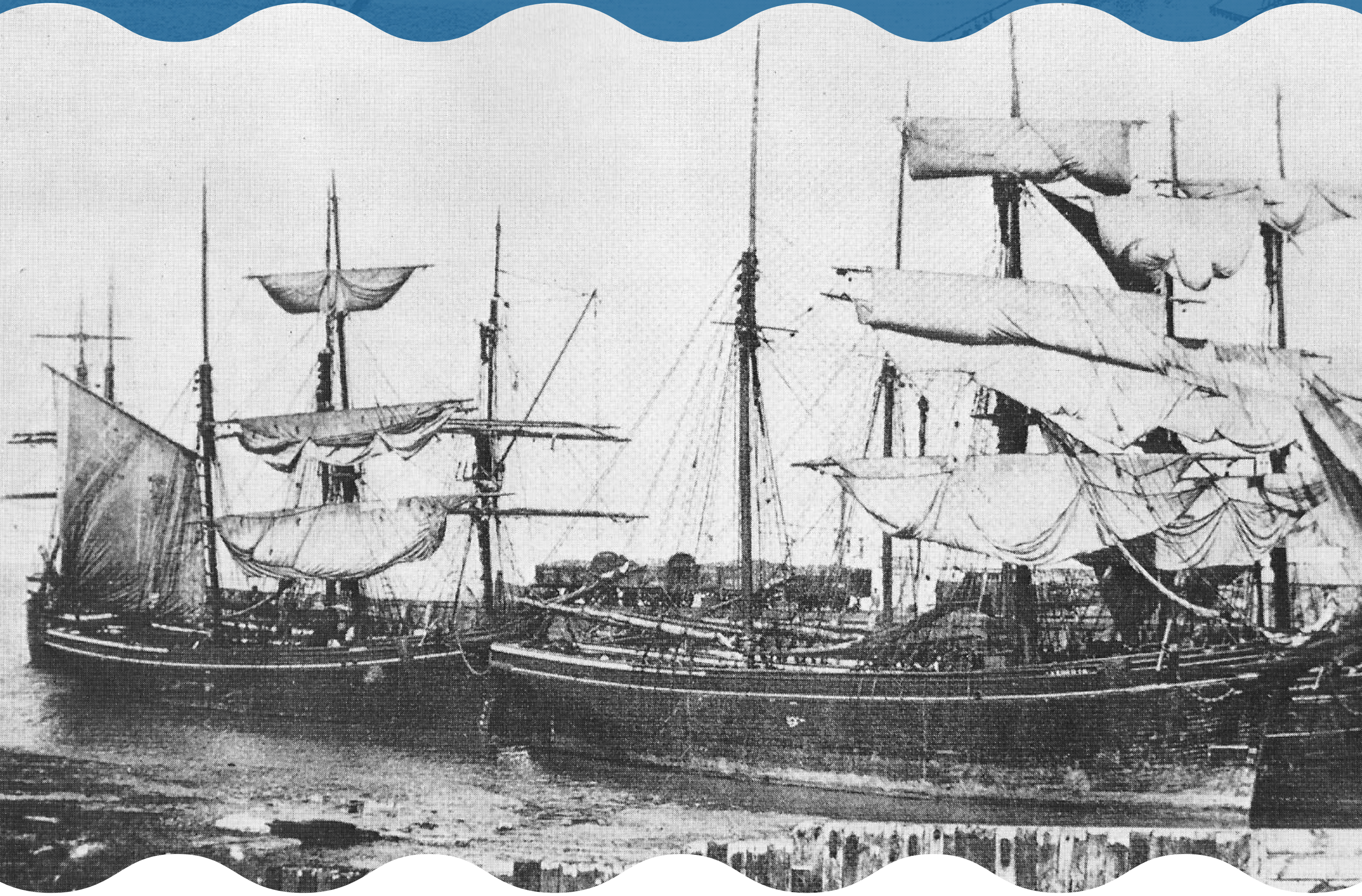




Seaside

CITY SHIPS



Changing times and Modern Day Waterfront

As the 1870s came to a close Summerside's shipyards became silent. With a mass departure of shipbuilding tradesmen Summerside was beginning to look different. The cause? The scarcity of timber drove up production costs and steam-powered, iron-hulled ships started to replace wooden structures.

The turn of the century saw four steamship companies open in the town for summer service. Meanwhile business owners in the town hoped the ships would dock in the town until the harbour froze for the winter; but it was not the case. As the years went by, development of the railway began, and oceanic shipping continued. In the fall the city came to life with major trade taking place after harvest season. Early oats, wheat and potatoes were taken to warehouses or put through mills, bagged, and then carted to the vessels docked at the wharves. Other trade included fish, livestock, and the hauling of coal and other goods.

A growing industry in western PEI, the silver fox era put Summerside on the proverbial map from 1910 - 1939 with the town acting as the financial and administrative centre of the trade. The silver fox industry was a combination of the fur trade and domesticated livestock farming. In the beginning the trade belonged predominantly to six men. By 1912 it has spread across the Island with the establishment of about 200 ranches, most located in Summerside.

Almost anyone with a modest income could get into the trade, by starting a ranch or by purchasing company shares. Ranches varied in their architecture, but a typical ranch consisted of several wired pens measuring around 20'x30' and surrounded by a fence. Each pen had a kennel for the fox to create a den. Ranches also had a feed house and the watchtower (an important vantage point to observe the foxes during breeding season). Come the fall the ranchers made the decision of which animals were ready for pelting. The industry continued to grow and in 1920 the Canadian National Silver Fox Breeders Association became was founded with two Summersiders elected as president and secretary-treasurer. The association's headquarters were based on Water Street. By 1948, pelt prices reached an all-time low as the industry began to collapse. Some ranchers opened their pens and let the foxes out into the woods, others had their animals pelted.

Today, the Summerside waterfront looks vastly different than its historic counterpart. With changes to infrastructure, changing shorelines, and properties, the modern day port serves new purposes.

Prior to 2010, the Government of Canada owned the modern day Port of Summerside. In February of that year, the government transferred ownership to the Summerside Port Corporation Inc., a non-for-profit organization that operates the port, its stockholdings, and shipping import activities. One of the most prominent things imported at the Summerside Port is fertilizer. Meanwhile local fishing operations still use the wharf to land lobster, tuna, and other fresh catches.

The view of the waterfront has also changed. Where once stood the infrastructure to build giant hulls of ships now rests a beloved boardwalk trail, local businesses and wide-open space named after the Green Family Green Shore. Local businesses like The Knot Beach Bar & Rentals and the Humble Barber sit seaside with access to the water for citizens and visitors to enjoy, while several restaurants like The Shipyard Market, the Deckhouse and the Breakwater all serve fantastic views of the harbour partnered with delicious eats. Also based near the port is Spinnaker's Landing, a collective of local businesses that operates during the peak tourism season of June - September.

