

The Inspector General's House
1 Harvey Road
St. John's, Newfoundland



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The Inspector General's House 1 Harvey Road, St. John's, Newfoundland

The first occupant and original owner of 1 Harvey Road was John Roche McCowen, (1844-1908) Policeman and administrator. Born Kilrush, County Clare, Ireland, son of T.A. McCowen he eventually married Elizabeth S. Netten. Before arriving in Newfoundland McCowen had served three years in the British Army and nine years in the Royal Irish Constabulary. He came to St. John's in October 1871 to join the Terra Nova Constabulary. This force had been organized to replace the British garrison which had left Newfoundland in 1870. McCowen served seven years with the Constabulary, and was recognized five times for "special and meritorious services". In 1878 he was awarded the medal of the Royal Humane Society of Great Britain for his role in rescuing the crew of a schooner jammed in ice.



John Roche McCowen

A friend and supporter of Prime Minister William Whiteway, McCowen was appointed Governor of the Newfoundland Penitentiary in 1879. As of 1885 McCowen was listed in the city directory as governor of the St. John's Penitentiary, and was living on Forest Road. Following the Great Fire of 1892, he was made honorary secretary of the fire relief committee. In 1895 McCowen was appointed Inspector-General of the Newfoundland Constabulary.

The building at 1 Harvey Road was constructed in 1895 and fully in use by 1897. It was built just outside the southern boundary of Fort Townsend. At that point, the land on which the building sits was apparently privately owned by J.R. McCowen. A map of Fort Townsend Dated October 3 1907, (City of St. John's Archive map H028 "Plan of parade ground - Fort Townsend") clearly shows the building, accompanied by the inscription "J.R. McCowen/Lease 99 years/Nov 1895". By 1897 the property is listed in the City of St. John's Tax rolls, listed as Freehold land occupied by Inspector McCowen, and the 1898 McAlpine's city directory also shows him as occupant.

In 1903 McCowen became the first Newfoundlander to be made a Companion of the Imperial Service Order. In 1904, he was still listed in the city directory as living at 1 Harvey Road. By 1905, he was the Inspector-General of a force which numbered 89 members, a capacity in which he was responsible for modernizing not only the Constabulary, but also the St. John's fire department. He died in Montreal on February 8, 1908, while being treated for pleuro-pneumonia.

It is presumably at this point that ownership of 1 Harvey Road switched to the government. McCowen's widow Elizabeth left the building and presumably moved to 50 Sheehan Place, where she was recorded as living in 1913. In the 1909 City tax rolls the property is listed as Crown Land and was occupied by Inspector Sullivan. According to both the 1913 and 1915 city directories, the building was at that time the private residence of John Sullivan, Inspector General, Inspector of Constabulary and Chief of the Fire Department. At this time, Sullivan kept his offices in the Court House and the Central Fire Station.

John J. Sullivan (1846-1918) was born Trinity, son of Florence and Annie (Handlon) Sullivan. He was educated St. John's, and married first Annie Donoghue then Mary E. McCourt. Sullivan had joined the newly-formed Newfoundland Constabulary in 1871, and was made sub-inspector by 1885. Following the St. John's Great Fire of 1892 he was named fire commissioner. He later reorganized the St. John's fire department (a division of the constabulary), while continuing to serve as second-in-command of the police. When McCowen was made Inspector General in 1895 there was considerable public support for Sullivan and relations between the two were strained for some years thereafter. After McCowen's death in 1908 Sullivan became acting Inspector General, and the next year was confirmed in the post. He was the first native-born head of the constabulary. Sullivan retired in 1917, a recipient of the Imperial Service Order and the King's Police Medal, and died a year later.



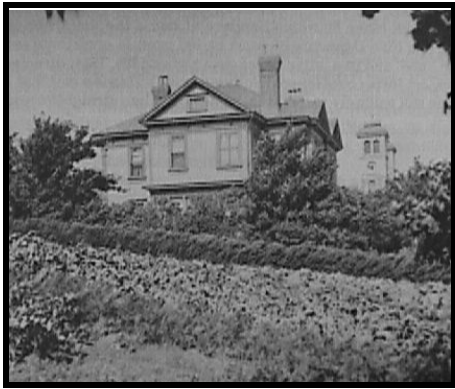
John J. Sullivan

Charles H. Hutchings, KC succeeded Sullivan as Inspector General, and both the 1928 and 1932 city directories list 1 Harvey road as his residence. Hutchings served as Chief of Police from 1917 to 1934, when he retired. He lived in the house with his wife Maude and their daughters. Hutchings was born October 1st, 1869 in St. John's, and was educated at the Methodist College in St. John's and Mouth Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. He was enrolled as a solicitor in December 1891 and was called to the Bar on November 1st, 1892, and became a King's Counsel on May 2nd, 1904. At the time of his appointment to Inspector General Hutchings was Deputy Minister of Justice, a Senior Member of the Bar, and had represented Bay de Verde in the Legislature. He held office during a turbulent period in Newfoundland history, and was involved in the St. John's Riot of 1932. Hutchings was accused of being the person who gave the order for the police to use their batons on the assembled crowd, an accusation he denied.

The building housed the offices of the Police Superintendent until 1935, when it became the District Superintendent's office. The 1936 directory lists it as the chief of police residence under PJ O'Neill, CBE, JP. Patrick J. O'Neill was born at Witless Bay on March 10th, 1883, and entered the police force in 1903. He was promoted to Sergeant in 1907, Head Constable in 1920, Superintendent in 1922, and on August 8th, 1934, was appointed to the new office of Chief of Police and Head of the St. John's Fire Department. He was the first to hold the title of Chief of Police, which was introduced by the Commission of Government in 1934. He served as Chief of Police until 1944, and died December 6th, 1944.

The next family to live in the house was that of Llewellyn Strange, who served as Chief of Police from 1944 to 1950. He moved into the house October 24th, 1945, and lived there with his wife Mary Ellen Strange (nee Morgan), their daughters Daisy and Jane, and their son Gordon. A native of Port de Grave, Strange had risen through the ranks like O'Neill before him, having joined as a Constable in December 1921. He retired in 1956 to become a Member of the House of Assembly for the District of Port de Grave in the Liberal Government of Premier Joseph R. Smallwood.

The residence was occupied by Strange and family up until 1952; at that time it was occupied by the Department of Economic Development under Alfred Valdmanis and also housed the Premier's office under Joseph Smallwood. When the new Confederation Building was opened in July, 1960, those offices moved to the new building. It was at some point in the 1950s that the rear addition to the building was constructed, most likely around the time of its conversion to government offices in 1952. In 1960, the city directory lists the occupants as the Newfoundland Transportation Committee and George J. and Edith Mulrooney. At that time Mulrooney served as Commissioner of the Newfoundland Transportation Committee.



1 Harvey Rd, circa 1970

In 1964 the building was occupied by the Memorial University Fund Drive and had been remodelled inside, with 5 offices and a board room on the first floor with 4 rooms on the second floor. By 1965, the occupant of the building was the Traffic Court. In 1970 the building was still in use by the Traffic Court according to city tax records, but was also still occupied by Mrs. Edith Mulrooney according to the city directory. In 1975 it was occupied by Roy Perry according to the city directory.

Around 1984, the building was taken over by the Estates Division of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and was still used for that purpose as of March 2000.

The building itself is of a fairly unornamented Queen Anne Revival style, with classical elements reflected in the use of pediments and corner pilasters. Eaves brackets shown in the c1970 photograph were not to be found on the building in March of 2000. Much of the exterior work on the building is new, with new clapboard, corner boards, frieze detailing, fire escape, exterior doors and windows throughout. Indeed only one relatively historic window remains intact in the upper storeys, an arched window on the rear second floor of the structure, and even this may have been altered from the original design when the addition was built on the back in the 1950s. The basement windows, protected with iron bars, may be original as well, although the iron bars are most likely not original to the structure.

The front of the building most likely featured two large bays which were probably converted to one larger bay, extending the useable space in the board room/court room. While the exact date this change was made is not known, it was most likely done in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The foundation of the building is cut stone, which may still be seen on the south and east face of the building. The building is of timber construction, with a hip roof pierced by three gables, one pedimented dormer, and a modern prefab chimney.

The interior of the building has been much altered since the time of construction. The main floor has seen the brunt of the renovation work, with most rooms and hallways cut up for office space or altered to create the large board room/court room. The open staircase was partitioned off due to fire regulations, although remnants of the plaster archway can be seen on either side of the new wall that cut the open stairwell in half. There are remnants of original

plaster work throughout, and some original woodwork. Most noticeable in this respect is the newel posts, banisters and balusters on both the main staircase from the first to second floor, and the staircase to the basement.

There is some original window and door trim remaining, largely on the second floor, and original doors, trim and wood wainscotting in the basement. Several doors in the basement have retained original hardware, including the original porcelain doorknobs. The second floor has maintained two of its three fireplaces. The two remaining are in fairly good condition, and are of faux marble (painted slate) with gilt detailing. The second floor and main staircase also retain some of the original Anaglypta wall covering.

Of some interest is the heavy cast iron gateway at street level on the Harvey Road entrance to the property. While its age is not known, it was probably built at or close to the time of the construction of the building itself.



1 Harvey Rd, March 2000

Note: This building was demolished by the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in the summer of 2000.