
**The geology of a building: the multiple layers of
the Sinclair Inn, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia**

ANDRE ROBICHAUD, BEN PHILLIPS,
AND COLIN P. LAROQUE

*Mount Allison Dendrochronology Laboratory, Department of
Geography, Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB, E4L 1A7
<arobicha@mta.ca> <bephllp@mta.ca> <claroque@mta.ca>*

Many old buildings that are found in the Maritimes have a complex history, having gone through repairs and renovations throughout the years. The Sinclair Inn in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, is one of the most complex structures encountered by the Mount Allison Dendrochronology Lab and has been the object of a thorough dendrochronological investigation to unlock the mystery of its several lives.

Samuel de Champlain founded Port-Royal in the early 1600s and it became the administrative and military centre of Acadie. It was later renamed Annapolis Royal by the British when it was captured in 1710 and is considered to be the oldest permanent

European settlement in North America north of Florida. Many old buildings survived through time and are still being used today. Among them is the Sinclair Inn located at 232 St. George Street, an old two storey wood frame building that was possibly made in the late 1700s by Frederick Sinclair out of the joining of two earlier houses that are thought to be dated in the late 1690s to early 1700s.

From fragmentary historical records, the Annapolis Heritage Society developed the hypothesis that the front part of the inn could be the remnants of the former Soullard House suspected to have been built on the current property. The lower back section of the inn could be the former Skene House, which was not originally built on the current property but possibly transferred there later by Frederick Sinclair. The inn itself was possibly built in 1781 on the current site by the joining of the Soullard two-storey house already on the spot and the Skene one-storey house which was moved. A second storey was later added to the Skene section and also a new roof covering both parts.

Our objective was to verify the hypotheses, by establishing the date of the three parts of the Sinclair Inn with the use of newly built regional tree-ring chronologies from the Fundy area of Nova Scotia. Cores were extracted from chosen beams using an increment borer then taken to the laboratory where ring-width of samples was measured to the nearest 0.01 mm. Growth patterns were crossdated with our regional reference chronologies. Excess fragments of selected cores were set aside for wood identification. The observation of wood anatomical structures was conducted with the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) at the Mount Allison Digital Microscopy Facility.

Results indicate that the trees used to build the structure of the front (Soullard) part are spruce and fir and the youngest cut date is 1707. The beams from the back (Skene) part are spruce and white pine and trees were cut in 1709. They confirm the age and hypotheses made by the Annapolis Heritage Society. The inn itself might be older than previously thought and could be as old as the late 1760s.