

features, including the hill at Fort Howe, and the rock ridges responsible for the Reversing Falls at the mouth of the Saint John River. The Cambrian-Ordovician rocks that dominate much of the old city have produced an Avalon fauna that once included some of the oldest and largest trilobites found in North America. The Upper Carboniferous “Fern Ledges” shales are also of scientific interest. When first described they were believed to include the oldest known insect fossils. The Saint John area remains a favourite stop for geology conference field trips and university geology classes. Not only is Saint John important for geological research, but its geology has sparked public interest as well. Local kayaking and jet boat companies highlight some of the geological history on their public tours. Information panels about geology have been in the city’s Rockwood Park for almost 20 years, while the new Harbour Passage trail has provided an opportunity to develop public interpretation along the waterfront.

Research grants from the Community–University Research Alliances (CURA-SSHRC) and the New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund (ETF) have allowed a risk assessment of geological and paleontological sites in the Saint John region, with a focus on heritage preservation. Site assessment involves evaluating scientific importance, identifying natural and human threats to site preservation, and assessing suitability for public access and interpretation. Understanding the geoheritage of Saint John is important to preserve access to the unique geology, especially in a growing urban setting. In the end we hope to develop a heritage plan to address the preservation of significant geological sites in the Saint John region, while promoting public enjoyment and understanding of the city’s fascinating geoscience history.

Preserving geoscience heritage in Saint John, New Brunswick

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Since the middle of the 19th century the complex geology of Saint John, New Brunswick has attracted a fascinating list of scientists to unravel its story (including Alcock, Ami, Bailey, Dawson, Gesner, Hartt, Hayes, Howell, Lambe, Matthew, Stopes, and Walcott). Hundreds of technical papers and reports have been published about the Saint John region and the city has been the focus of countless field trips. The diverse geology includes the late Precambrian Green Head Group marble containing the first Precambrian stromatolite fossil to be scientifically described. This group forms a high ridge through the centre of the city producing prominent landscape