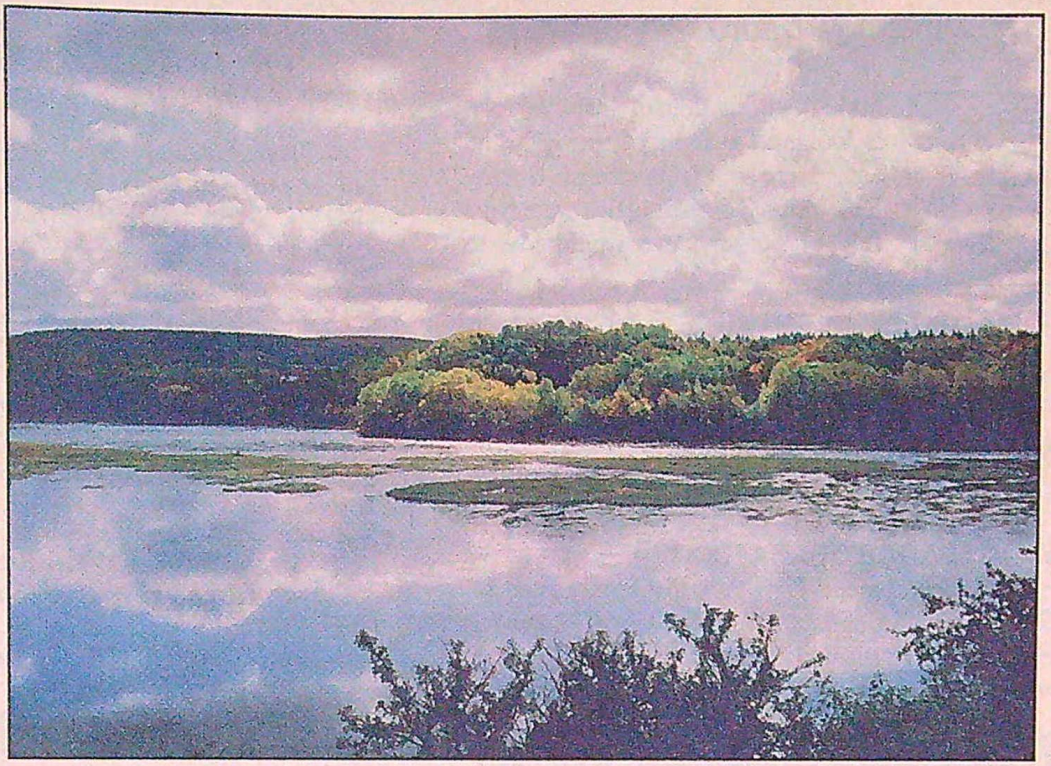
Spring!

Partici-Paper



Inverness
County
Cape Breton
Nova Scotia

March/ April 1996
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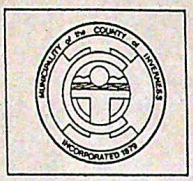
from The Director's Desk . . .



Just about this time of year everyone is looking for signs of spring in the air. Here in the Inverness County Recreation/Tourism office we have a few of our own we would like to share.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

One sure sign of Spring is our annual Volunteer Awards Night. The Municipality will honour volunteers the night of Wednesday, April 24 at the Municipal Building in Port Hood. See inside this issue for details on nominating a volunteer.

COUNTY CRIBBAGE TOURNAMENT

Several cribbage tournaments have recently been hosted in various communities throughout Inverness County. Each of these tournaments will be sending representatives to play at the Annual Inverness County Cribbage Tournament slated for Saturday, March 30th in Mabou. All the best to the participants! Be sure to check the next issue of *Partici-Paper* for more details and pictures of the winning team.

WINTERFEST '96 CRIBBAGE TOURNAMENT

Another popular cribbage tournament is the Cape Breton Winterfest Cribbage Tournament, an annual fundraiser for the Mabou Minor Hockey Association. This tournament is separate from the County Cribbage Tournament. The tournament will take place at the Mabou Community Hall on Saturday, April 20th. Check page 31 in this issue for further information on the registration fee, time and prizes.

WE CAN HELP PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS:

The Recreation/Tourism Department is available to assist non-profit organizations in promoting special events and activities. 1) *Radio:* The weekly recreation report is aired every Thursday on CIGO and CJFX. Information must be in by noon on Wednesday. You can notify this office by phone (902) 787-2274 fax (902) 787-3110 or by mail. 2) *Partici-Paper:* All Inverness County non-profit organizations can have their events promoted free of charge in *Partici-Paper*. For more information contact *Partici-Paper* editor Mary Anne Ducharme.

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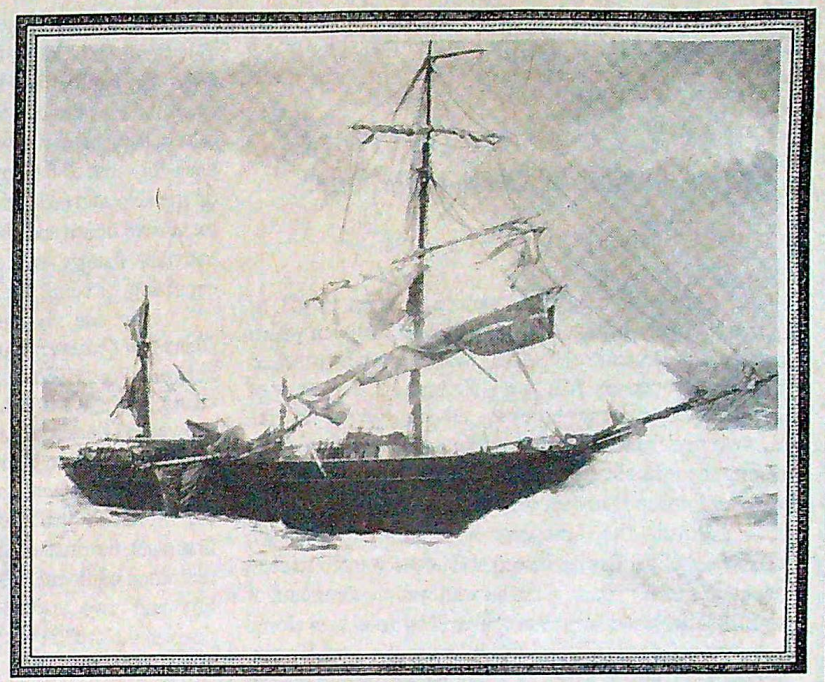
Seven true eye witness accounts of

Inverness County Shipwrecks

Part III of *Men, Fish & Wooden Boats* (Jan./ Feb. issue)



The Watch Below

by Mary Anne Ducharme

Within the concealing vault of the sea, buried on the floor bottom, are not only the remains of lost wooden ships. There lie also thousands of men, women and children who began a journey in hope and promise, and ended it in tragedy. The spirits of the drowned keep the watch below.

The first recorded wreck in the province was in 1583 when the *H.M.S. Delight* sank on Sable Island. There are thousands of other documented shipwrecks in Nova Scotia waters, with uncounted others unknown.

In 1988, eight years after the passage of the Special Places Protection Act in Nova Scotia, a computerized list of wrecks was begun which incorporated information on the vessels, the human caualties, and the wreck locations. The Nova Scotia Shipwreck Inventory, designed as an aid in protecting archaelogical sites, uncovered discrepancies in official records from sources such as the the Department of Transport's list of shipping casualties, and the Department of Marine and Fisheries' lists of wrecks.

This inventory is extremely important to our marine history, but it is only when eye witness accounts have been preserved do we begin to understand the horrific human costs behind the lists and the bare facts.

In August of 1873, it is estimated that a thousand Nova Scotians never returned home, perishing at sea. Countless vessels in various ports dragged ashore and were damaged or destroyed as were wharves and houses. There was another famous storm of similar ferocity in August of 1926.

Despite loss of life, there were those who welcomed the seredipity of a thorough wreck. Supplies were desperately needed in the scattered settlements on shore. While families offered aid and sometimes a permanent home to survivors,they still claimed the right of salvage.

Our ancestors were not *always* kind, however. There were also "wreckers," those who deliberately lured ships to the rocks, who murdered the survivors, and who profited enormously from the spoils. The 1978 book by David Stuart Dow called *Cliff Hanger House*, contains the chilling account of a Mafia-like family in Cape Breton making an enormous fortune by wrecking. This it a novel, but it contains elements of evil that are based on real history.

The seven accounts given here are about survival, about courage, and about those safe on shore who gave everything they could to help.

continued page four

The Watch Below, continued

The St.Lawrence survivors
Little Judqiue or Mabou Harbour?
1780

One of the most dramatic stories in all of Inverness County history is that of *The St. Lawrence* which foundered in December of 1780. Whether it was wrecked at Little Judique or Margaree Harbour is a matter of historical controversy because the survivors of the *St.Lawrence* themselves did not know where they were. Among the men aboard was an Ensign Prenties who later wrote an firsthand account of the experience.

During the American Revolutionary War, the commander of the British forces at Quebec wanted to send dispatches to Sir Henry Clinton who was in command of the British forces in New York. Travel by road was closed and so the important dispatches had to be sent by sea. Accordingly, they were made out in duplicate, and sent by two separate vessels so that if one vessel failed to get through, the other would no doubt get there. One vessel was lost with all hands on board in a storm. The other set of dispatches were on *The St.Lawrence.*

The St.Lawrence, heavily coated with ice in the same storm, passed the Magdalene Islands in a swirling snowstorm so thick that the crew could not see the mast on deck. The captian and some of the crew were drunk and when the seas broke over the quarterdeck and flooded the cabins, the captain was washed out of his bed where he had been for most of the voyage. Ensign Prenties took control of the ship and ordered the sailors to man the pumps, but these were frozen and *The St. Lawrence* staggered along in constant danger of being thrown on her beam ends, capsizing, or being swamped.

In one version of the story in the *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly* (June 1978), *The St.Lawrence* passed between Port Hood Island and Henry Island, and finally struck shore at Little Judique on December 5th. The keel and vessel's backbone were broken, and long, high breakers forced all hands to take refuge in the rigging. Finally they launched a boat with great difficulty and the men reached the shore with their clothing freezing to their bodies. The first night, the drunken ship's carpenter and the captain who remained on board, froze to death. That night on shore, a boy and two sailors also froze. All suffered frostbite despite the fact they were able to light a fire. With debris from the wreck, they were able to build a crude lean-to shelter, and eight men remained there, too sick to travel.

As weeks passed, the number of survivors were decreasing every day, and the men who were able-bodied trekked miles along rivers (either the Margaree or the

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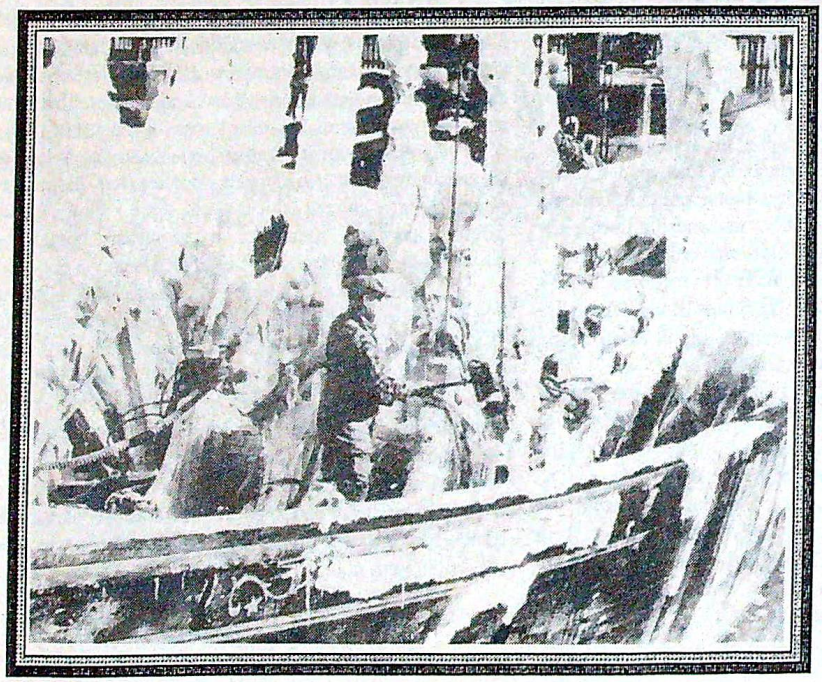

This 1930's photo by Ewing Gallowway in *Men, Fish and Boats* illustrates one of the hazards encountered on the St. Lawrence. Heavy ice build-up makes the ship top-heavy and unstable. A method used to combat ice was to borrow a stick of cord wood from the cook, bore a hole in it and run a broom stick through. Waving this sledge around high over head dislodges big ice chunks. This is hard work in calm waters at dockside. On a slippery, heaving deck, it is almost unimaginable.

Another danger was "window pane ice" -- clear sheetings of ice on the water surface. In very few minutes, this kind of ice can saw through 3 inch planking and destroy small vessels.

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Sir William Young: Lawyer and politician

"On behalf of a delegation from Judique"

by Bill Graham, Judique

On August 17, 1835, a parcel of land was purchased by William and George Young of Halifax from Andrew MacDonald, Trader, Judique, and the conveyance was recorded in the Office of the Registry of Deeds on the same date. The purchase price was £100 and the lot contained 70 acres, more or less. The land was described as being located at Judique on the north side of the River Denys Road, extending from the present Route 19 to the Doctor's Road. This land was conveyed to Bishop Colin MacKinnon in the year 1853 for the parish of St. Andrew's, Judique. Five acres were retained by the parish and the remainder conveyed back to the MacDonalds. The former lot is located now on both sides of Lauchlin Drive.

Who was this man William Young, and why did he purchase land in Judique? Historical records tell us that Sir William Young was born at Falkirk, Scotland in 1799 and he died in Halifax on May 8, 1887. He was a son of John Young of Falkirk, Stirlingshire, who emigrated to Halifax. William received honors at the University of Glasgow and was admitted to the bar of Nova Scotia in 1826 and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1843.

When he had established his reputation and became comparatively independent in circumstances, he entered the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia as a Liberal member, having been retained in 1833 to represent the Island of Cape Breton when it formed an electoral district.

This first venture into politics was ill-fated. During the voting in Port Hood, Young's supporters prevented Smith's followers from casting their ballots, resulting in a bloody riot. An account of this was recorded by James D. Gillis in his collection of poems called *The Great Election.* After Young's election was challenged and later declared null and void, he was replaced by his opponent, Richard Smith.

In 1836, the County of Juste-au-Corps was established with William Young elected as its first representative. In 1837, on behalf of a delegation from Judique headed by Rev. Alex MacDonell, Young presented a resolution to the House of Assembly to have the name of the county changed to Inverness. Father MacDonell and most of his parishioners were from Invernesshire, Scotland, hence the desire to have their native land perpetuated in New Scotland.

It can be assumed here that the requirement to own property in the electoral district was the reason for Young's purchase of property in Judique in 1835.

In 1830, Young, a Presbyterian, married Anne, the daughter of the Honorable Michael Tobin, a Roman Catholic. An article published by Justice Doull in the 1960's recalls the case of Cartin vs.

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