



## The Early Years

by Graham Williams and Rob Raeside

It is hard to believe that in 1971 there was no regional society interested in or focused on the geology of the Maritime Provinces. To remedy this, a letter was drafted and circulated by Bruce Sanford of the Geological Survey of Canada to geologists and geophysicists of the three provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island), asking for an expression of interest in forming such a group. The encouraging response led first to a meeting of about 12 in the Argo Building, Bedford Institute in September 1971, then to an evening meeting at the old Press Club in Halifax in October 1971, to discuss the viability of a regional organization. Several long-standing members of the community favoured starting a Section of the Geological Association of Canada but others, generally the younger ones, proposed the founding of a new and independent Society. A questionnaire mailed to all interested parties showed overwhelming support for an independent group, with the most acceptable name (by one vote) being the Atlantic Geoscience Society.

The Atlantic Geoscience Society came into existence on 11th April 1972, at a meeting held at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Dartmouth. About 30 members including representatives from the federal and provincial geological surveys, the regional universities, and industry attended the natal day ceremonies. The first general meeting was held 31st May, in the Faculty Club of Dalhousie University. Don Sherwin of the Federal Government gave a talk on the geology and petroleum potential of offshore eastern Canada, a topic which would not be out of place today.

At the 31st May gathering, it was decided to hold monthly meetings throughout the fall, winter and spring months, with presentations by invited speakers and to publish a regular newsletter, to be edited by Graham Williams. It was also decided to make the first evening meeting in the fall, usually in September, the Annual Meeting, with election of officers. And to encourage membership, the annual dues were set at the exorbitant amount of one dollar, a cost which was



Bruce Sanford



Argo Building, Bedford Institute of Oceanography, home of the founding meeting of AGS



Faculty Club of Dalhousie University, where the first talk of the Society was given.

not increased for five years. At the September meeting, Rupert MacNeill of Acadia University was officially installed as the first president.

Recognition of the importance of the Atlantic Geoscience Society first occurred on October 1973. At the Geological Association of Canada's Council Meeting in Kingston, AGS officially became an Affiliated or Associated Society of GAC. In January 1974, AGS consolidated its position by holding its first Colloquium, "The Geological Evolution of the Atlantic Seaboard of Canada", in Fredericton (19-20 January). Despite taking place in the middle of a major snowstorm, this very successful two day meeting attracted over 150 people from the Maritime Provinces, Newfoundland and Ontario.

The response to the Fredericton meeting led to the organizing of the second Colloquium, "Natural Resources of Atlantic Canada", held at Acadia University, Wolfville, in January 1976. Again, despite the inclement weather, there was an excellent turnout with about 200 in attendance. By great good fortune, the Society had hit on a time of year when it had a captive audience, since where else can one interested in the geosciences go at this time of year in the Maritimes. As a token of respect, however, there wasn't a field trip. Coupled with the enthusiastic response to the meeting was an increase in membership to about 175.

1976 was a particularly good year for the Atlantic Geoscience Society since the Geological and Mineralogical Associations of Canada accepted the Society's offer to hold their 1980 Annual Meeting in Halifax. The chairman of the Steering Committee for this meeting called Halifax '80, was John Smith, Deputy Minister of Mines for Nova Scotia. And, AGS held its second major meeting of the year on Saturday, 11th December, at Mount Allison University that was organized by Laing Ferguson. The one day Colloquium, "Current Research in the Maritimes", attracted over 70 participants, with 44 speakers. Registration, in keeping with AGS policy, was \$2.00 and that included free coffee.

The only year since 1976 that there was no colloquium or symposium was in 1977. However, the Society was not resting on its laurels, since it initiated a project to produce a



Graham Williams teaching a close friend how to use a microscope.



Rupert MacNeill of Acadia University, the first President of the Atlantic Geoscience Society



Geological Association of Canada logo

geological highway map of the Maritime provinces, primarily intended for the general public but also to be finished in time for the Halifax '80 meeting. Another milestone occurred on Thursday, 13th October 1977, when AGS hosted an executive meeting of the Canadian Geoscience Council, then umbrella organization for all the Canadian geoscientific societies.

In 1978, AGS renewed its annual meetings with a major symposium 20-21 January in Fredericton, where 140 gathered to discuss "Provincialism". At the accompanying banquet, the Society started the practice of inviting the president of either the Geological Association of Canada or the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists to be guest speaker. This practice was allowed to lapse in 2002. 1978 was also marked by the decision to initially produce one geological highway map, which would cover only Nova Scotia

A draft version of the Nova Scotia geological highway map was displayed at the 1979 Biennial Colloquium, "Current Research in the Atlantic Provinces", on 19-20th January in Amherst. by the co-chairs: Jonathan Bujak, Howard Donahoe and Bob Grantham. Bill MacMillan also played a very active role, Jonathan and he driving round Nova Scotia to determine the occurrences of the different rocks. The map was developed jointly with the Nova Scotia Department of Mines and Energy and the Nova Scotia Museum. It marked the first of several endeavours that AGS undertook in partnership with other organizations. Another highlight of the Colloquium was the performance of the AGS Moron Choir, which fortunately sang only one song. In the fall, AGS helped organize a fun day for children at the Nova Scotia Museum, where one of the most popular activities was panning for gold. The festivities were part of Logan Day celebrations, a day named in honour of the first Director of the Geological Survey of Canada. Activities took place across Canada, from St John's to Victoria.

Halifax '80, the Annual Meeting of the Geological and Mineralogical Associations of Canada, 19-21 May, was the most important function of the AGS in its first decade. Over 1100 people attended this successful and enjoyable gathering. There were several highlights, one of which had to be the



Steering Committee for "Halifax '80"  
Notice its sober nature.



1978 AGS Council and Roger MacQueen, the guest speaker.



Howard Donahoe, Bob Grantham and Jonathan Bujak viewing the Nova Scotia Geological Highway Map



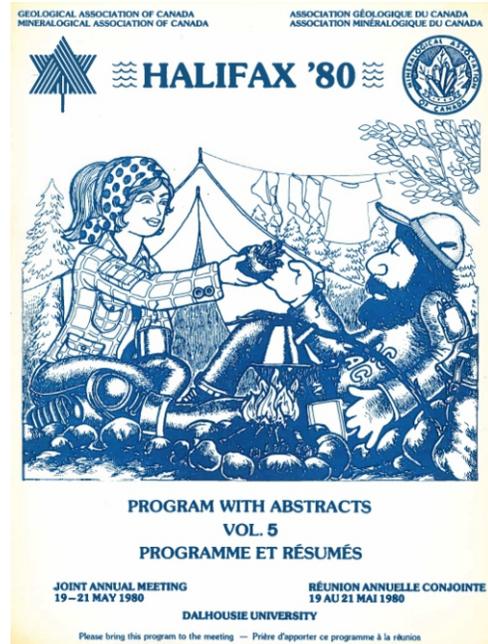
AGS Moron Choir

official publication of “The Geological Highway Map of Nova Scotia”. This impressive production was not simply a map. It also told the story of the geological history of the province, numbered and described 92 sites, and highlighted eight key areas, such as Joggins. The map has been a major success, a revised version being published in 1990 and a repackaged version in 1994. A third edition was published in 2005 and a fourth edition is being planned for the Halifax 2022 meeting. The 2022 meeting, which marks the 50th anniversary of AGS, will be held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the Geological and Mineralogical associations of Canada.

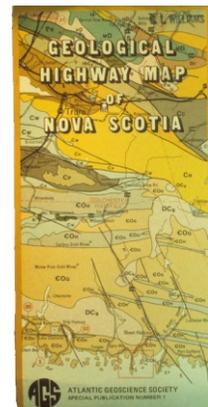
On 28th September 1980, the AGS again celebrated Logan Day, now christened National Geoscience Day, by hosting “A Day of Geology” at the Nova Scotia Museum. The main objective was to inform the public, especially children, about geology through demonstrations of rocks and minerals, fossils, films, gem polishing and contests. The highlight was a field trip to a once famous gold-producing area. What was so impressive to both parents and organizers was the enthusiasm of the pre-schoolers and students. Also, in September, the Society ran its first field to the Parrsboro Shore.



Peter Wallace with some students on Logan Day at some tailings from an old gold mine.



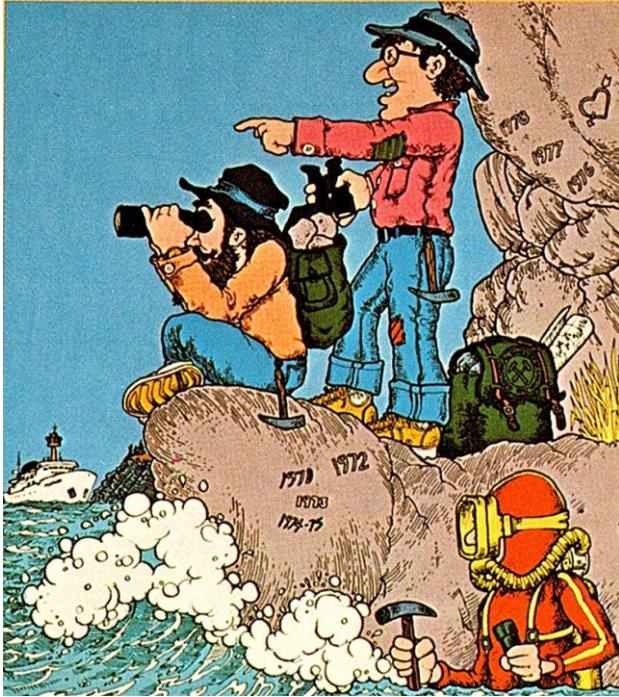
Halifax '80, the Annual Meeting of the Geological and Mineralogical Associations of Canada



Geological Highway Map of Nova Scotia



Norm Lyttle at the Nova Scotia Museum with his daughter during Logan Day



The first decade.



David Piper with his girls



1979 Parrsboro Shore fieldtrip  
**Both photos are fieldtrip, pick one!**