back alleys for collection every year. Today the alley is used mainly as a walking path for many

**Fig. 6 (bottom)**

*Front room showing fireplace, John Murphy house, Richmond Street*



of the neighborhood's residents, a place to pitch horseshoes in the summer, or a place for various children's games.

Many of the men who worked in the heavy mills (including the blooming mill, the bar mill, the nail mill and the plate mill) resided in the Richmond Street houses. While the houses were originally built by the company in 1913, they were purchased by employees from DOSCO (Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation) in the late 1940s for between \$1 700 and \$1 800. This is a significant time, for it is after this date that a number of transformations in the houses occurred.

When the houses were still owned by the company, a crew of carpenters — company employees — maintained the houses. According to one informant, they were spray painted with oil and oakum twice between 1913 and 1948, giving the houses either a green hue or a dark brown hue. There were no full cellars in these company-built houses; residents began to dig their own basements only after purchasing the homes from the steel company.

A coal fireplace originally heated the front room. A cast-iron stove (locally referred to as a "Quebec" heater, after its place of manufacture) warmed the small hallway downstairs.<sup>17</sup> For fuel, the hall stove regularly used coke, while the large kitchen stove used coal. In some houses, a small coke heater was also used in the upstairs bedrooms. In the 1940s, hot-air coal furnaces began to appear and by the 1950s a coal stove called a "Warm Morning" became commonly used in these homes.<sup>18</sup> These stoves are fondly remembered by residents: when conducting field work I have often heard residents mention how well these stoves worked and how much heat could be generated

by this model. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, oil furnaces also began to appear on Richmond Street. One informant remembers that oil furnaces began to appear particularly after the 1947 strike. Many of the cellars were dug out, by hand in most cases, to provide a space to locate the coal and oil-fired furnaces.

The interior walls of the houses were originally surfaced with plaster and lath. Today, most are covered with numerous layers of paint and wallpaper. In some, panel board (a popular form of interior walling that began to appear in Cape Breton Island in the late 1960s) has replaced the plaster and lath. Originally the houses had no insulation; at present, most are insulated with fiberglass and are covered by vinyl or aluminum siding, also introduced to the neighborhood in the 1960s.

Between the steel plant and the twenty duplexes on Richmond Street is a large field once owned by the company. Here, residents grew gardens or kept cows and horses. As one resident states:

*There was an old gentleman, Malcolm MacNeil who kept cows, he and my father shared the same pasture; they did the fencing. They never used fancy wire or anything, they always got old used cable or something they used for fencing. And, oh, in them days there was some hairy days too and cows would get out and get roaming around the city. They had an old poundkeeper by the name of Hillman and you'd have to go over and pay four dollars to get your cow out of the pound, and it never pleased my father too much; he used to stretch the English language when he'd have to go for his cow...<sup>19</sup>*

Many steelworking families found it necessary to keep a small kitchen garden, a cow and a few hens to supply fresh produce, milk and eggs.

Neighbors shared the product of their toil with each other; whatever produce was not used in a household was given away to nearby residents. The materials used for fencing the gardens were often discarded materials from work sites at the Sydney Steel Plant.

The company tolerated the workers fencing off company-owned gardening areas. This squatting on company-owned land for their own use is one way in which original settlers of the row transformed the company-created environment into a meaningful place.



**Fig. 7**  
Back service lane,  
Richmond Street

Some of the original residents came from rural backgrounds where farming, planting and animal husbandry were common. In this way, older, residual, agricultural patterns continued in the industrial community. This pattern of small-scale gardening and subsistence farming continued into the 1960s when it largely disappeared. Today, more recent houses have been constructed on this side of the street, and the field between the plant and the houses lies unused.

### Victoria Road Houses

These duplexes are similar in size and shape to the Richmond Street homes (Fig. 8). One difference is the use of a central dormer: this form has a gable roof with the large, central dormer cutting the roofline. This shallow-pitched central dormer hints at the Gothic revival style that began to appear in the Maritimes in the early years of the nineteenth century, becoming extremely popular toward the end of the century. This particular architectural feature was popular in other Cape Breton company towns, including New Waterford, Glace Bay, Reserve Mines, and Inverness.<sup>20</sup>

These houses are 24' by 24' (7.3 m x 7.3 m) in size and possess a front room with a fireplace (called a living room in the original plan), a kitchen and a pantry on the ground floor, plus four small bedrooms on the second floor (Fig. 9). They were built without foundations and, as with their counterparts on Richmond Street, had an outhouse and coal shed to the rear of the dwelling.

On both Richmond Street and Victoria Road, original plans did not call for a bathroom or any

indoor plumbing. A drain from the kitchen sink led to the backyard; water was obtained from wells in the neighborhood. Plumbing was not installed in many of these houses until the 1930s. One resident states that these houses were drafty and,

*frequently during winter we arose to find the water frozen and kids were compelled to huddle around the fireplace until the pipes were thawed. Fires were usually banked but morning found us rising to cold kitchens, cold furniture and bread that had lost all courage to rise. Even after the plumbing and hot water burners were installed it was not uncommon to find that the hot water front in the old coal stove had frozen solid during the night.*<sup>21</sup>

Numerous reports about the poor conditions of the company houses in the first thirty years of the twentieth century are verified in a Royal Commission of the time, prompted by labour-management strife occurring in the region.<sup>22</sup>

A sense of some of the activities inside Victoria Road company houses is provided by Mike McCormack in his narrative about growing up in a Victoria Road company house:

*But growing up on Victoria Road wasn't all bad. I made my friends I still cherish 60 years later. Only the very affluent had telephones and radio was in its infancy. Gramophones were quite the thing and television had not even been contemplated...We got to be pretty good 45 players and in the neighborhood regular games were played for groceries and small cash prizes. Some of us couldn't carry a tune in a bucket but those with musical inclinations were forever exchanging the words and music of popular songs...As for sports, we had no proper equipment but we managed to field a pretty fair baseball team playing a series every year with the boys from the Coke Oven district.*<sup>23</sup>

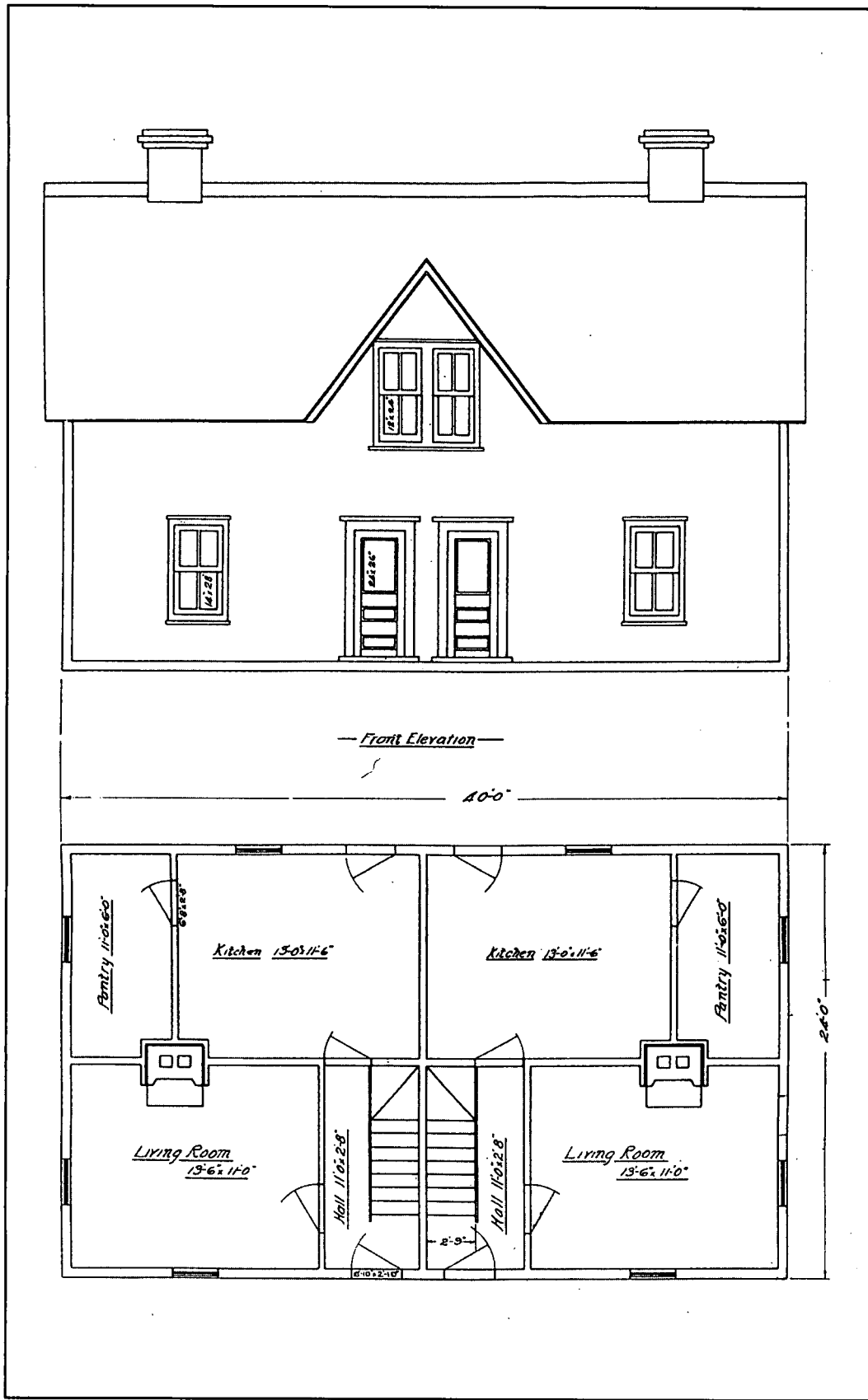
There was much interaction between the Richmond Street rows and the Victoria Road rows: people worked together in the mill's departments, they went to the same churches, drank in the nearby Whitney Pier Clubs or local Legion, and played baseball and other games on the streets and nearby fields.

The exteriors tell us that people made a number of cosmetic modifications on the company houses only after the houses were purchased from the company in the late 1940s (Fig. 10). Some of the changes made after this date include: enclosing verandahs, painting

Fig. 8  
Victoria Road row houses



**Fig. 9**  
 Floor plan and front  
 elevation of Victoria  
 Road houses (Beaton  
 Institute, University  
 College of Cape Breton)



**Fig. 10**  
 Photograph of  
 Richmond Street  
 house in 1950s  
 (from Ray  
 Muise's family  
 photograph  
 album)



**Fig. 11**  
 Decorative iron  
 work, Richmond  
 Street



**Fig. 12**  
 Collection of  
 family photos in  
 front room of  
 Muise house,  
 Richmond Street



shingles and trim, siding the homes with aluminum and vinyl, insulating, digging out the basements to install central heating, and reconstructing the end walls of the foundations. The verandahs speak of people communicating with each other. It was a place for resting, doing household chores, relaxing and observing each other's behavior.<sup>24</sup> Residents say that much time was spent on the verandahs before the widespread popularity of radio and television. A recent development in the neighborhood is the use of decorative iron work on the verandahs (Fig. 11). A local blacksmith repaired one verandah with iron railings made in his Whitney Pier shop; neighbors borrowed the idea and have begun to copy this decorative technique for their own verandahs.

While the front yard consists of a metre or so of grass with some shrubs, bushes and trees, the use of the backyard was for a coal and coke storage shed, an outhouse and a garden. As I mentioned earlier, the back alley behind the houses was a service lane, a pathway for children, a place for keeping garbage and ashes and a place for a horseshoe pitch.

While the exteriors of houses and the landscape reveal some of the patterns of the lifestyle of steelworking families, the interiors provide some clues to the way in which people assert their individuality. For example, each house has its collection of family photographs and other mementos in the front room, either on a bureau, on top of the mantle over the fireplace, or on the piano (Fig. 12). In the early years of the twentieth century, pipe organs were also used for this purpose. Ray Muise's photographs reveal significant weddings and portraits of family members alongside autographed baseball cards. Ray is an avid baseball fan who is able to offer many stories about the local Colliery League of Cape Breton, a semi-professional league that operated in the 1930s and 1940s with imported players from the United States. It is the front room, sometimes called "the parlour" of the house, where this form of display is most prevalent. Sometimes used when guests came to visit, it was often employed for other purposes:

*It was just another room, we never could afford fancy furniture. My poor mother and father they also used to, like, lay in a little extra in the larder for the winter and there's always be a barrel of apples in there and a half a barrel of pork and whatever you could get, meats. And you stored it in the front room, yea. We didn't have Duncan Fife, we didn't know who he was then, we don't care either. Fancy furniture was never part of the decor around here.<sup>25</sup>*



Other informants say that the front room sometimes doubled as a bedroom, especially if the household kept boarders, a common practice in the neighborhood in the first half of the twentieth century. While the room functioned as an area of display, it doubled as a storage room and as a bedroom when required. This working-class variation deviates from the standard image of the front room presented in many nineteenth-century pattern books as "the repository for the most elegant and artistic objects" and the most formal room of the house.<sup>26</sup>

While the front room or parlour contains images of the Muise family, the living room's walls include plaques received from friends upon retirement, photographs of horse races and winners, photographs of grandchildren and a crucifix. The small living room is an extensively used room: it is the place where the television is kept and where the large, floor-model radio was once situated. Comfortable chairs and small couches are the furniture of this room. One must walk through the living room from the front entry of the houses before entering the kitchen, making this a heavily traveled thoroughfare in the house. In the bedrooms (the more private areas), the only decorative items of ornamentation besides the paper or paint over the plaster and lath, and the furniture are items such as holy pictures and crucifixes. In a sense, the walls of this house are like a life encyclopedia, offering a visual expression of some of the life experiences and significant events of this family.

Some of these interior objects tell us that for many residents of this area, family is important. Many of the significant objects centre around family members, whether children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters or more distant relatives. In addition, various sports activities are also significant: baseball, hockey and darts trophies abound in many homes. Some are placed on display in windows so fellow citizens can view these achievements. Images of rural beauty also abound, particularly images of places such as the Margaree Valley, Cape Breton and the Mira region of Cape Breton. This is an important point, for many steelworking and mining families originally came to the industrial towns from the many rural areas of Cape Breton Island. Many steelworkers have retained a connection to these areas through the building of summer cabins in places such as the Mira and Margaree Rivers of Cape Breton Island. Work is also significant: plaques on walls relate to work situations and events such as retirement. The message inherent in these objects is that while

family and sporting events are extremely important, steelworkers also take great pride in their arduous and difficult work.

While the walls of houses tell us about many aspects of the daily lives of a steel family, there are other issues about which the objects are silent. Interviews reveal that sharing amongst neighbors was an important feature of this neighborhood. For example, one informant says:

*And then my poor father he used to go to Sydney River and he'd come home in the spring of the year with a wagon full of gaspereaux, and, it was just like a, well, hard to describe, but he'd be coming down the street and he'd be dishing them out by the pan full as he goes along, almost every other door, to whoever wanted them. It'd be the same way, near the ice in the fall and he'd be out getting eels, he used to get eels. As soon as he'd come home he'd deliver them from door to door...<sup>27</sup>*

Sharing of gaspereaux and eels — a special food for many — was a way of connecting the community. Indeed sharing in various ways — from helping to build a fence to providing food for neighbors at wakes and funerals — was a common feature of this neighborhood.

But all neighbors were not treated with the same respect. Old hurts take a long time to heal and some go back for generations. For example, I asked one informant if there was much rivalry in the neighborhood between the two streets — Victoria Road and Richmond Street. The reply:

*I don't think there was rivalry, but this is a hard thing to talk about...Some of the houses were occupied by, well, people who scabbed during the strike in 1923 and some of the residents here in these houses were blacklisted by the company and put out of some of these houses....well I know when I was a kid I used to hear them talk about them you know that there was certain families put out of these houses because of that strike. And some of their famous scabs moved into them. Now I don't have to tell you Richard that there was animosity between these people and you know, like my poor father used to say, if the milk goes sour, send it to so and so, and don't give them anything else...And it lived with them until it went to their grave, and you know the stigma is still there on some of their families.<sup>28</sup>*

Old wounds, particularly ones created during strikes, do take a long time to heal. In this strong union neighborhood, scabs — people who cross picket lines during strikes — are not treated



**Fig. 13**  
John Murphy house,  
Richmond Street

with much respect. The animosity directed at particular families has passed from one generation to another.<sup>29</sup>

### Conclusion

These houses and this neighborhood tell us something about how houses are transformed into homes in this industrial community (Fig. 13). One generalization is that it takes much more than a coat of paint to transform these prefabricated spaces into meaningful places or homes where life is lived. Continuing the rural pattern of gardening and animal husbandry was an important feature of the neighborhood in the early years of the twentieth century. Some minor structural changes in the 1940s — constructing foundation end walls and digging out basements, adding insulation, bricking up fireplaces, and adding vinyl and aluminum siding — made these houses more comfortable for the residents. The work was usually done by the owners of the homes,

or with the assistance from neighbors, only after the dwellings were purchased from the company. A whole underground economy was at work as well: services were regularly exchanged and reciprocal arrangements were the norm.

The way in which houses are furnished and decorated also adds much to the creation of homes. Photographs, plaques, paintings, wall hangings, and wall papers are also ways in which rooms are personalized and individualized, telling much about family history, life's experiences and some of the important moments of a mill family. Oral narratives about past events of significance to the community, such as strikes and strikebreakers, also help to create a neighborhood and sense of belonging in this community.

The neighborhood is now undergoing change again. In the past, every neighborhood family worked in the mill. Today, many residents are retired from the plant and others were laid off while the steel plant has been modernized, transforming it from a blast furnace mill to an electric-arc steelmaking process.<sup>30</sup> One resident quipped, "When I grew up here they were company houses, now they're duplexes; and now I don't live near the steel plant any more, I live in Grecoville," referring to a national pizza chain recently established in the neighborhood. Even though the neighborhood is changing, the buildings, yards and artifacts continue to provide insights into some of the important values that lie at the heart of industrial communities: hard work, competition in sports and pastimes, loyalty to family and neighbors, and sharing of resources and time. By looking at some of the ways houses are transformed into homes in this neighborhood, we begin to see some of the sinew that connects people in our world, as it is shaped by the powerful forces of industrialization.

### NOTES

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2. T. W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880–1910," in *The Acadiensis Reader* (vol. II), *Atlantic Canada After Confederation*, ed. P. A. Buckner and David Frank (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1985), 176–201; Del Muise, "The Making of an Industrial Community: Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1867–1900," in *Cape Breton Historical Essays*, ed. Don MacGillivray and Brian Tennyson (Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1980), 76–94; Peter Latta and Diane Tye, "Symbols of Change: The Legacy of Two Early Twentieth-Century Nova Scotian Builders," *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 9, no. 2 (1989), 18–34.
3. Richard MacKinnon, "Workers' Housing in Wabana, Bell Island, Newfoundland," *Material History Bulletin* 14 (1982), 67–72. JoAnn Latremouille, *Pride of Home: The Working Class Housing Tradition in Nova Scotia 1749–1949* (Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1986); Graeme Wynn, *Timber Colony: A Historical Geography of Early Nineteenth Century New Brunswick* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Deryck Holdsworth, "Housing the Industrial Worker: Early

- Canadian Examples" (unpublished paper presented at the History of Industrial Housing Conference, Ironbridge, England, November 1984). For a study of Pennsylvania company towns, see: Margaret M. Mulrooney, "A Legacy of Coal: The Coal Company Towns of Southwestern Pennsylvania," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 4, ed. Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press for the Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1991), 130-37; Donald L. Miller and Richard E. Sharpless, *The Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985). See also: Nancy Soloman, "Folk Housing in a Company Town: The Case of Kitzmiller, Maryland" (M.A. thesis, George Washington University, 1985).
4. Alice Gray Read, "Making a House a Home in a Philadelphia Neighborhood," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 2, ed. Camille Wells (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 192.
  5. The word *Ashby* derives from a farm of this same name situated in this area owned by Henry Davenport in the mid-nineteenth century. Thanks to Dr. Robert Morgan, Director of Research and Development and Archivist, University College of Cape Breton, for providing this information.
  6. Joe Black, "Hunkey Town: The Immigrant Family and Its Company Home" (unpublished paper, p. 1, Beaton Institute, University College of Cape Breton).
  7. Ernest R. Forbes and Del A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto, Buffalo, London and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993), 167.
  8. Ron Crawley, "Class Conflict and the Establishment of the Sydney Steel Industry, 1899-1904" in *The Island: New Perspectives on Cape Breton History, 1713-1990*, ed. Ken Donovan (Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1990), 145.
  9. *Ibid.*, 150.
  10. *Ibid.*, 154.
  11. Bryce Stewart, "Social Survey of Sydney," paper presented at First Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, Ottawa, September 4-6, 1913, p. 13. Beaton Institute Archives, University College of Cape Breton.
  12. For a video presentation of the steel plant showing the coke ovens in operation see: Making Steel, Beaton Institute, University College of Cape Breton and The National Film Board, 1993.
  13. See Alexander Fenton and Bruce Walker, *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981), 153. Fenton and Walker call these sideboards "Welsh dressers." See also John J. Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study in Cultural Transfer and Adaptation*, University of Toronto, Department of Geography Research Publication No. 12 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 142-43, 254; Alan Gailey, "Kitchen Furniture," *Ulster Folklife* 12 (1966), 18-34.
  14. *Ibid.*, 142.
  15. Sigurd Erixon, "West European Connections and Culture Relations," *Folkliv* 2 (1938): 137-72.
  16. Raymond Muise, interview with author Richard MacKinnon, 115 Richmond Street, Sydney, Nova Scotia, 21 May 1992.
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  22. See, for example, Sir Andrew Rae Duncan, *Report of Provincial Royal Commission on Coal Mining Industry in Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1926).
  23. McCormack, "Reminiscences," 2.
  24. Gwendolyn Wright discusses the advent of the verandah in her: *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 24. She says, "In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, spacious porches of various shapes and sizes appeared around the house. These were entrance porticos and simple back service porches, open verandahs (galleries along the side of the building), piazzas (Americanism for verandah) and upper floor balconies. These porches had specific uses: resting, dining or doing household chores, watching the afternoon sun, or relaxing in the evening breeze of summer. Ornamentation became more elaborate by the 1880s: support posts were rounded rather than squared off, and were heavy with detailing," p. 24.
  25. Ray Muise interview, 21 May 1992.
  26. Wright, *Moralism*, 32.
  27. Interview with Richmond Street resident by author Richard MacKinnon, Sydney, Nova Scotia, n.d.
  28. Tape-recorded interview by Richard MacKinnon, Sydney, Nova Scotia, n.d.
  29. For a discussion of some of the strikes during this period, see: Ernest R. Forbes and Del A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto, Buffalo, London and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993), 233-271.
  30. The Sydney Steel Plant has recently been purchased by a Chinese company, MinMetals, and its long-term future remains uncertain.