Special to Partici-Paper:
Author Ray Smith tells the story of a well-known Mabou resident in *Fred Smith, Pilot*

New County placemat, 2
Volleyball/ basketball, 2
50/50 cost share grants for summer employment, 2
Inverness County Art Show, 5
Scottsville School of Crafts, 7
Wilderness Escape, 8
Distance Education, 8
Quilts of the Island, 9
New history of Stewart United Church in Whycocomagh, 10
"Billy Can't Read," 10
Continuing Education/Recreation Fall Programming 1993, 10
New genealogical publications, 11
GED Course Schedule, 11

PARTICI-PAPER
Serving Inverness County since 1979

August 1993 Vol.14 no.8

Fred Smith, Pilot

by
Ray Smith

The late Fred Smith of Mabou was a man who believed in doing things right; a pilot who in the words of a former military friend "was always meticulous with his checks, reliable and dependable." He never spoke much about his military experiences in World War II, but he saw action at the River Kwai, dropping supplies from the B-24 Liberator. The passion for flight begun in the military stayed with him all his life, and he delighted in flights for many a photographer of Cape Breton. His son, Ray Smith, a writer now living in Westmount, Quebec, tells the story of his father as a pilot.

Fred Smith, my father, did not talk much about the Second World War. Yet he had nearly five interesting years in the RCAF -- and he became a pilot. For the rest of his life, he was probably happiest when he was flying.

I very much doubt that he was aloft before the war. But flying clearly interested him. For example, although he signed up as an accounts clerk, an obvious enough duty for a bank employee, it was not the Army or Navy but the Air Force that he joined.

From June 1941, he was doing pay accounts in Winnipeg, and used to travel to work on a tramcar. Another regular passenger was a senior officer, and in time they came to chat together on the journey. My father said he wished he could fly, but the service was still rather picky and, as I understand, was demanding university of at least some pilot trainees. But the senior officer encouraged my father to apply from the ranks, and by mid-1942 he was on his way to Regina for the classroom introduction to flight training.

From here on, many of the details of the story are in the two logbooks my father kept of his flights. A glance through the pages reveals my father's neat printing of dates, aircraft types and numbers, destinations, passengers, times. While this makes reading easy, more important is the reassurance the precision gives--this carefully controlled hand will get us off the ground, through any sort of weather conditions, and safely to our destination. This is a dependable hand.

He began his flying experience on Monday, October 12th, 1942, as a student passenger in a DeHavilland Tiger Moth, at Number 15 Elementary Flight Training School in Regina. The Prairies are ideal for flight training because the weather is so often fine, with visibility often reaching seventy-five miles. The vast flat fields are an obvious added advantage for student pilots.

The Tiger Moth was a biplane with two seats fore and aft. It had a sliding canopy to keep out at least some of the prairie winter wind. I expect that October day was sunny and crisp as Dad and R.E. Hanson, his instructor, walked along the flight line to aircraft number 4107.

They would be wearing baggy flying suits, fleece-lined boots and gloves, and leather helmets with snaps, clasps, and ear receptacles for head phones. R.E. Hanson, who has done it all before, is calmly working through a list of last-minute reminders, throwing in reassurances; my father has concentrated his attention as never before in his life.

When they arrive at 4107, they walk around the aircraft to check that all is well, a ritual observed even today--I have seen a British Airways captain do a walk-around of his Concorde. Presently Dad climbs into the forward cockpit seat while R.E. Hanson guides him through exercise "1-A. Familiarity with Cockpit," along with exercises "18. Action in Event of Fire," and "18-A. Abandoning Aircraft."

continued page three

In 1980, Fred bought his own aircraft, a four-seater Cessna 172 Sky Hawk. The letters C-GCOH, in the language of pilots, stood for Charlie-Golf-Charlie-Oscar-Hotel, or Charlie-Oscar-Hotel for short.

From the Editor

Fixing the roof . . .

With a better idea!

Congratulations!
Lake Ainslie Weavers and Craft Guild

The last time I happened to drive past the former Scotsville Nature Centre, it was becoming a derelict. The paint was peeling, the windows were blank, the yard overgrown. Like all our flat-roofed structures, the roof leaked. There are quite a few flat-roofed schools and public buildings in Inverness County. Because of our inevitable freeze-thaw cycles of rain, snow, and ice, it seems that after building a few leaky roofs, someone would have concluded that flat roofs ought to be given up.

What I saw on July 20th, however, was heartening. The former Scotsville Nature Centre sported pristine sky-blue paint, and significantly, a sensibly pitched roof. New thinking was going on here! A Canadian flag whipped cleanly in the breeze. The building was now was "The Scotsville School of Crafts," under the ownership of the Lake Ainslie Weavers and Craft Guild, and it held little resemblance to its former days of decline. The freshly mowed grounds were lined with many cars. Everywhere was the sound of greetings, voices, and laughter. There was also the merry sound of fiddles. On the inside, stains on the ceiling beams remain as the only evidence of the old leaky roof.

This particular set of people makes pessimism out of place. In every nook and on every wall were woven and quilted pieces, art works, and crafts -- all from careful, caring hands This is what we all need to see.

American anthropologist Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Her words are deeply appropriate for Cape Breton, and the Lake Ainslie Weavers and Craft Guild are a local example of what she meant.

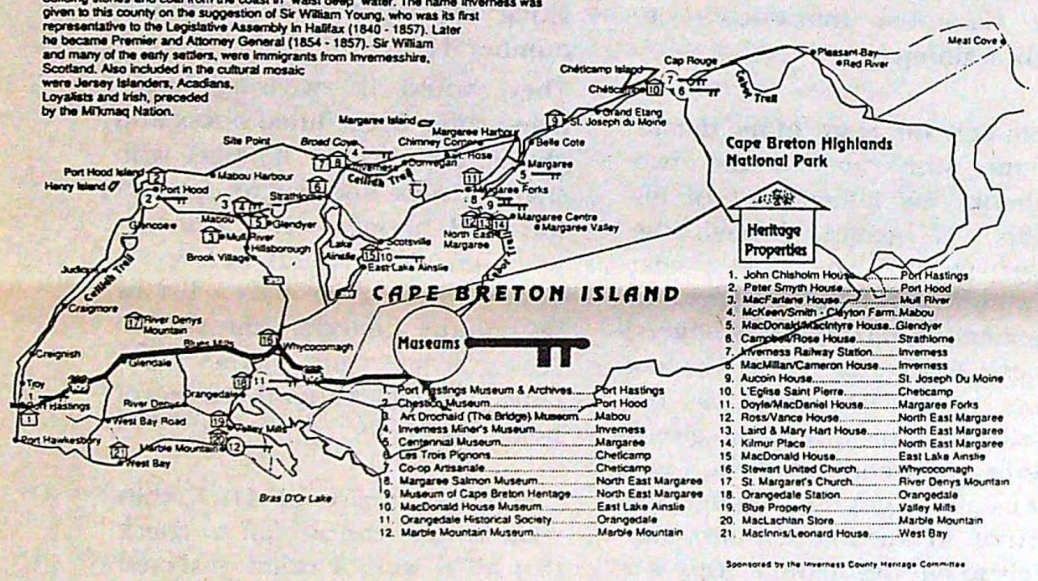
All change must begin with us as individuals, where we are. This group took a derelict building and made it into a place where the very best of traditions are passed on. This effort, far greater than most people realize, deserves to be assisted in tangible ways, including funding.

Verna MacMillian, president of the Lake Ainslie Weavers and Craft Guild, has the right idea: the world is hungry for things well-made and well done. Some of our economic answers are in the many things we already do very well in Cape Breton.

Cape Breton has more than its share of troubles, but its greatest strength -- its most special of all gifts -- is the sesnse of community. We have many caring people here -- people who stop putting old tea kettles around the house to catch the leaks, and go out and not only fix the roof, but apply a better idea to it, so it is unlikely to leak again. With people like this, all is possible.

The Naming of Inverness County

By the Act of 1837, the district or county of Juste-au-Corps (meaning "jacket" or "waist-deep" in French), was changed to Inverness. French presence dominated until 1765, at which time they extracted building stones and coal from the coast in "waist deep" water. The name Inverness was given to this county on the suggestion of Sir William Young, who was its first representative to the Legislative Assembly in Halifax (1840 - 1857). Later he became Premier and Attorney General (1854 - 1857). Sir William and many of the early settlers, were immigrants from Invernesshire, Scotland. Also included in the cultural mosaic were Jersey Islanders, Acadians, Loyalists and Irish, preceded by the Mi'kmaq Nation.



Putting Inverness County on the map --and the placemat

Until recently a tourist sitting in a restaurant looking at the Cape Breton placemat while waiting for his dinner would see an outline of the Island, a nice quotation from Alexander Bell praising the island, and an attractions list on the left side. He may not realize it like some of us would, but none of these attractions are in Inverness County.

Now tourists in Inverness County will have something about Inverness County to look at. The hope is that it will help keep them in the area a day or two longer by suggesting visits to heritage properties and museums. The Inverness County Heritage Committee and the Tourism Committee collaborated to produce a placemat specific to the County, with information about its naming, and a list of museums and heritage properties. A 16" x 24" larger version is available as a decorative wall map. The graphic design is by Camille Chapman.

"Heritage tourism" is a new catch-phrase on the Island because so many tourists have expressed a desire for an interactive cultural experience -- a chance to learn from and talk to local people, and not just observe shows of staged culture. Community museums and heritage properties are potentially good places to do this, and some facilities in the County do very well in this role. Other facilities face problems of staffing, training, and funding.

While the issues of development for heritage tourism are complex, the wall map and placemat are a positive step in providing information in an attractive format. Both are available to retailers and restaurants at a competitive price, and would give County businesses a sensible, practical way to promote local tourism, and improve public relations -- without extra cost. **The Inverness County wall maps and placemats may be purchased by contacting:**

Donnie Matheson, Chairman of the Heritage Committee, Belle Cote, 235-2987

Ned MacDonald, Secretary of the Heritage Committee, Glenville, 258-3291.

John Cotton, Department of Recreation/Tourism, Port Hood, 787-2274.

Beach Volleyball and 3 on 3 Basketball

We welcome Gerri MacDonald from Port Hood to our summer staff. Gerri will be coordinating a beach volleyball circuit as well as "3 on 3" basketball tournaments. A beach volleyball tournament is scheduled for August 14 in Port Hood. Registration is $30.00 per team and all teams must be co-ed. Money prizes will be awarded. If you would like more information, contact Gerri at 787-2274.

Registration for fall courses September 13-17th (see page 10)

50/50 Community Cost Share Grant

Sixteen community organizations took advantage of the 50/50 Community Cost Share Grant which is offered by the Inverness County Recreation/Tourism Department. The Department cost shares with organizations who provide summer employment for students throughout the county.

Partici-Paper

Editor
Mary Anne Ducharme
R.R.#2 Whycocomagh
Nova Scotia, BOE 3MO
Telephone: 945-2982

We welcome letters, contributed articles, and photos from all who love Inverness County, its people and heritage

Partici-Paper is published monthly and is free for Inverness County residents
For other subscribers per year:
Canada - $10.32
United States - $13.21

Published by the Inverness County Recreation/Tourism Department
Box 179,
Municipal Building
Port Hood, Nova Scotia
BOE 2WO
Telephone: 787-2274

Printed by The Pictou Advocate