Partici-Paper

Magazine

Inverness County
Cape Breton
Nova Scotia

July/August 1995
Volume 16, No.4

See our communities in bloom!

Six Inverness County communities take part in a national contest to be one of the best beauty spots in Canada

Director's Desk

Partici-Paper

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

People, Plants, and Pride . . . Growing Together. Six communities in Inverness County have taken the initiative and will be participating in the national competition Communities in Bloom 1995. Plans are now underway in Orangedale, Port Hood, Mabou, Whycocomagh, Margaree and Cheticamp with a common goal of beautification, while building community spirit and respect for our environment. See inside this issue for more information.

SUMMER RECREATION

Welcome to Tara MacLellan from Judique to our summer staff. Tara will conduct a facility survey throughout the county as well as coordinate community recreation programs. Watch for registration dates and time for programs such as The Great Science Adventure, Dinosaur Day, Nature Walks, as well as the popular county field day. Be sure to check local papers for announcement and listen to CIGO and CJFX radio on Thursday for the Recreation/Tourism Department weekly radio report.

NOVA SCOTIA YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS

The Nova Scotia Dept. of the Environment, through the Nova Scotia Youth Conservation Corps has approved cost-share funding for six environmental projects proposed by local community groups. Twenty-three students have been hired to work on these projects. Project areas are 1) Cape Mabou: maintenance and development of hiking trail system; 2) South Lake: maintenance and enhancement of trail at MacDonald Hours and Heritage site as well as green space and trail development at Soapstone Mines; 3) Inverness: "The Enhancement of Hometown Pride" - garbage clean-up and education re: environment, recycling, composting, etc., 4) La Plage St. Pierre: maintenance and enhancement of nature trail, 5) Cheticamp: control and prevention of Purple Loosestrife infestation in local ecosystems and 6) Brook Village: clean up and enhance of the community and ball field.

The Recreation/Tourism Department is excited to have these projects happening in our county and are encouraged by the supporting organizations who have taken on the responsibility of proposing and supervising these projects.

SUMMER EVENTS BROCHURE

The 1995 Inverness County Summer Events

(continued page 31, inside back cover)

July/August 1995 Volume 16 No. 4

Contents

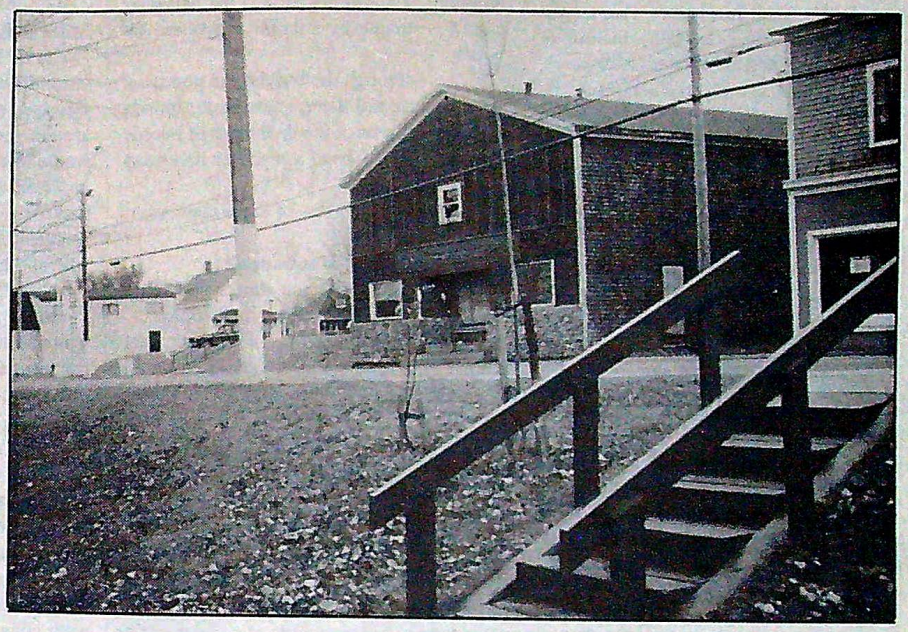
The Victoria Theatre	3	Brendon Kennedy
Causeway Opening	7	contributed
Rural Survival	8	Duart MacAulay
Delivering government to rural areas	8	Daniel Boudreau
The future a big question	9	Nicky Tompkins
Building inventory	11	Heritage Committee
Cultural Initatives	13	N. S. Information Service
Culture Centre Proposal	13	Mary Anne Ducharme
Communities in Bloom and photographs	15+	contributed
Roots in Ireland	18	Jim St. Clair
Whycocomagh Women 1909	20	Doris Tinney
Health Care in the County report on the panel	21	Mary Anne Ducharme
Instructor Profile	27	Recreation/Tourism
Glace Bay Miner's Museum	28	book review
Great Science Adventure	30	Recreation/Tourism
A daisy is a smile of God	31	from the editor

Deadline
for submitted articles
for the Sept./Oct. issue: August 7

Editor: Mary Anne Ducharme
R.R.#2 Whycocomagh Nova Scotia, BOE 3MO
phone: 945-2982
Publisher: Inverness County Department of Recreation/Tourism
John Cotton, Director, Box 179, Court House
Port Hood, Nova Scotia BOE 2W0
phone: 787-2274
We welcome
contributions of articles, photos and information
Printed by the Pictou Advocate
Partici-Paper is a service for the residents of Inverness County
For other subscribers per year:
Canada $10.32 – U.S. $13.21
(send payment to the Recreation Department)

The Victoria Theatre

Lingering memories of a bygone era



Although the building is gone, the memories are still there, in the hearts, minds and imaginations of the thousands of people who will always have a piece of Inverness history with them.

by Brendon Kennedy

It's gone now, all that remains are the old concrete steps.

But for over 50 years, the Victoria Theatre has been a landmark on main street Inverness, and a cornerstone in the memories of the generations that ventured up the steps and through the doors to get a glimpse of a bigger world through their own personal window.

In 1940, an enterprising Italian immigrant by the name of Jimmy (Giacomo) Tubetti, who had a humble beginning selling everything from shoelaces to ice cream, constructed a building in hopes of housing a movie hall. For two years, Jimmy waited for his movie licence. Being a quick-minded businessman, he installed jacks in the floor, so that it could be raise or lowered, and for the two years he waited, the building served as a dance hall for Inverness.

Magicians, fiddlers, and singers performed at the hall. Even a young, unknown country singer by the name of Hank Snow played there.

When the films finally began to play at the theatre, the floor was lowered at the front, and seating for about 260 people was installed. The first movie aired at the theatre is believed to have been the 1942 film *Mrs. Miniver* with Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon. Not surprisingly, its theme was World War II.

The 40's 50's amd 60's saw the Victoria Theatre thrive with the bustling crowds of children lining up for the matinees on Saturday afternoons, and the steady stream of teenagers and adults with their dates for the evening screenings.

These good years saw movies playing at the Victoria Theatre seven days a week, with two movies a night, a matinee on Saturdays, and sometimes midnight horror flicks.

From cartoons and slapstick comedy for the kids, to the weekly news reels and the continuing sagas of the seemingly never ending serials, the Victoria Theatre had most of Inverness County captured in the magic of the movies.

The late 50's saw the ownership of the theatre change, when Jimmy Tubetti died, and his son George and daughter Italia took over the business.

By the early 70's, the building underwent some cosmetic changes. The original marquis that jutted out from the top of the building was replaced with a newer, more modern sign. The front of the building had a face lift with a new stone wall, and the chairs inside were replaced.

Everything seemed to be looking up for the theatre and the movie goers who cherished their "show hall."

(continued page 4)

The Victoria Theater, continued

What was not known to the Tubetti family, and the many small community theaters in North America, was the rapid advancement of technology in the entertainment industry.

After surviving the onslaught of television in Inverness County in the mid-50's, the Victoria Theater had another foe to contend with. Cable television was introduced to the area in the early 80's, and if that wasn't enough, home video was knocking at the door at well. Instead of going to a movie and a restaurant afterwards, the movie goers had a choice to stay at home and flip the channels or rent a video and buy a pizza.

To make matters worse, the movie rentals from MGM, and Orion had increased sharply, making most weekends a losing proposition for the Victoria Theater.

"The video industry was the main reason for the decline in seat sales over the last few years of operation. My father George ran the business at a loss until it was no longer an option. He said that he kept it open because it was somewhere for the kids in Inverness to go, " said Angela Deagle, daughter of the late George Tubetti.

On the Labour Day weekend in 1986, the Tubetti family had commitments out of town, and couldn't find anyone to run the old arch-projector. The weekend was cancelled, with the new film *Legal Eagles*, starring Robert Redford, slated to play. The Victoria Theater never opened its doors again.

For the next eight years, the building was up for sale, but a buyer never did come forth.

And unlike the old serial cliff hangers that ran so many times on its screen, there was no hero to the rescue, and no happy ending for the old Victoria Theater.

In December of 1994, owner Kevin Deagle decided to bring the slow demise of the old Victoria Theater to a merciful halt. With the help of his brothers Campbell and Raymond, Kevin dismantled the hall with dignity, shingle by shingle and board by board.

Although the building is gone, the memories are still there, in the hearts, minds and imaginations of the thousands of people who will always have a piece of Inverness history with them.

Here are a few of those memories.

Francis "Chalk" MacDougall

"When a person thinks of what a quarter means today, it isn't really much. But back in the 50's and 60's, a quarter meant a show-fare, a pop, chips, and a licorice. I can remember getting to some of the shows late and lining up a block and a half away to get in, down by where the Brother's Restaurant is today. I'm sure a lot of people can remember this. There were no televisions back then. All we had was the show hall, and we spent a lot of time there.

"Western movies were very popular in Inverness, and my favorites were *The Lone Ranger* and *Shoot Out at the OK Corral.*

"Nobody had what they called an 'allowance' in Inverness, our money was simply called show fare because everything was centered around the theater.

"Sometimes we were pretty resourceful kids, though. If we couldn't scrape the money together to get in, we would save our ticket from the week before or sneak under the wicket when people weren't looking. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. We were just kids."

Mary Ellison

"The Tubetti family was really a second family to me. I was friends with George's sister Francis. We used to hang around the show hall all the time. They would let me help out around, maybe sweep up, or sell tickets. That would give me a free pass to the movies. Jimmy Tubetti would sit around and tell me all kinds of stories, and when I think back, it makes me smile.

"John Dan "Sool" MacDonald used to run the projector for years and years. He was absolutely hilarious with his jokes and crazy antics that he used to pull off. Most of them you can't print, but he always had somebody in the theater in stitches laughing.

"As teenagers, we thought that the show was everything to us. Boyfriends and girlfriends would go holding hands. It was the thing to do. Couples usually sat in the back so they could kiss. And no matter what the weather was outside, the idea was that the show must go on, and it always did, and we were always there."

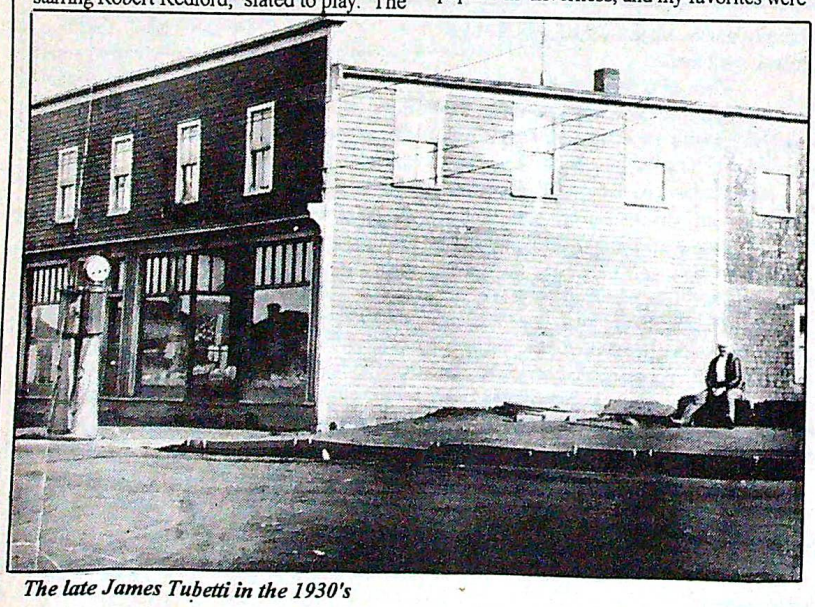
Neil Campbell

"The first night movie I ever went to was a monster movie called *Godzilla* in the early 50's. My sister took me. It was quite a treat, and as soon as the lights went down, everyone in the theater cheered. You certainly don't see that anywhere.

"Another movie I can remember was *Tora! Tora! Tora!* which was about the bombing of Pearl Harbour. We went to see it in the middle of the school day from the Holy Family High School. Admission was a cut out from a Red Rose tea box. You don't see that anywhere either.

"There were nothing but great memories in that building. There were chip bag fights with the old tin foil bags. Some of us tried sneaking in through the canteen. And I can remember one movie started off

(continued next page)



The late James Tubetti in the 1930's