County Arts / Culture

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Community leadership is required to encourage and sustain participation

RECREATION AWARENESS COUNTY

Director's Desk

CHANGE

Change is a very innovative way to describe the many modifications of our everyday society. Change certainly suggests improvement such as, "Medical science wiping out disease, i.e., smallpox" or "Travel presently is within the reach of everyone ". Yet there is also negative connotation that results from change such as, "large powerful cars have produced environmental damage, congested cities, etc.," or "Energy from nuclear fission threatens to destroy the world."

Change is certainly not something new it has been going on continually for centuries. We in today's society are saturated with the many forms of change as reported by our various media sources. As aresult we have become very sensitive to change. We in today's society have reacted in several ways to change. Some of us have been shocked by it, resulting in helplessness, anxiety and confusion on our part. Others have tried to cling to the past resisting change. Others acknowledge that change is necessary, but argue over how to change. Still others have adapted to change, setting new goals and objectives.

Coping with change particularly within our various service industries (i.e., Recreation, Tourism, etc.) requires a strong and positive action on the part of those in management positions. It requires skill to handle such things as planning, goal setting, and pressure. One of the keys to being successful is to provide concise, clear and accurate information to all involved with your organization. We must use the democratic process of decision making if we are to succeed.

Managing change in "good times" is easy, we simply add new staff. But during periods of restraint, we need a strong commitment to creating recreational opportunities in communities that

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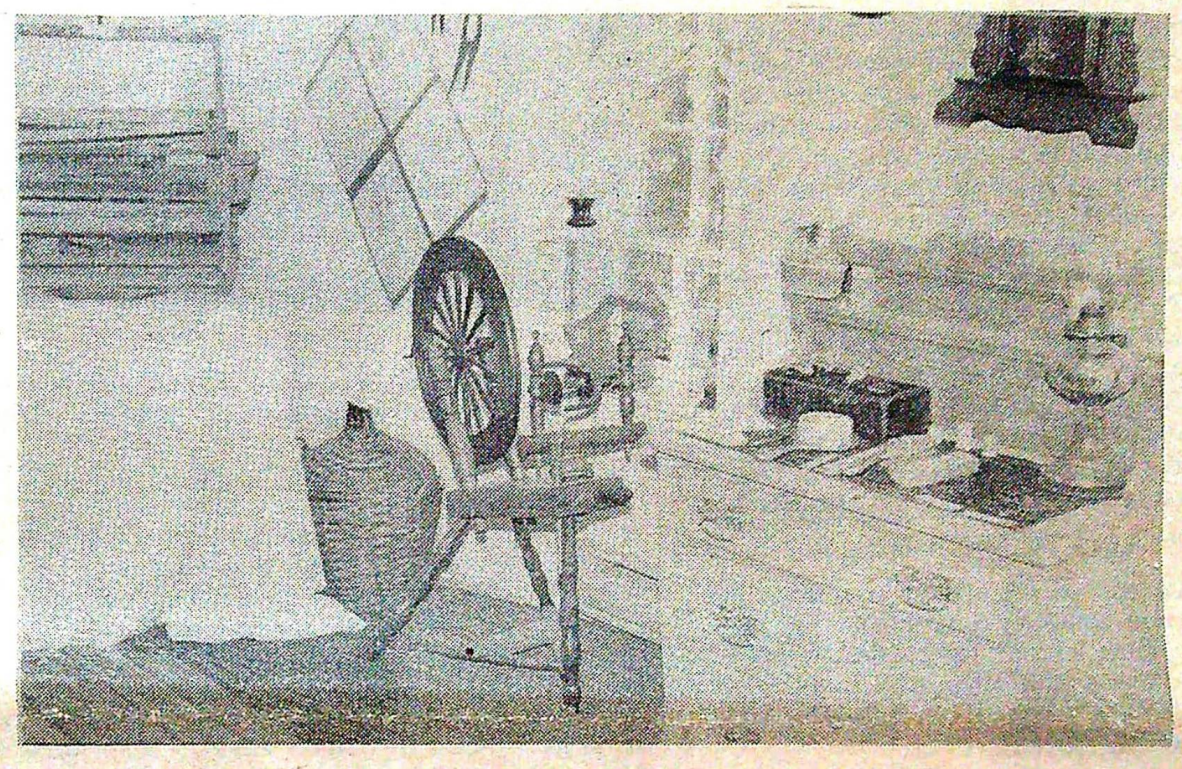

LOCAL HISTORY ALIVE

You will pass an innocent sign on the highway going through the pretty village of Port Hastings which states simply "Museum" and which points to a quiet street off the busy road. There you will find a small museum which is home to the Port Hastings Historical Society. Inside you will find a wealth of local history, maps, photographs and artifacts arranged throughout the rooms both upstairs and down. It is certainly one of the county's local museums that is well worth a visit.

Since its opening last year, the Port Hastings Museum has been busy welcoming visitors who are travelling through and local people who want to get in touch with their own history. Many people visiting the area are interested in genealogy, and here they will find such items as the early census records for Cape Breton in 1818, 1861, 1871, and 1881 all neatly compiled and ready for use. These are often a starting point for those who want to find out about their ancestors. Many local family genealogies are already written and researched and the staff is always willing to help those interested in discovering more about their roots.

Yvonne Fox, curator of the Museum, is a goldmine of ideas and enthusiastically welcomes researchers at the museum which already has an extensive archives. The Historical Society has collected a wide range of photos and maps of the area, and summer workers have photographed many of the older homes in the Port Hastings area. Yvonne is an avid collector, and there are many fine displays of old calendars, scrapbooks and quilts which all add to the history of the area. A very fine display of photos shows the building of the Canso Causeway and this is well worth a visit in itself. There are

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THIS ISSUE:

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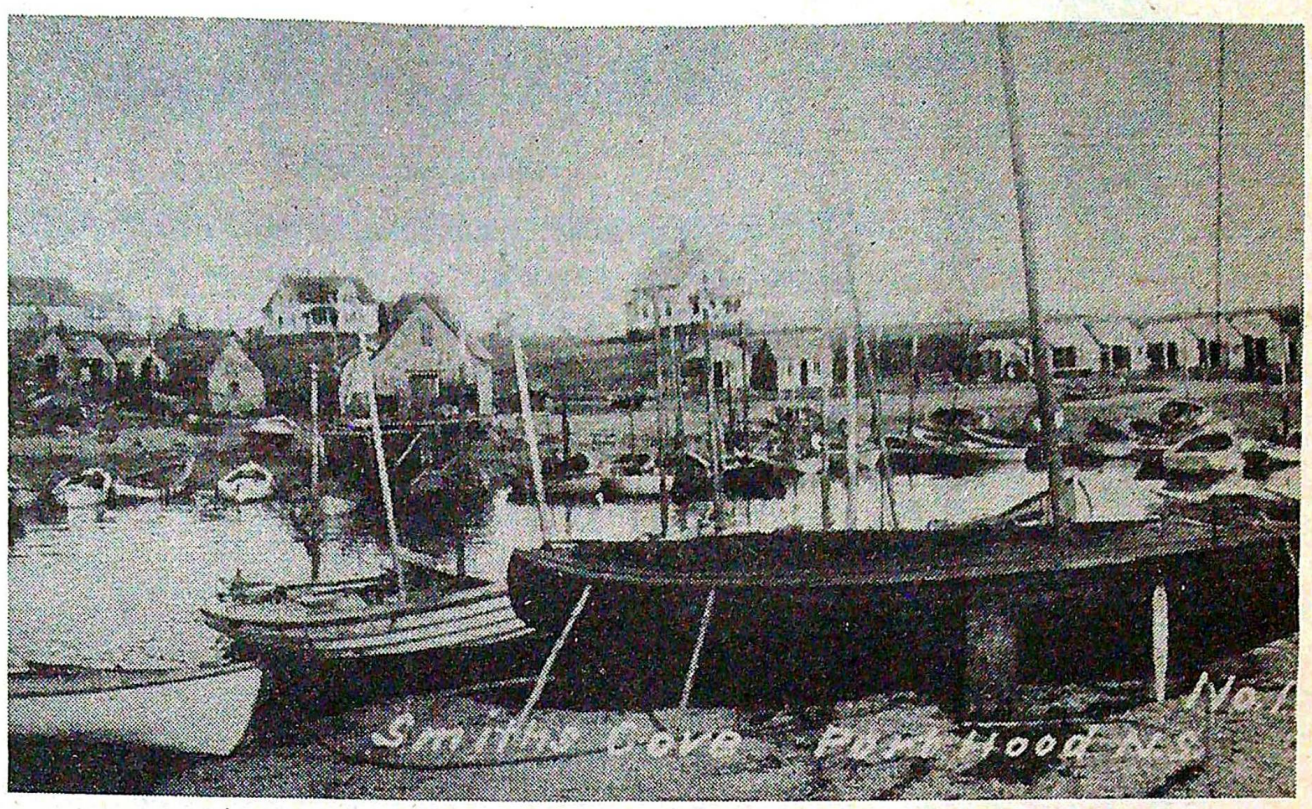
2. ORIGINS OF PORT HOOD'S CHESTICO
3. A SHIPWRECK
4. ARTIST ASSOCIATION FORMED

PORT HOOD MARINE HISTORY

In the nineteenth century, Port Hood was well known as a commercial fishing centre. It still is quite important as a fishing port today with three wharf facilities in its immediate area, but in the 1850's it was not uncommon to see hundreds of fishing vessels at anchor in the harbour, and because of the free trade treaty in fishing with the United States, many of the vessels would be American that were fishing out of Gloucester, Massachussetts. So busy was Port Hood, that a U.S. Customs House was in use directly up the road from the main wharf, and operated by the Tremaine family who had emigrated from Boston. Vessels from all over Canada and the U.S. anchored at Port Hood and a regular steamboat service was in use.

For any community that lives by the sea such as Port Hood, and where ocean traffic could be busy, loss of life as a result of storms at sea is inevitable. Port Hood has been no exception, and several of its greatest sea disasters have been the results of fierce December gales. The following is an account written by the late Port Hood historian Percy Watts Smith in his book, The Smiths of Cape Breton:



View of north end of Port Hood Island taken from Smith's Cove 1925-1930. View shows fishermen's shanties which were later washed away in a severe gale.

THE LOSS OF THE MAGGIE H.

"On December 17, 1876, a number of essels took shelter under the protec-ion of island shore from the terrific torm which was sweeping the coast. ne vessel, the "Maggie H.", under the ommand of Captain Murdoch acLennan of Port Hastings, had dragged er anchors for a considerable distance nd was stranded on a sand bar near the entre of the harbour, where the ountainous was rolling and driven by a reat gale. Frost was intense and a lizzard was raging. The Smiths of ort Hood Island immediately realized hat the ship was in great danger and ssistance was needed at once to rescue he crew. Joshua, Hezekiah, Richard, hos Smith, all brothers, and their ousin John Smith made ready a boat and ent to rescue the crew.

The rescue party allowed their boat be lowered down the harbour by means a rope, after making contact with other vessel anchored in the harbour. ey took up a position opposite the ssel in distress and their boat was rtially filled by a heavy sea which rced them to return for dry clothing d a refit for their boat. Once again ey set out on their mission. They soon alized that the crew were all partly ozen and lashed in the rigging. A pe was used to make contact with the ew, and when the ship would roll wards them the partly frozen bodies uld be dropped into the water and lled aboard to safety.

The rescue party was obliged to ke two trips to complete their rescue rk. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts with three ildren were taking passage from . John's, Newfoundland, to New York. e three children were lashed to the in-mast and a sea which swept the ck carried them away. Two men left in dory and tried to make land to the leeward, but were never heard of again.

Mr. and Mrs. Roberts with the remaining crew were taken to the home of John Smith where one of the crew members died immediately as the heat struck him. Mrs. Roberts was very badly frozen and it was necessary to amputate both legs. Most of the crew suffered like conditions, losing hands or arms. Most of these amputations were done by local doctors. A specialist from New York came and performed the necessary operations on Mrs. Roberts. They moved the following year to St. John's, Newfoundland, where several children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Roberts in later years.

The Canadian Government presented the rescue parties with watches and some of them are still in use and are highly prized by their descendents. The following inscription is on each:

"Presented by the Government of Canada to Mr. Smith in recognition of his humane and gallant exertion in the rescue of the Ship wrecked crew of the Schooner Maggie H., of Port Hawkesbury, 17th December 1876."

The following April, 1877, after the loss of the schooner "Maggie H.", John Smith, member of one of the rescue parties, was drowned with his brother, Edward Smith, near the spot where he helped in the rescue of the crew a few months earlier."

CHESTICO (cont'd)

became the judicial centre for the district and when the county of Justaucorps became a few years later, the County of Inverness, the name Port Hood started to catch on. Chestico still survived, however, in the hearts of the people, and certainly has a much more unique origin than that of its successor. For this reason, the Chestico Museum and Historical Society has been trying to retain the heritage of Port Hood by retaining the area's earlier name.

Witches of Mull

"From near and far came the Doideagan Muileach, the grey witches. Some rode on oat-straws, some flew as daws or carrion crows and many came hidden in the cloak of the wind, until the earth trembled to their fearful clamour. When they were assembled Duart addressed the Doideagan Mor, a haggard beldame whose one eye saw only in the night. He pleaded that a mighty storm be conjured up to sink the approaching ship.

'Magic to break magic!' screeched the hag. ' But no magic could destroy that which comes from the hand of God. Has the wizard sought help from the Deity?'

In reply Duart assured the witch that Forrest was an unbeliever. This satisfied the witches and they planned the form the counter-spell would take. Green bracken was brought and twined and fashioned into a rope. At one end a grindstone was fastened, then the loose end was slung over a gibbet-tree. The Doideagan Mor began to pull. The rope tightened, and the stone began to rise from the ground. Almost at once the wind rose, increasing as the stone lifted inch by inch.

But the witch had no more strength to master Forrest's spell. The wind blew no harder and she screamed for her sisters to help. But their efforts were in vain. The weight still hung heavily. Even the muscles of the great smith and his hammer-man were useless."

conclusion in next issue