

Oakland Road Dock and the Northwest Arm Ferries

Over the years, ferries have carried passengers across the Northwest Arm from at least seven locations - Point Pleasant Park, Oaklands, Oakland Road, South Street, Coburg Road, Jubilee Road and Quinpool Road. The Jollimore Ferry began service between the foot of Oakland Road and the new park at the Dingle soon after the park's establishment in 1912. In that era, few people had other means of transportation. The ferry carried Haligonians wanting to escape the city on a hot summer's day to the Dingle beach and woodland trails. While the service ended in the mid-1960s, the Oakland Road ferry dock is maintained today as a public access point to the Northwest Arm.

Origin of the Ferry

William Cunard allowed the residents of Jollimore, a village across the Northwest Arm, the use of a landing at his Oaklands estate for a ferry. Halifax businessman Roderick McDonald bought the estate in 1904 and terminated the water access. A 1906 petition from residents asked for an expropriation to extend what would become Oakland Road to the Arm. MacDonald responded by providing an access point further north. In the same year, Josiah Boutilier took over the ferry which had been landing at the foot of South Street from Sam Jollimore.

MacDonald closed the Oaklands access point in 1913. This time, a further petition requesting an Oakland Road extension for a ferry dock was successful. Boutilier then applied to operate a ferry from the new dock, as did David Dixon of Argyle Street. City Council granted Boutilier the exclusive right to a ferry operation. Dixon also applied to keep boats for hire, at the same float that provided dockage for the ferry. In 1915, Dixon was permitted to extend his boat float further out into the Arm.

Developments Since

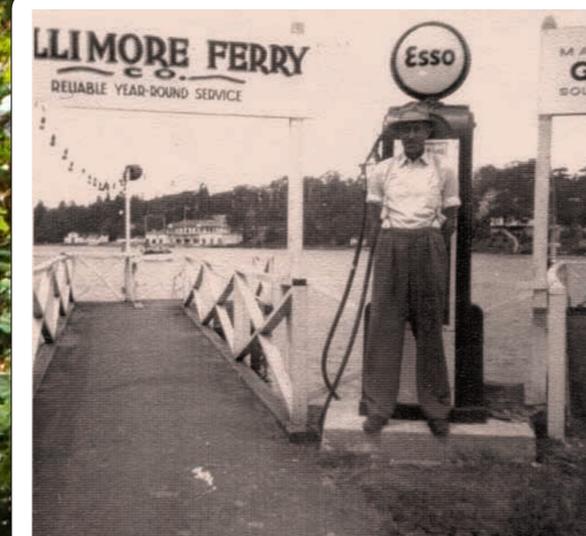
Josiah Boutilier ran the ferry to a landing dock near the Memorial Tower at the Dingle until he retired in 1948. His sons Fred and Foster took over until the early 1960s, and the ferry ceased operations in 1965. In the 1970s, the Oakland Road dock was closed to the public and became dilapidated. In the 1980s, a campaign by adjacent resident and former Halifax mayor Leonard Kitz to have the City of Halifax rebuild the dock was eventually successful. The second round of improvements to the dock and landing – new steps and lighting – was completed in early 2013.

Then-MLA for Halifax Atlantic Michelle Raymond attempted to revive the ferry, operating it on a trial basis for two weeks in 2001 and again in 2002. Since then, HRM Council has been exploring a concept for a high-speed ferry from park-and-ride lots in Purcell's Cove to the downtown ferry terminal.



Credit: Mainland South Heritage Society

In this 1948 photo, operator Ray Bignell helps passengers into Joe Boutilier's Ferry, "The Tiger," at the Dingle loading ramp. The ferry ran almost continuously from 8am to 11pm in midsummer and cost 5 cents a trip. It was powered by a single-cylinder make-and-break Acadia gas engine. The Oakland Road dock and the steps leading down to it can be seen across the Arm to the right. When the ferry ran after dark, passengers waiting there signalled the operator by turning a light off and on again.



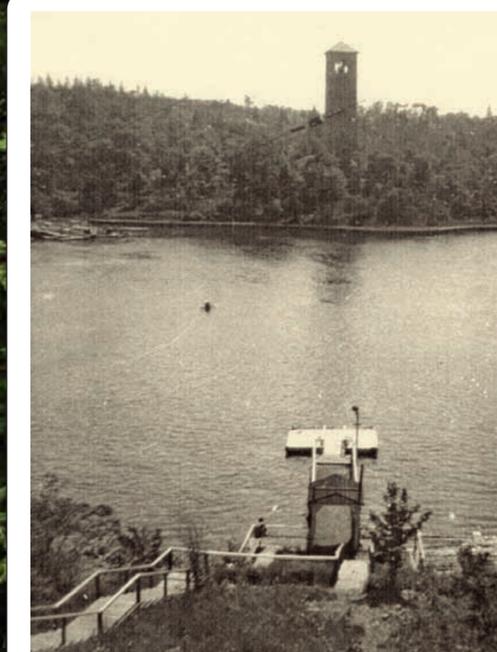
Credit: Mainland South Heritage Society

George Rockwell was operating the ferry for the Boutilier brothers in this photo from the early 1950s. He is standing at the entrance to the loading ramp at the Dingle. The Jollimore Ferry sign reminds users that the service did not just run during the summers. The Saint Mary's Boat Club and the Waegwoltic Club can be seen in the background.



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This summer afternoon line-up, sometime in the 1940s, shows the demand for ferry rides to the Dingle. Joseph Mont ran the Armdale Ferry from Quinpool Road near Horseshoe Island in the summers throughout the 1930s and 1940s.



Credit: Mainland South Heritage Society

In this 1956 photo of the Oakland Road dock, the slope leading down to the shoreline is cleared of trees, unlike today (panel background photo). There is a wide-open view of the Dingle across the Arm. Otherwise known as Fleming Park, this had been Sir Sandford Fleming's estate. It was donated by him to the City of Halifax in 1908. The park was formally transferred to the City in 1912, after the ten-storey stone Dingle Memorial Tower was completed. The tower commemorates the 150th anniversary of the 1758 establishment of representative government in Nova Scotia.

