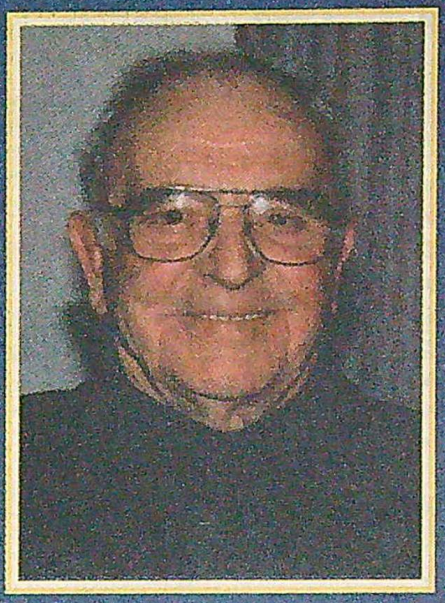
# The Participaper

Inverness County

Mar/Apr/May 2002



*Inverness County "Volunteer of the Year" representative, Harry Neynens*

## From The Director's Desk

### THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

On April 24 the Municipality honoured just over 50 volunteers at the annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony. Over 1500 volunteers have been nominated by their peers and honoured at the Municipality's volunteer recognition ceremonies over the last 22 years.

We know this is just a small sampling of the many thousands that are out in their own communities, quietly working behind the scenes and giving so generously of their time. The County is sincerely thankful for the time and energy ALL of our volunteers dedicate to their communities.

As a Municipal Recreation/Tourism office we are in touch with volunteers on a daily basis. We know that our work throughout the county would not be possible without the many volunteer contacts we have established over the years.

Our rural communities would not thrive without our volunteers. However, in order to grow and become more vibrant communities there is a need to bring fresh faces and energy to our meetings. Even volunteers who enjoy what they do, need a break now and then. We cannot keep letting the same volunteers continue to do all of the work.

When the fun goes out of volunteering, people experience "*burn out*". Many volunteers in our communities are involved in more than one organization or charity and many have given 20, 30 and even 40 years of service. There is always room for more volunteers of all ages. We need to have more young families, and especially youth, get involved. Young people will find that volunteering can be a rewarding experience that can give them the skills and experience that could ultimately lead to a job, and, that they can make a difference in their own communities.

### SENIORS GAMES:

Revitalize your health and your social life - take part in this year's Inverness County Seniors Games, open to those 50 years+. This year's games will take place on Saturday, June 1, at the Inverness Academy on Cabot Street in Inverness. Come out for a little friendly competition, entertainment, socializing and informative workshops and lots of fun. Registration for the Senior Games is being taken by local Senior's clubs throughout Inverness County.

*Director's Desk Continues on Page 31*

**The Participaper**
Editor
Marie Aucoin
P.O. Box 43, Chéticamp, NS, BOE 1HO
Phone: (902) 224-1759
email: m.aucoin@ns.sympatico.ca
(for subscription requests see below)

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Marie Cameron
Recreation and Tourism Department
P.O. Box 179, Municipal Building,
Port Hood, NS, BOE 2WO
or, email her at: marie@invernessco.com
or by phone at: (902) 787-2274

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**Submission Deadline for the July/August issue of the Participaper is June 14, 2002**

# The Dutch Of Inverness County - From the Netherlands

*By Virginia MacIsaac*

Fifty years ago, Neynens, Peeters, and Van Zutphens came to Nova Scotia as immigrants, along with other Dutch families who arrived here between 1950 and 1960. Some came via other provinces or countries. All arrived hoping to find a better future for themselves and their children - a better future than that which they had envisioned for themselves in post-war Holland.

Van den Heuvel, van de Ven, Boomgaars, van den Hoogens, Heukshorst, and Rooyakkers are all familiar names now in Inverness County. What were the circumstances that led to their arrival in the small communities of rural Nova Scotia? After World War II, rural areas throughout Canada were depopulating at an accelerated pace. In order to stabilize the population of these areas, the Department of Immigration proposed that the Dutch be designated as preferred immigrants.

An agreement between Canada and Holland was struck in 1946 when the Netherlands Emigration Foundation was established and potential immigrants to Canada were selected and screened. In 1947 the Netherlands Farm Families Movement began measures to entice Dutch farmers to come to Canada. Although Dutch immigrants arrived regularly over a period of many years, almost 185,000 arrived on our shores between 1947 and 1970. In 1996 the census identified 41,475 people of Dutch origin in Nova Scotia.

The Dutch government of the day encouraged an emigration policy for several reasons. First of all, the population of Holland (which is geographically smaller than Nova Scotia and now has twelve times the population of our small province) was increasing. Secondly, the German invasion had led to the flooding of much arable land in Holland and there were long waiting lists for farmland. And finally, it was often the case that farms had to be rented or leased, so there wasn't enough land left for fathers to pass down to sons who wished to farm, as had been the tradition previously.

*On Sept 11, 1960, Fred Heukshorst and members of his family attended the opening of the Lady of Sorrows shrine in Mabou.*

Recruiters came to Holland with fine films and stories of farmland available in Canada. However, many of the farms the Dutch settlers were able to purchase when they emigrated were not the neat productive farms shown in the films. They were abandoned and rocky farmsteads that required much concentrated effort to bring them into production. Through hard work, dogged perseverance - and the occasional helping hand of friendly neighbours - the Dutch immigrants carved out productive lives for themselves in the relative isolation of rural Inverness County.

On paper, there were several reasons why moving to Nova Scotia made good sense for immigrants. Farmland was less expensive than in Ontario; Catholicism was the prevalent religion - especially in Inverness and Antigonish counties; Nova Scotia Land Settlement Boards assisted with loans; the Canso Causeway opened, allowing bulk deliveries of feed and fertilizer; and, cooperatives were well established here.

However, there were practical issues to be dealt with that almost outweighed the pluses. Most of the farms in Inverness County had been subsistence farms and were underdeveloped as commercial enterprises.

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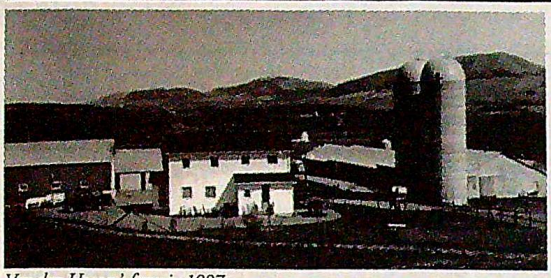
*Ancestors Unlimited is unavailable for this issue only. Look for it in the next issue, due out in July.*



*Van den Hoogen's farm in 1987*

Some had been abandoned for years and had neither electricity nor running water. The van den Hoogens, who arrived in 1956, remember hauling water for the animals and the household the first winter that they had moved onto their farm. Like an Duinne MacIsaac - who spent part of a winter with cousin Neil MacDougall in the earlier settlement years - the van den Hoogens spent six weeks with their relatives the van Zutphens, who had in turn spent a month with the Westerlinks when they first arrived.

Furthermore there was difficulty obtaining supplies and necessities. In Holland, these were only a bicycle ride away, and baked goods and produce were brought to the door daily. Here, the families were miles from stores, churches, and schools. The bitter cold and long winters, heavy snows and frosty winds were unfamiliar challenges to the new arrivals.

To further complicate matters, the Dutch settlers did not speak English. Fortunately the children learned quickly, and many in turn, taught their parents. In some families however, there were times when the parents could not understand the children with their English speech. Mrs. van de Ven, whose family went to Iona before coming to Brookvillage and Mull River, worked as housekeeper for the priest in Iona. To help her purchase the right ingredients, she would take box-tops and packaging labels with her to the grocery store.

Because it was so remote compared to Holland, some families described where they came to live as 'the back of beyond', and would have returned to Holland if they had the money. The van den Heuvels did just that, after spending 11 years in Canada. Seven months later they returned, and in 1972 moved to Brookvillage, where van den Heuvels still reside.

Mrs. Mary Peeters was not a world traveler. However when her husband died before he could move the family to Canada as he had hoped, she sent her oldest son, Bill, across the ocean to find land. Two daughters subsequently followed him to find work. The next year, in 1951, Mrs. Peeters arrived in New York. From there she traveled to Ontario and made several trips to Nova Scotia before purchasing a farm here. Eleven children were born in Holland and all of them came to Canada, with the exception of the youngest daughter who remained in Holland with relatives.

As was the case with their Nova Scotian neighbours...family and religion were two of the most important priorities in the daily life of the Dutch families. However, although they shared that trait, there were also many cultural differences, therefore, at times there was great loneliness to contend with. When the Dutch families were able to make contact with relatives and friends there was much to talk about, but because of distances and commitment to the farm they didn't travel often.

That is why visits by Father Englebertus van de Ven, who was commissioned out of the P.E.I. diocese to be Chaplain of the Dutch Immigrants between 1958 and 1968, were so important. He is remembered for organizing 'Dutch Days' - usually held in Bras d'Or for the Cape Breton contingent. He took many pictures of his travels and recorded the early days of Dutch settlement in the Maritimes. He passed away in 1985, a much-respected pastor.

*Family of Johanna and Franciscus Van den Hoogen in Holland in 1924. Elizabeth and William (back row, 2nd and 3rd from left), emigrated to Canada in the 1950's.*

Something else that was different here in Canada was the school system. In Holland the children went to school until age 11, or about Grade Seven. After that, the choice was made whether to take agricultural training, trades training, religious training, university prep, or go to work. Some women were able to continue their education and train in domestic studies; many men who immigrated to Canada had taken agricultural courses. This background served families well as they laboured to turn small family farms into productive and efficient commercial enterprises.

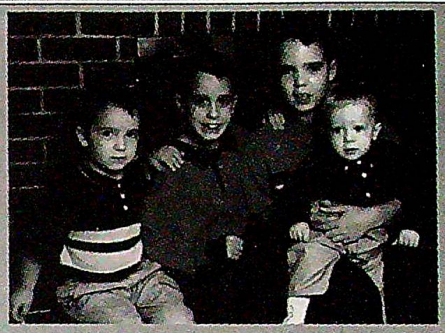
Farming was not the only contribution these immigrants made. In Inverness County there are now numerous enterprises begun by and carried on by their descendants. Construction, information technology, legal work, pulp and logging, food service and production are just a few areas that are prospering and adding to the lifeblood of the area.

Another Dutch group, the Brothers of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, has left lasting mementos in this place that they called home for many years. The Brothers' Farm, the Students' Residence, the Brothers' Residence, Mary's Hill Home for the Mentally Handicapped, and the Mother of Sorrow's Shrine - all of these enterprises, which fulfilled some need in the community. The Shrine remains a landmark and is mentioned in many stories of suffering or joy among county residents.

Many seeds have been planted and much has been sown. May we all be inspired to look forward to prosperous days in Inverness County. ❄

[Information for this article and photographs were obtained in Volumes 1 and 2 of *The Postwar Immigration of the Dutch to Inverness County, Nova Scotia,* compiled by Annie Cox, Bro. Paul Sterk, and Tony van den Hoogen. These can be seen at the Mabou museum. Thanks to Effie Rankin for making them available.]

Some on-line resources on this topic that may be of interest to readers are:
http://collections.ic.gc.ca/heirloom_series/volume7/countries/countries.html (click on Netherlands)
http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/canada1946/dutch.html
http://www.findfamilyfun.com/lynden.htm Travel adventures
http://www.dutchmarket.com/ppbooks.html Dutch books, calendars
http://infoweb.magi.com/~vanbommel/dutchimm.html



*The great-great grandchildren of Franciscus and Johanna van den Hoogen, these are the children of David and Lorraine (van Zutphen) MacIsaac of Judique*

*Some background information on the Dutch emigrants:*

In the ten years following World War II the Netherlands was struggling out of economic ruin caused by the war. Families were large, land was scarce. Russia loomed menacing by in the east. Many Dutch looked west to Canada as a land of opportunity.

Encouraged by the Dutch and Canadian governments, thousands of Dutch immigrants came to Canada, many of them under the Netherlands Farm Families movement, which encouraged farmers to emigrate by paying their travel expenses. From 1946 to 1950, almost twenty-six thousand Dutch immigrants arrived in Canada. That number had quadrupled to one hundred and three thousand three hundred by 1957. In some cases, whole villages moved.

By the mid-1950's a dramatic economic upturn began and emigration slackened. In 1971 there were fourteen thousand eight hundred Canadians of Dutch extraction in Nova Scotia. Most of the Dutch immigrants were farmers and brought a wealth of experience in dairy, market gardening, and intensive farming techniques.

William Cox, the father of Leo, wrote a book, *Separated by Fear Reunited in Joy.* It tells of the family's life in the Netherlands along the German border as the war progressed and as immigrants to Canada.

Annie Huekshorst Cox and Annie Van Zutphen Beaton have both described their lives in Holland during the war and their families' lives subsequent to their emigration to Canada in the 1950's. These descriptions appeared in the June 1982 issue of the *Participaper.* ❄