FIFTY YEARS IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW

Pilot Officer F.M. Covert, ca. 1943

Frank Manning Covert

Fifty Years in the Practice of Law

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Editor's Foreword

Autobiographical literature on Canadian lawyers is in its infancy. There are the memoirs of a former attorney general of Ontario, a prominent Toronto criminal defence counsel, a corporate executive, a federal Progressive Conservative politician, and an early Jewish lawyer in Halifax; that is all.[1] Biographical literature, on the other hand, is flourishing.[2] The author of these memoirs was, from 1955 to 1975, one of Canada's leading corporation lawyers. Frank Covert's continuing celebrity was such that David Ricardo Williams, deeming Covert to be "the logical choice for the Atlantic region," included him in his collective biography of élite lawyers, each of whom "attained, in his own particular way, the pinnacle of the legal profession not only in his own province and region but also in the entire country."[3] Covert's memoirs, not written for publication, are an important historical document shedding considerable light on how corporation lawyers came both to epitomize the legal élite and to dominate the business élite in post-war Canada.[4]

Frank Covert was both businessman and businessman's lawyer. Indeed he was so highly respected as a corporate lawyer that he exercised more power and influence in the business world than most businessmen. In his time one of Canada's top 100 bank directors and a senior director of the Royal Bank, Covert was a leading figure in the business establishment. A linchpin of the Canadian corporate elite, in Atlantic Canada he defined it. In the field of industrial relations, which he introduced and made his own, Covert was a pioneer – years ahead of his time. He "sold" the idea of trade unions to sceptical Maritime tycoons like R.A. Jodrey and for thirty years personally negotiated collective agreements on behalf of management,

even occasionally accepting unions as clients. Covert's clients included the most prominent regional corporate capitalists of his time – Jodrey, Ralph Bell, George Chase, Fred C. Manning and Frank Sobey. Like Jodrey, whose conglomerate remains private and family-owned, Covert was a proud and loyal Maritimer who was at home on Bay Street but believed that business could be done and was worth doing in the Maritimes.[5] So valued was Covert's counsel that he served not only as a director of many important national companies, such as Sun Life, but also as president or vice-president of regional concerns.[6] If Frank Covert was Nova Scotia's Mr Lawyer,[7] then it was because he was also Atlantic Canada's Mr Businessman and Mr Financier. He recognized that corporation law – especially securities regulation and income tax – was of supreme importance to business development and he exploited that knowledge to the benefit of every company with which he was associated as legal adviser or director or – frequently – both. He was more corporate captain than "corporate navigator" – a lawyer whom big businessmen trusted so completely that they not only depended on his legal and financial advice; they also invited him to organize, reorganize, or run their companies – and talk to organized labour on their behalf. Though for him business was not in any degree beyond the law, Frank Covert truly was "more than a lawyer."[8] He was himself, in Peter Newman's memorable phrase, one of Canada's greatest businessmen in whom the flame of power burned brightly.

Frank Manning Covert was born in Canning, NS on 13 January 1908,[9] the second son and third of four children of Archibald Menzies Covert MD and Minnie Alma Clarke.[10] Dr Covert had followed his parents from New Brunswick to Nova Scotia, settling first in Lakeville (Kings County), before removing to Canning after his marriage in 1904 to a farmer's daughter. Originally the site of an Acadian village, Canning had been given a new lease on life by the arrival of American Loyalists in 1783. By 1908 it was a thriving riverport village. Archibald Covert, like many small-town doctors of his time and ours, had political ambitions. Though the Covert family were stalwart Conservatives,[11] Dr Covert defected to the Liberals – the party of his wife's family[12] – and served for twelve years as a municipal councillor in Kings County. He went on to become a Liberal member of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly and then of the Legislative Council (until 1928 the provincial senate), before dying prematurely of cirrhosis in 1922, aged fifty-two. Dr Covert's

legacy to Frank was threefold: the Liberal Party of F.W. Borden, Wilfrid Laurier, and William Lyon Mackenzie King – Frank's devotion to which never faltered; the learned professions, though Frank would follow a different one from his father; and diary-keeping, which turned Frank into a lifelong documenter of himself. Frank was fourteen when Dr Covert died; the teenager, who was the apple of his father's eye, never got over the loss. Throughout his life he was always the son, never the father, and this attitude inevitably coloured and complicated his relationship with his own children.

Had his father lived longer, Frank Covert would have followed a profession other than law. His choice, approved by his father but vetoed after his father's death by his formidable mother, was engineering. Though Dr Covert's family was Church of England,[13] his mother's was Baptist, so, by way of compromise, Covert went to Presbyterian Dalhousie rather than the University of King's College or Acadia University. Arriving in Halifax in 1924, Covert lived at Mount Amelia in Dartmouth with his Covert first cousins. Among them was eleven-year-old Mary Louise Stuart (Mollie), with whom he would later fall in love and marry in 1934. Walter Harold Covert, Dr Covert's older brother, was an élite corporate lawyer and a power in the Conservative Party. Young Frank was impressed with city life, but not with Dalhousie. He intensely disliked and therefore did not distinguish himself in the arts course. His brilliant performance in the Law School, however, showed how wise was his mother's choice of career for him. Not only did he win the coveted Smith Shield for advocacy in the moot court; he carried off the university medal in law on graduating two years later.

In 1927 Covert had met the person who would dominate his life for the next three decades. James McGregor Stewart was the fastest-rising star on the Halifax legal firmament.[14] A mere thirty-eight years old, he would become head of his law firm – now Stewart McKelvey Stirling Scales – before the year was out and eventually the foremost Canadian corporation lawyer of his day. Small wonder that W.H. Covert, standing in loco parentis, chose Stewart, a close business and political associate, as the right person to whom to article his "green country boy," as Covert described himself. It was the beginning of an intense father-son relationship which endured until Stewart's death in 1955. When Covert was called to the bar in February 1930, he was prepared to return home to practise in Canning, which then had no resident barrister. Instead Stewart

offered him a place in his own firm, which Covert gratefully accepted. He never looked back.

Stewart's offer to Covert was not made from mere generosity. The cornerstone of Stewart's human resources development policy was to recruit annually the winner of the university medal in law, the crème de la crème of the rising generation of the legal profession. Stewart took the view that trial work was good exercise for someone becoming a corporate lawyer. It was corporation law that mattered, for it separated the men from the boys, the wheat from the chaff. As Stewart's protégé, Covert was drawn into the business world early on. By 1936, when he became a full partner in the law firm, Covert was well out of the courtroom and into the boardroom, where he would make his name as a solicitor and counsel and, in due course, as a director and executive.

When the Second World War broke out, in the autumn of 1939, Covert was over thirty and both a husband and a father. He went to Ottawa in 1940 to work in the Department of Munitions and Supply (M&S), rising to be assistant general counsel in the legal branch. But a desk job was not enough; he wanted nothing less than active service overseas. Stung to the quick by the parliamentary Opposition's allegation that lawyers in the bureaucracy were shirkers and deeply affected by the accidental deaths of both his infant daughter and his brother-in-law (an Army officer), Covert enlisted in the RCAF. He used his influence with C.D. Howe, the all-powerful "minister of everything," to be sent overseas, where he flew numerous bombing missions as a navigator. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and was on active service when created a king's counsel in 1944.

At war's end Covert resumed the practice of law in the firm from which he had been absent for five years. In 1946 his name was added to the shingle, where it would remain for forty-three years. He resisted repeated offers to move to Toronto to join Borden & Elliot (now Borden Ladner Gervais LLP). Assiduously studying developments in business law during his absence, he quickly identified industrial relations as a growth area and was the first corporate lawyer in Nova Scotia to appreciate how the Trade Union Act could benefit the vested interests. He became a skilled and successful collective bargainer on behalf of management, so his services were much in demand. The brains behind the breaking of the strike against

National Sea Products (now High Liner Foods Inc.) in 1947, Covert was immediately rewarded with a directorship in the company.

By 1957, two years after J. McG. Stewart's death, Covert was numbered by Peter Newman among "Canada's biggest big businessmen." He was astute enough not to accept the presidency of the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation (predecessor of the now both defunct Sysco and Devco), which he knew was on the verge of collapse. He was also wise to decline the presidency of Industrial Estates Limited (now Nova Scotia Business Inc.) depriving his friend Conservative Premier Robert Stanfield of political kudos. In 1949 he replaced the former minister of finance and justice, J.L. Ilsley, as counsel to the federal Royal Commission on Transportation. Ilsley's House of Commons seat was his for the taking, and only the personal intervention of Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent was sufficient to relieve the pressure on Covert to run in the constituency where he had grown up. Covert could even have replaced the late Angus L. Macdonald as premier in 1954, if he had been interested in the job. Despite their different political affiliations, Covert had learned from Stewart that the corporate lawyer performs more useful party service by financing political parties and party leaders than by running for political office. Covert's faith in the Liberal Party was never really tested, not even in 1972, when the Liberal government nationalized Nova Scotia Light and Power Company Limited (now Emera Energy), an important client of the firm, as well as an important directorship of Covert's. Though he forgave Premier Gerald Regan, Covert did not live to see Nova Scotia Power reprivatized in 1992 and a member of his law firm, Gerald Godsoe QC, appointed its inaugural president.

Among the board memberships that devolved on Covert immediately after J. McG. Stewart's death in 1955 was that of Dalhousie University. Stewart had been chair of the university from 1937 to 1943. Covert served for 21 years, resigning only in 1976 to forestall a possible conflict of interest with Nova Scotia Technical College, of which he had accepted appointment as chair of the board. At Dalhousie Covert was instrumental in creating the office of chancellor, and in having his friend and mentor, C.D. Howe, appointed to the post. The university's faculty pension scheme was Covert's brainchild. Among other Halifax institutions that Covert served were Saint Mary's University, whose transition from a religious to a

secular institution he supervised; the Sisters of Charity, whom he served as counsel and as member of the financial advisory board; and the Halifax Infirmary, where, as chair of the board, he assisted the conversion to public ownership and where, years later, he chose to die. Covert was the lawyer of choice for official Roman Catholicism in Halifax. He also served as president of the board of management of the Children's Hospital (now IWK Health Centre).

Like his mentor Stewart before him, Covert rose from articled clerk to head of the firm. He served in that capacity from 1963 to 1978, his 70th year. Frank Covert went on working for as long as possible, and went down fighting against a disease that gave no quarter – leukaemia. "How the mighty have fallen," he remarked towards the end, which came on 1 November 1987. Ironically, René Lévesque, the former Parti québécois premier of Quebec, died the same day. Covert, a Trudeaumaniac *avant la lettre*, was committed to keeping Quebec within Canada – but not at any price. Just as he had supported the Patriation initiative of 1980–2, so Covert opposed the Meech Lake Accord. Indeed, his last letter to the editor of a Halifax newspaper, written less than a month before his death, dealt with exactly that subject.[15] Small wonder that he described himself, without exaggeration, as a "passionate Canadian."

Frank Covert's memory has not been well served by the two principal published accounts of his life. David Williams's biographical essay misrepresents him as being a trial lawyer.[16] Journalist Harry Bruce's authorized life,[17] a popular biography that draws liberally on Covert's memoirs, is entertaining but superficial. By far the best account of Covert's brilliant career is his own. So many people told him he should write about his fifty years in the practice of law, that in January 1980 he began to do so – just to see what it was like. He started reading his old diaries and making notes, but the flood of memories was so great that he found he could not let go. He read the highlights of previous years and began compiling a five-decade chronicle of them, 1929 to 1979. It was while collecting this information that he really formed the idea of composing an autobiography and set to work on 3 February 1980.[18] Written in longhand and neither reread nor revised, Covert's stream-of-consciousness memoirs are a chronicle of seventy years. Typed by Covert's faithful secretary, Beulah Mosher, the manuscript runs to over 500 typewritten pages. Its title, "From the Diaries of Frank M. Covert: Fifty Years in the Practice of Law," is revealing; Covert

saw his life as his career. Though the manuscript is loosely based on his diaries and includes an abridgment of them, Covert was blessed with a near-photographic memory and his memoirs therefore contain material not found in the original diaries. Covert approached his memoir as he would have done a thick client file – with discipline, candour, and assiduity. Writing them was hard work as he found them stressful psychologically. They are a measure of just how long and how hard he had worked at providing raw material for them. Far from forgetting yesterday, he made remembering it the work of today.

Frank Covert's mother inculcated in him a competitiveness and passion for self-improvement that made him a driven man, an obsessive-compulsive hyperachiever both at work and at play. In his garden – vegetable, of course, not flower – he competed against the seasons, the elements, the rodents, and the last best harvest. Both quality *and* quantity mattered equally to him. Whether at bridge or at golf, he competed less against his opponents than against himself. This attitude of mind accounts for his vicarious interest in competitive sport – baseball, hockey, and horseracing – which he followed with all the enthusiastic attentiveness of the participant he never was. High society and high culture meant nothing to him and he had no intellectual or spiritual life. Still, he knew how to enjoy himself. The only way he could relax was by working. He profoundly loved his family and was loved by them. Yet he ignored them at the same time and remained psychically disengaged from them. Unlike two of their Covert cousins,[19] none of his four surviving children – two sons and two daughters – followed him into the legal profession. The standard that Covert set for himself was attainable by him but not by others. Ultimately it was his clients, not his family, who mattered more. He achieved as much as he did not because he was brilliant, though he *was* brilliant, but because he worked nearly all the time. In fact he was serenely proud of his workaholism. A non-drinker, non-smoker, and fanatical exerciser, he was instinctively hostile to anything that might interfere with his work. He was enamoured of anyone who was, or who could be converted into a client – something his family could not be. For Frank Covert the solicitor-client relationship was the most intimate, most gratifying, and most reciprocating of all human relationships.

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Frank Covert's memoirs were not written for publication and could not have been published without the approval and assistance of my good friend W. Michael S. Covert and Mary L. S. Covert, respectively Frank Covert's eldest child and his widow. Michael provided me with unrestricted access to his father's diaries and other papers and on every occasion went out of his way to be helpful and encouraging. His efforts have ensured that his father's uniquely valuable archive will be preserved. Mrs Covert candidly shared recollections of her late husband and his family and, in particular, made a generous grant in aid of publication.

J. William E. Mingo QC, formerly chair of the executive committee of Stewart, MacKeen & Covert (now Stewart McKelvey Stirling Scales) provided me with complimentary copies of both Covert's memoirs and his unpublished history of the law firm. Wing Commander Wilbur C. (Wib) Pierce DFC, Covert's wartime comrade-in-arms and lifelong friend, not only read the RCAF chapter and pointed out various editorial errors, but also shared his many vivid recollections and personal papers relating to Number 6 Group, Bomber Command. Dr Gregory P. Marchildon, Canada Research Chair at the University of Regina, reviewed the entire manuscript from the point of view of his own profound knowledge of corporate lawyers and law firms.

In Ottawa I had the benefit of expert research assistance from Susan Villeneuve, Jody Perrun, and Jeff Noakes. Francine Hannam computerized the entire typescript, while Troy Wagner responded graciously to innumerable requests for inter-library loans. My colleagues John MacLeod and Paul Maxner provided valuable information

about Jerome Spevack and Twin Cities Cooperative Dairy, respectively. Karen White, Archivist of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Halifax, Joanna Andow, formerly Archivist of the Sisters of Charity (Mount Saint Vincent Motherhouse), and Carolyn Scanlan, then Archivist of Mount Saint Vincent University, were all extremely courteous and helpful on Roman Catholic matters.

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Barry Cahill
13 April 2004

Author's Preface

I wrote this book from fifty-two years of diaries, which I have faithfully kept. In the beginning I wrote it for my own family and I dedicate it to my wife Mollie and our four children, all of whom I neglected in pursuit of the law. Then, in the course of preparation, and because seventy per cent of my life has been with the firm of Stewart MacKeen & Covert,[1] I decided I owed it to the firm to dedicate the book to them. Accordingly I also dedicate it to the firm, of which I am so proud. I am not proud of the book. I started reasonably well, but after putting in over 400 hours' work, I tired of it and began a history of the firm.[2] By the time I completed that, I did not have the ambition to do much more than summarize the recent years of my life. Sometime I might try to improve it, but I felt I just had to finish it now.

All I can say is that I have loved life, I have loved the practice of law. I have had an affection for the firm beyond anything that anyone can imagine who has not been a part of it. It has given to me, a green country boy, opportunities to meet people, to do things, and to be part of a scene that I could never have hoped for or dreamed of, let alone experienced. I have had wonderful luck in my partners, in my associates, and in the firm staff. All of them have been so kind and thoughtful that I felt I owed it to them to produce this book as part of their history.

Frank M. Covert
13 December 1980

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FIFTY YEARS IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW

"Forget yesterday
Work today
Plan tomorrow"
– *Frank Covert's motto*

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CHAPTER ONE

Apple Tree Landing

I was born in Canning,[1] a village in Kings County, Nova Scotia, in 1908, the son of a country doctor and a farmer's daughter and one of a family of four – two girls and two boys.[2] The Canning I knew was a beautiful little village with a tidal river running through it, nestled at the foot of North Mountain, approximately six or seven miles from Kentville (the shire town of Kings County) and about equidistant from the college town of Wolfville.[3] To the north, one went up the side of North Mountain (which is only about 300 to 500 feet high) to the Lookoff, where there was a house with a small tower on it, which one could ascend and look at the surrounding country. It is indeed a magnificent view – rolling countryside, apple orchards, Cape Blomidon, Paddys Island, Minas Basin, Upper and Lower Canard, Pereaux, Kingsport, Habitant, Starrs Point, and so on. The view is breathtaking, especially at apple blossom time. One can go and see Scots Bay, Baxters Harbour or Halls Harbour, or drive down the road to the foot of Cape Blomidon. One could take the road to Kentville and go to Upper and Lower Canard or Starrs Point, or take the road to Sheffield Mills and Centreville. All of these roads I travelled by wagon, sled, and car with my father to tend his patients.

The river at low tide was a stream not more than fifteen feet wide; at high tide, however, the salt water came up from the Bay of Fundy through Minas Basin and flowed into the river basin and was held back by dykes built by the Acadians. The river at high tide would be at least 100 feet wide between the dykes, and between the dykes and the wharves and cribwork that lined the side of the river next to the town. When the tide was in, the river basin was very pretty;

when the tide was out, it was chocolate-coloured marsh mud. These dykes, which protected vast meadowlands, were eight to ten feet high and made of earth and marsh mud, interlaced with tree branches, mainly willow, I believe. Thus at high tide a broad river formed, which enabled three-masted schooners to be launched from the shipyard, and the ferries, *Brunswick* and later the *Kipawo*, to sail in at high tide, unload, settle down into the marsh mud, and then sail away when the tide rose again.

Nothing obstructed the river from its mouth on Minas Basin to where it reached the road leading into Canning. In place there was what the townspeople called an aboiteau (from the French *abbatis*, a breastwork of felled trees or bent saplings). It consisted of a sluice with gates, which were closed by the force of the incoming tide and which prevented the tide going beyond the gates, thus preserving the meadowlands. When the tide went out, the gates were forced open by the pressure of the water, which had backed up in the little river on the other side of the gates. It was a sight to see the tide rising over thirty feet, then the little river of fresh water growing, the tide going out of the big river, the three gates opening, and the water rushing out with great force, and the water level of the little river going down.

The little river wound its way through lush meadows. About one and a half miles upstream lay a swimming-hole we boys called the Red Bank; at high tide the water fell into a place we called the deep, which was over everyone's head. So at high tide we would go to the Red Bank, where everyone swam in the bare pelt. It was a good place to learn to swim because there was the low, which was shallow, and the deep, where one ventured when one learned to swim. At high tide a few of the boys swam in the Big River (we called it the Canning River – its proper name was the Habitant River). Though clear at high tide, the Big River was where all the sewage was deposited, so it was regarded as unsafe by the doctors in town.

At one time Canning had been called Apple Tree Landing, but that was hardly a name to suit the ideas of the village fathers when it became a thriving little town. So about 1830 the name was changed to *Canning*, after the late British prime minister. In later years Canning was served by the Dominion Atlantic Railway (a subsidiary of Canadian Pacific), which ran from Kingsport to Kentville and stopped at Canning, Hillaton, Sheffield Mills, and Centreville – a route totalling not more than ten miles. Canning

was also served by a steamboat that ran out of Saint John, New Brunswick, and stopped at Kingsport, Canning, and Wolfville. It had a branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia and many shops – two butcher shops, two hardware stores, two drygoods stores, a drug-store,[4] four grocery stores, a barber-shop, a shoemaker, a post office, and a small hotel. No description of the town could fail to mention that right in the centre of it, at the junction of Main Street and the road leading up to the North Mountain, is a huge monument called The Harold Borden Monument.[5] It is in honour of the only son of Sir Frederick William Borden, minister of militia and defence in the Laurier government. Atop the monument is the bust of Harold, who was killed in the South African War. On one side is a lion's head which spouted drinking water for humans, while on the other was a place for horses to drink and three bronze plaques – one describing the son and the events leading to his death, the other two depicting the scene, complete with snipers in the mountains.

Canning had one factory, which made the Blenkhorn axe,[6] famous internationally for its quality. Many an hour I spent in the axe factory watching the trip-hammers pound the glowing steel into shape; then watching the workers temper the blades, polish and paint them, and finally hang them on nails on a barrel to dry – fresh, shiny black, green, blue, and brown, with just the sharp edge of the shining bright steel left unpainted.

There was a vinegar factory making cider vinegar and, at one time (before it burned down), an apple evaporator.[7] One watched the farmers bring the culled [picked] apples here for pressing and one could drink one's fill – indeed we did, until our stomachs were distended – of the fresh apple juice as it came out of the spout and into the big hogsheads. Canning had at least three apple warehouses serviced by the railway. There the farmers brought their apples to be sorted, graded and packed in barrels holding two and a half to three bushels. It was fascinating to see the apples going along the endless belt and falling off into chutes according to size – the men inspecting them for spots and other defects – and finally being packed in barrels. The first layer was on a piece of cardboard with every apple fitted to fill the bottom, then basket after basket until the barrel was filled and the top layer was again fitted apple by apple. Then the apples were shaken down and over them was placed a heavy paper container filled with excelsior;[8] the barrel head was placed on top, pressed down by a contraption that bore down

evenly until it reached the circular notch keeping the barrelhead in place. Then the two hoops at the top were forced down, so that the barrelhead was held tightly in place; the name and grade of the apple, the name of the grower, and the name of the warehouse were painted on the cover; and the barrel was rolled away ready to ship. It was an assembly line at its best. At lunch-time there were often tests of strength, such as lifting a barrel of apples up over one's head or lifting a barrel of apples off the floor by the chimes.[9]

The town was the centre of an apple-growing district and one saw the farmers pruning, spraying, dusting (a form of spraying), ploughing, and picking. One saw all kinds of apples – from delicious eating apples such as Gravensteins (red and yellow), Cox's orange pippins, ribston pippins, and bishop pippins, russets and northern spies, to apples shipped to England to form the base for jams and jellies such as greenings and fallowaters, starks, etc. There were thirty to forty varieties. All apples were barrelled, not boxed as they are today, and the principal market was England.

Canning also had a sawmill, a cooperage, which made apple and potato barrels, and a blacksmith shop. Above all it had a shipyard, which built four three-masted schooners while I was young. I missed no stage of the work – laying the keel, fashioning, and placing the ribs, planking and caulking, laying and caulking the deck, and erecting the tall masts of Douglas fir, which came from British Columbia; rounding, smoothing, and placing and, finally, the stepping of the masts; then putting up the crosstrees, erecting the topmasts, and mounting the rigging.

How wonderful it was to watch the riggers. And the blacksmith shop making and galvanizing all the fittings. But above all the shipwrights – those skilful carpenters who formed the master's cabin out of teak and mahogany. Then there was the installation of the rudder, the painting of the ship, and finally the launching. Thousands came from all over the county seeking vantage points in order to watch the vessel go down the ways and into the river basin, shooting out into the water and being restrained from crashing into the dykes by huge hawsers. Twice I was on board vessels when they were launched. One knew the ship from stem to stern, having crawled up the rudder-hole, climbed the ladders to the crosstrees (usually on a dare) and watched the young men who shinnied up the hawsers from the crosstrees to the top of the topmast and carved their initials on the ball at the top. One knew every nook and cranny of the vessel and imagined oneself sailing on it to foreign lands.

The regular blacksmith shop (as distinct from the one at the shipyard) was a fascinating place to go to watch the smithy take the old shoes off the horse, peel off a part of the hoof, select the shoe in its rough form, heat it white-hot, bend it, try it on the hoof, and watch it burn, then finally fit it and drive the nails into the hoof. How he handled the horse – his back to the horse's rear, putting the horse's leg up through his split leather apron while never letting the horse back away from or kick him.

For those who wanted to fish or hunt there was trout in the little river and in the streams up on the North Mountain. There were also in the big river eels and tommycod and the occasional flounder or flatfish. Three miles away, at Kingsport, there was fishing for tommycod, eels, smelts, and flounder – not to mention a nice sand beach and swimming when the tide was in. In the woods around the town were weasels, rabbits, skunk, and racoon. On the dykelands there was muskrat. I remember trapping my first muskrat. One set the trap near the hole at the side of the stream, then placed a carrot on a stick protruding from the bank directly over the trap. The animal caught his leg in the trap but its fur was unharmed. Coming down to tend the trap, I was excited to see the chain drawn into the hole; I pulled it out and there was the rat. I flung it up the bank and hit it over the head with the side of my hatchet and killed it. When I got home I skinned it, turned the pelt inside out, and put it over a board to dry and cure. Later the buyers came and haggled over the price.

In the winter there was skating on outdoor ponds – which was enjoyable until one tried to pull on the lumberman's rubbers or moccasins, only to find they were frozen solid. Later the town fathers built a rink, which was a great improvement, for there was a room with a stove in it where one could change. This brought hockey to the town.[10] Canning built up a hockey team, which competed with teams from Wolfville, Kentville, and Windsor in what was known as the Valley League. The town produced teams, which, though they never won the league or a championship, on many occasions carried Windsor (who became Nova Scotia champions) into tie games or close games with scores of 1-0 and 2-1. There were no seats in the arena – one tried to find a place "along the boards" – and the rink was always packed.

On one occasion, when the larger towns got into faster company, Canning put together the Beavers, a junior team, which performed well and played teams from all over the province. In summer there