

TIDNISH DOCK

PROVINCIAL PARK

*Eastern Terminus of the Historic
Chignecto Marine Transport Railway*



Located near Tidnish Cross Roads, Cumberland County, Tidnish Dock Provincial Park marks the eastern terminus of the historic Chignecto Marine Transport Railway - one of Nova Scotia's most ambitious engineering projects.

THE CHIGNECTO MARINE TRANSPORT RAILWAY

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are connected by the Isthmus of Chignecto, a flat, low-lying area largely covered by marsh and swamp. In 1686, the Governor of New France reported that a ship canal could easily be cut across the isthmus, greatly reducing the sailing distance between Port Royal, the French capital of Acadia, and Quebec City. The Governor's report was to be the first of many proposals advanced over the next 200 years to move vessels across the isthmus.

In 1875, Henry G.C. Ketchum, a brilliant engineer from New Brunswick, first suggested the idea of transporting vessels across the isthmus by railway as a means of reducing the sailing distance between ports on the St. Lawrence River and those on the Bay of Fundy and Atlantic seaboard of the United States. Ketchum's proposal called for the construction of a 28 kilometre (17 mile) long double-tracked railway from Fort Lawrence, on the Bay of Fundy, across the isthmus to Tidnish Dock, on the Northumberland Strait.

Docks at either end of the marine railway would allow vessels to be floated over huge wheeled cradles which would be lifted by hydraulic presses to the level of the railway. The vessel, secured within the cradle, would then be hauled across the isthmus by two locomotives. On reaching the other side, vessel and cradle would be lowered into the water until the vessel floated free.

In 1888, after several years of negotiation and study, the federal government agreed to subsidize the operation of the marine railway on the condition that Ketchum complete the project within a fixed time frame.



H.G.C. Ketchum

CUMBERLAND COUNTY MUSEUM

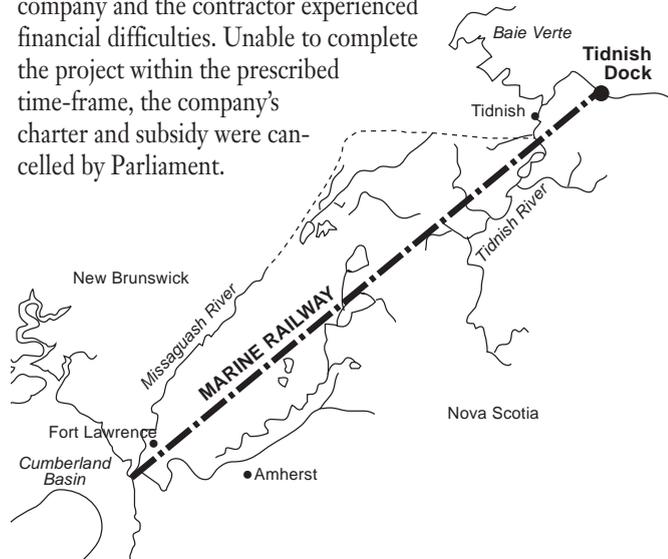


PARKS CANADA

Ketchum's firm, the Chignecto Marine Transport Railway Company, promptly hired a contractor who, in October, 1888, commenced work on the project. A miniature city quickly sprang up near Amherst to house and feed the 4000 men employed on this mammoth undertaking.

Almost as soon as construction began, unforeseen difficulties arose. Unusually heavy rains created near-flood conditions over much of the line, delaying work for several months. One boggy section, over 1.6 kilometres in length, had to be excavated and filled with rocks to a depth of 18 metres (60 feet) to form a solid footing. Even the flow of the Tidnish River had to be altered.

Despite these challenges, work progressed on the marine railway and, by 1891, a majority of the project had been completed. In that year, however, work was suspended when both the company and the contractor experienced financial difficulties. Unable to complete the project within the prescribed time-frame, the company's charter and subsidy were cancelled by Parliament.





PARKS CANADA

Tidnish Dock circa 1890

For several years Ketchum tried unsuccessfully to complete the work. Without the subsidy, however, it was impossible to attract additional funds. The marine railway was subsequently dismantled and sold to pay creditors. Among the few remains which stand tribute to Ketchum's grand scheme are the railbed, a stone culvert over the Tidnish River, and remnants of the dock at Tidnish Dock Provincial Park.

HERITAGE RESOURCE PROTECTION

Tidnish Dock Provincial Park was established in 1982 to protect and interpret the eastern terminus of the marine railway, and to provide complementary recreational opportunities and services. The Province of Nova Scotia has also designated three sections of the marine railway as a provincial heritage site, including a portion of Tidnish Dock Provincial Park, the Tidnish River bridge and the Fort Lawrence dock. As a further tribute to one of Nova Scotia's most ambitious engineering projects, in 1989 the Chignecto Marine Railway was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Site by the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering.

RECREATION

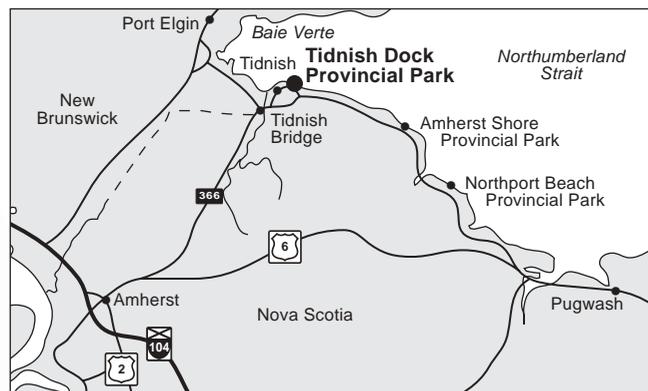
In addition to its historic significance, Tidnish Dock Provincial Park also includes a small unsupervised beach, a picnic area and offers scenic views of the Northumberland Strait. Facilities include vault toilets, change rooms, water and interpretive panels. A five kilometre (three mile) walking trail, developed by the Tidnish Crossroads Community Association, extends from

the park to the Tidnish River. A unique suspension bridge enables hikers to cross the river.

Fifteen kilometres (nine miles) southeast of the park, on Route 366, Amherst Shore Provincial Park offers camping, flush toilets and showers, a playground and access to the Northumberland Strait. Five kilometres (three miles) further southeast on Route 366 is Northport Beach Provincial Park which provides excellent swimming opportunities in Nova Scotia's warmest ocean waters. Vault toilets, change houses, water, and a picnic area are provided for the enjoyment of park visitors.

HOW TO GET TO THE PARK

Tidnish Dock Provincial Park is located 0.4 km (1/4 mile) north of Route 366 at Tidnish Cross Roads, Cumberland County. It is approximately 18 kilometres (11 miles) northeast of Amherst.



A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO PARK VISITORS

Nova Scotia's provincial parks are provided for your benefit and enjoyment. Help protect Tidnish Dock Provincial Park by leaving it as you found it so that future visitors may enjoy the park as you have.

Flowers, trees, shrubs and even rocks are part of the park's natural heritage. Please do not damage or remove these resources.

Remember to practice safe swimming as the beach is unsupervised. Never swim alone. Children should be watched closely whenever they are in or near the water. Inflatable swimming aids should not be used.



TIDNISH DOCK PROVINCIAL PARK

To Tidnish Bridge and Rt. 366



Baie Verte



Church of the Good Shephard



To Tidnish Cross Roads and Rt. 366



Parking



Picnic Area



Toilets



Unsupervised Beach



Change Rooms



Walking Trail



Interpretation



Marine Railway

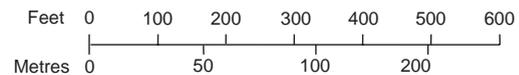


Park Boundary



Northumberland Strait

Scale 1" = 300'



For Additional Information:

Parks and Recreation Division
Department of Natural Resources
R.R. 1, Belmont
Colchester County, Nova Scotia
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Natural Resources



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