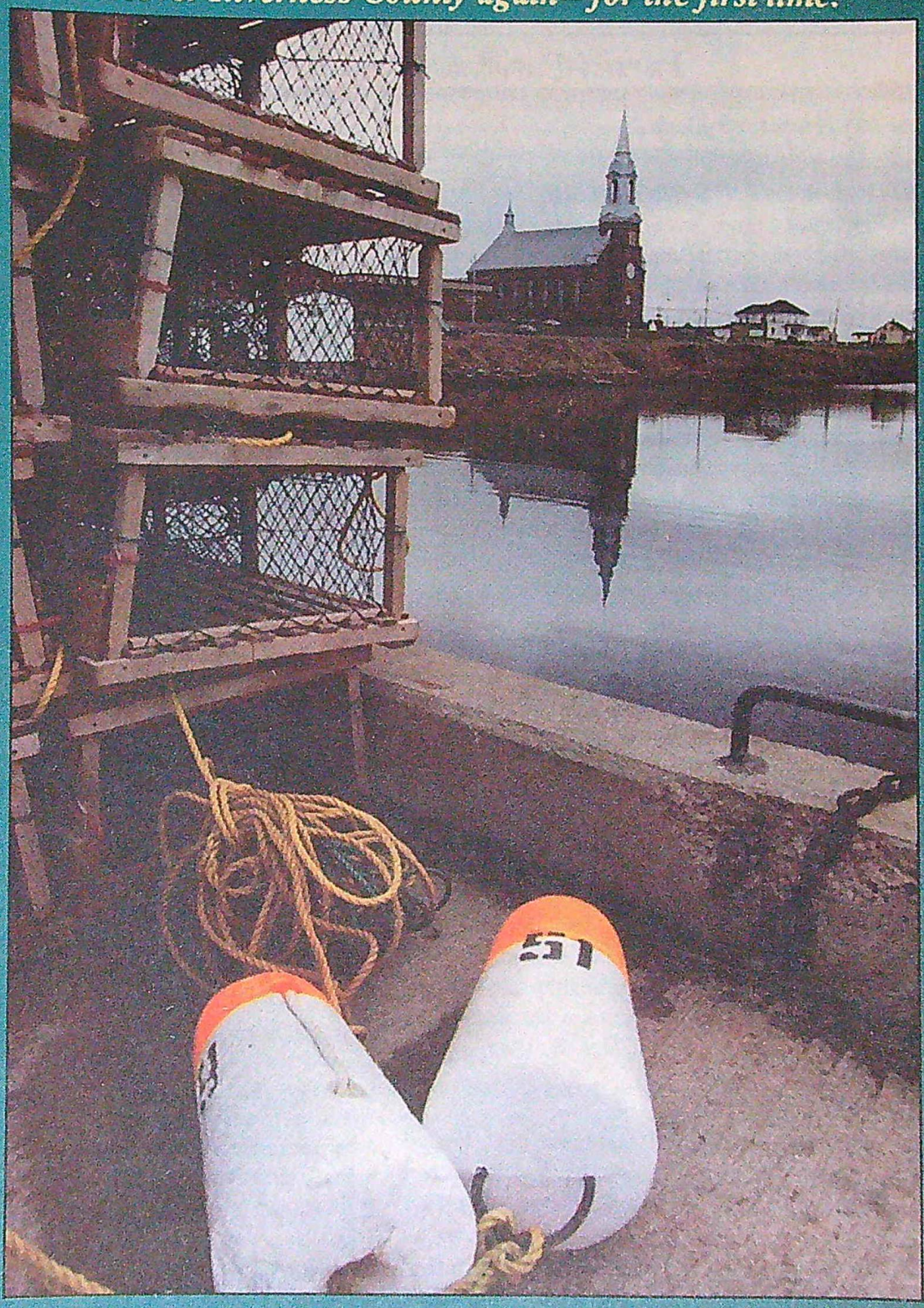
Partici-Paper

Discover Inverness County again-- for the first time!



Cheticamp: photo by Daniel Aucoin

Inverness
County
Cape Breton
Nova Scotia

July/August 1996
Volume 17, No.4

Municipal Budget Summary

see pages 15-17

Partici-Paper, July/August 1996, Volume 17, No.4

from the Director's Desk . . .

FESTIVAL & EVENTS BROCHURE:

By this time every mailbox, businesses included, has received a copy of the *1996 Summer Events Brochure*. We encourage residents across the county to come out and have fun at the festivals in your own community but to enjoy the many events happening in communities all over the County. Be sure to keep this schedule as a resource to help plan your summer activities.

The Recreation/Tourism Department welcomes information for events not finalized before our brochure deadline. Throughout the summer, our office will receive requests for information, so give us your details and we will be happy to pass the information along!

RECREATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Registration for fall courses in Inverness County has been scheduled for the week of September 16 - 20th. For more information and a list of programmers check this issue.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROMOTION

Just a reminder that the deadline for applications for the *Community Health Promotion Fund (CHPF)* is Friday, July 26, 1996 at 4:40 pm. Information and applications on the *Community Health Promotion Fund (CHPF)* are available through the Inverness County Recreation/Tourism Department in Port Hood and your local Public Health office.

MUSEUMS

Summer is here and there are over twelve museums found throughout the county. We encourage you to visit, explore your family history, watch a demonstration of weaving, spinning, rug hooking or participate in a good old fashioned milling frolic! For a complete listing contact the Recreation/Tourism office at 787-2274.

RUNNING CIRCUIT

Copies are now available of the 1996 running circuit race schedule. For further information on the races contact the Recreation/Tourism office at 787-2274.

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Deadline for the September issue: August 6

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Partici-Paper is published six times a year by the Inverness County Department of Recreation and Tourism; John Cotton Director, Box 179, Municipal Building, Port Hood, N.S. BOE 2WO. Phone: 902-787-2274. Contributions of information, articles, photos, etc. are welcome. This publication is a service for the residents of Inverness County. Other subscribers: $5.40 per year, Canadian; and $6.78 per year, U.S. Please send payment for subscriptions to the Recreation Department.

Printed by *The Pictou Advocate*

Part One: ***Martin Boston****, The Orangedale Station;* ***Valery and Lawrence Arsenault****, The Salty Mariner;* ***Mark Timmon and Tina Roach****, whale and seal cruises;* ***Daniel Aucoin and Sandra LeFort****, Trois Pignons;* ***Stu and Slawa Lamont****, Mill Valley B&B;* ***Marilyn Harrison****, Harrison Hill House,* ***Alistair MacLeod****, MacLeod's Inn;* ***Betty Ann MacQuarry****, Tourism Cape Breton;* ***Burton MacIntyre****, Whycocomagh Summer Festival;* ***Yvonne Fox****, Tilden's Rent-a-Car.*

Part Two: **(IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE)** ***Eleanor Mullendore****, Duncreigan Inn;* ***Leflie McDaniel, Brenda Rankin and Marie MacDonald,*** *The Glenora Distillery;* ***Rilla McLean*** *on tourism for the handicapped;* ***Georg and Elvi Kargoll****, Haus Treuburg;* ***Michael and Karen Gillis****, MacKinnon's Campground.*

Interviews by Mary Anne Ducharme

The series of articles on the next several pages are condensed from informal conversations with some of the doers and dreamers in Inverness County. These are people with entrepreneurial spirit and good business sense and they help make tourism grow in the County. Most share the view that there is potential for tourism to be a leading factor in our economic future. However, the scene is complex, requiring endless fine-tuning as new travel patterns and opportunities materialize. The future may hold surprising trends that could see Cape Breton and all of the Maritimes a "hot-spot" destination for travellers from around the world.

As tourism becomes a leading world-wide economic activity in the next millennium, we have to examine what we want as a share in this enormous market-place. To what extent is tourism development also good for those who live in our communities? What are the pitfalls we want to avoid? When is there enough or too much tourism? How important is it to plan collectively for tourism development in our small villages-- as a County-- and as an Island? Are we doing a good job of educating young people about business opportunity? How are we doing in terms of promotion? How well does the network of government, operator associations, and individual businesses interrelate? These are some of the questions and issues that come up frequently, along with other personal perspectives that are interesting in their own right.

Tourists give us an important gift: they help us see the familiar in a fresh way -- for instance, how lucky we are to live in a part of the world that is clean and uncrowded, with natural beauty all around us. They also help us realize the value of our lively cultural heritage. At appropriate levels to preserve all that, tourism is an endlessly renewable resource.

"Small, rural, pristine: for some people these are very attractive in this over-crowded world."

Martin Boston
Orangedale Station

The big museum and heritage attractions like Louisbourg and The Alexander Graham Bell museum are major calling cards for tourism and the reason why many people visit Cape Breton. However, the small museums and the small communities are also extremely worthwhile for those who want to understand an area, and not just rush down the road quickly. Some people are looking for places to vacation that are small, rural and pristine: these are very attractive in this over-crowded world.

We have some marvellous little museums all through Inverness County with knowledgeable staff people. Last year the Orangedale Station acquired rolling stock: a boxcar, a caboose, a flatcar, a snow plow, and this year our funds are at an all-time low. I don't see that the Orangedale Station should try for more acquisition of rolling stock. It is better to do a good job of maintaining what we already have.

In late June, we celebrated the 100th birthday of Orangedale Station and we expect that we will have nearly 5,000 people sign the guest book this summer. Most visitors have heard of us by word of mouth, through the Tourism Bureau in Port Hastings, and through the Rankin Family song *Orangedale Whistle*. That song has been a great boost for us. Visitors enjoy our tours because we take time to talk to them and we don't rush them through.

There is a core of people who are enthusiastic railroad buffs who subscribe to railroad magazines and they have read about us. They come from all kinds of places in Canada, the States, Europe, and even Australia and New Zealand. European travellers comment on how cheap our prices are in Nova Scotia-- for example in Germany, they pay three times what we do for a gallon of gasoline. .

The small museums, like our own, have a constant struggle and often exist hand to mouth despite many hundreds of hours of volunteer time and effort given by their small memberships. Government funding is diminished and we have to rely more on fundraisers, like tickets on food baskets, donated crafts, walk-a-thons, suppers, bake sales. This is all a lot of work for those who donate time and goods and for the volunteers who organize. A positive of this is the pride of having your own money, money raised by local people, and not handed out by government. It gives people a sense of ownership and accomplishment and the ones involved don't take the museum for granted. This year we have about 14 people who are active and involved volunteers, including three students, and this is a move in a positive direction. We need a lot more people to take an active interest in supporting local museums through volunteering.

One of the things often discussed at meetings of the Iona Connection is that the small museums need to form a support network for themselves so that our concerns have weight provincially, and perhaps we should do some cooperative advertising.

On my wish list is hope for growth in visitorship, in community involvement, in promotional efforts and in the number of small souvenir/ information-type publications available for tourists to purchase. A problem we need to solve is how to get tour buses off the Trans-Canada so more people can discover the Orangedale Station and other little museums.

The Port Hawkesbury Waterfront Commission is negotiating to obtain a passenger coach, and there is a possibility that there could be a return day trip by rail between Port Hawkesbury and the Highland Village at Iona, with a scheduled stop at Orangedale so that the visitors could tour the station and the community museum and gift shop. I believe that with the right promotion, the rail buffs would come in droves, and soon there would have to be several coaches for the train. In the autumn of the year, when the leaves are at their peak, it would be a truly spectacular excursion!

" Small places too often get left out of the tourism picture: we want more tourism -- as long as we don't end up paving paradise."

Valery and Lawrence Arsenault
The Salty Mariner
Pleasant Bay

It is difficult for us to promote or develop tourism in Pleasant Bay when tourists never even see it on maps or hear about it at the information bureaus. The larger areas get a lot of publicity, and the smaller communities get left out of the picture. This is a shame, because people are missing some truly beautiful areas and experiences when they go around the trail in a one-day rush. A lot of people are advised to take the Trans-Canada straight to Baddeck

"the beginning and end of the Cabot Trail"-- too many tourists whiz by the lovely little places that our Island has to offer because they don't know enough about them. Our small villages pay a lot of taxes for their business operations and they deserve at least to be recognized as being in existence in government promotions.

On the cover of the lure piece publication put out by Enterprise Cape Breton recently is a lovely scene of a part of the Cabot Trail. However Pleasant Bay has been left out completely from the map. The ECBC lure piece was included in information about the new organization called Tourism Cape Breton, and so it put that in a bad light too, as far as we are concerned.

Many tourism associations want our membership but we are not convinced that we benefit from the high cost. The bureaucracy has gotten bulky and it very hard for people to sort it all out and to see which program and special listing designation is worthwhile. Let's simplify! The Check Inns system is worth it, and we found that it was cheaper than having our own 1-800 number which some people are doing. Word of mouth advertising is the best way for us to gain customer support, and there is no fee we have to pay for that. We treat our guests very well, and they are happy about staying here.

The Doer's and Dreamer's Guide has been a good promotion for us but sometimes we are not make aware soon enough of the deadline date for inclusion. The Provincial Department of Tourism has won promotion awards but if it wants to stay on top, it can't allow too many slips. We have had guests who commented that they received requested tourism information from PEI and New Brunswick, but nothing from Nova Scotia.

We think that much more should be done to make the Canso Causeway area more attractive-- clean it up and repair the causeway entrance area itself-- use flags, lights, more landscaping, more welcoming and interesting signs along the way.

We are finding an increase in European travellers, particularly from Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Many Canadian customers originate in Ontario, with Quebec after that. If we had to quantify, we would say that 65% are European or American, with an average stay of two days. We don't get a high proportion of families here with young children, but get more people who are middle aged or seniors. We also get quite a number of younger people who are bicyclists, and hikers. The hikers love Pollet's Cove, North Mountain and Asby Bay. There is at present no guided hiking or other outdoor wilderness adventure packages -- these are areas of opportunity not yet tapped.

The setting here really is *"a pleasant bay,"* and we are well-positioned to have a share of Cabot Trail business, but we have to give the whole community more of a resort-look to it, with eye-catching signs, and flowers. Tourism can be sustainable forever and it can be environmentally friendly, but if it is not strategically planned for the entire Cabot Trail, we may end up paving paradise and destroying the peace, quiet and pristine wilderness that is the real attraction here. There has to be a rational plan or overall view for tourism development for small communities too -- some guiding principles that will avoid problems of exploitation-- both from the local point of view, and the tourist point of view. But consulting with each other, gaining consensus and cooperation are hard to achieve.

Because of the downsizing of the fishery, a lot of people want to jump on the tourism bandwagon.. Standards for food service and accommodation and gift shops should not just be on paper -- they should be *enforced* so that we do not see substandard facilities popping up like mushrooms everywhere. We hear complaints from tourists, for instance, about eat-in places with no washrooms. There are opportunities for all kinds of upgrading and growth so that more people can have tourism-related work, but let's think it through. We have a population of 250 people, and there are seven restaurants, and a number of small gift shops. How can they all survive? How can we manage things so that *everyone* has chances to benefit from tourism?

Some developments wouldn't be appropriate to this place. If the proposed gold mine in Cheticamp goes forward, it may well create many jobs and help the economy, but that kind of heavy industry will profoundly and visibly change the area, affecting tourism and the delicate balances of the eco-system.

The proposed Whale Interpretation Centre, which is in the planning stages and will involve a combination of public and private funds, would be a major attraction that would draw people here to stay for two or three days before they complete their Cabot Trail tour.

Interviews continued page 6

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