

Naidheachd a' Chlachain

Nova Scotia Highland Village Society



(The Village News)

Winter/An Geamhradh 1996

Margaret MacPhail



LITTLE NARROWS BRIDGE 1896? • SUMMER OF 1996

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 From the Manager's Desk
By Rodney Chaisson
- 5 Message from the President
By J. Bruce MacNeil
- 6 The Summer of 1996 in Review
Summer News from Hector's Point
- 8 "Christmas"
Excerpt from AUNT PEGGY FROM LOCH BRAS D'OR
- 10 Crossing the Strait of Julia
An 1896 proposal for a Bridge at Little Narrows
- 11 Alex Matheson's Blacksmith Shop
Photo's of the South Haven Blacksmith and his shop for which our forge is named.

On the Cover: Margaret MacPhail, the author of LOCH BRAS D'OR, THE GIRL FROM LOCH BRAS D'OR and the BRIDE OF LOCH BRAS D'OR. We celebrated Women's History Month in October with a session remembering Margaret and her contributions to Cape Breton culture through these great books.

Naidheachd a' Chlachain

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Naidheachd a' Chlachain (The Village News) is published in Iona twice each year by the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society. Comments, suggestions and contributions are welcomed. You can contact us at:

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The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society is a non-profit Society with the mission: to protect, interpret and further the collection of buildings and artifacts at the Nova Scotia Highland Village site at Iona; and to preserve and promote the Scottish Highland and Island culture as found in Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society operates a 43-acre Museum and Cultural complex including the Highland Village Outdoor Pioneer Museum, Roots Cape Breton Computer Assisted Genealogy and Family History Centre, Highland Village Gift Shop, and Outdoor Entertainment and Theatre facility.

Board of Directors (1996-97):

President - Bruce MacNeil, Iona;

Vice-Pres. - Walter MacNeil, Sydney;

Sec./Treas. - Dan E. MacNeil, Iona;

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Donald Beaton, Little Narrows; Kate Currie,

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James Watson, Gaelic Instructor;

Timothy MacNeil, Maintenance Supervisor;

Gerry MacNeil, Gift Shop Supervisor;

Marie MacDonald, Textile Coordinator;

James MacKenzie, Farm Coordinator;

John MacDonald, Ironworks Coordinator;

Patricia MacNeil, Secretary;

Helena MacNeil, Sadie MacDonald & Stacy

MacNeil, Receptionists;

Glen MacKenzie, Groundskeeper; and Marie

Chehy, Beth MacNeil, Betty MacNeil, Kaye

Anne MacNeil & Vicky Quinby, Guides.

Memberships:

Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage, Canadian

Museums Association, Iona Connection,

Scottish Societies Association of Nova Scotia,

Nova Scotia Gaelic Council, Council of Nova

Scotia Archives, Genealogical Association of

Nova Scotia, Society for the Study of

Architecture in Canada, Tourism Cape Breton,

ICOMOS Canada, Association of Living

Historical Farms & Museums and Tourism

Industry Association of Nova Scotia.

From the Manager's Desk

Rodney Chaisson

WELCOME TO THE WINTER 1996 ISSUE OF *Naidheachd a' Chlachain*. It is very hard to believe that another season has sped by.

In this issue we will look back on the summer of 1996. As well we also remember one of Cape Breton's great women authors, Margaret MacPhail, with a Christmas story by her daughter, Mabel. The story called *Christmas* includes Mabel's reflections of her mother and family during this holiday season. Special thanks to Mabel for her

permission to reproduce this great story. Margaret wrote the Loch Bras d'Or Series which included three great books: *Loch Bras d'Or*, *The Girl from Loch Bras d'Or*, and *The Bride of Loch Bras d'Or*.

Another treat in this issue is an 1896 plan for a crossing at Little Narrows. Thanks to Fonce Farrell and Ann Marie MacKay passing this copy along.

Did you ever wonder the man of whom our forge is named after? Well to wrap up this issue of *Naidheachd a' Chlachain* we share some photos of Alex Matheson at work in his South Haven shop in the 1970's.

Our regular features including the *Curator's Corner*, *Microfilm Reel* and *Gàidhlig* will return in the next issue.

Over the past few years we have talked much about the new Museums

Assistance Policy (MAP) implemented by the Nova Scotia Museum to distribute almost \$800,000 to over 50 community museums throughout Nova Scotia. A portion of our Provincial Government funding is distributed through this program. This program has two main focuses: to distribute funding to community museums and to increase standards in museums in Nova Scotia. A requirement of funding under this program is an evaluation component. We have elected to be evaluated annually.

In 1995, our evaluation score was 64.7%, which gave us a placement of 10th out of 50 museums. These results emphasized our strengths and identified our weaknesses. Thus, over the winter of 1995-96 we undertook several projects aimed at increasing our standards and ultimately our evaluation score.

I am very pleased to share with you the results of our 1996 evaluation. Out of a present total of 56 museum funded under this program the Highland Village has increased its placement to 3rd with a score of 77.2%. The highest evaluation score is 79.3%.

Everyone involved with the Village, staff and volunteers deserve a large pat on the back for this achievement. It has taken a lot of work by a lot of people. Thank you to everyone. This achievement is another stepping stone in our vision of the Highland Village as a world-class museum.

There is, however, still lots of tasks to be done in preparation for our 1997 evaluation. We not only have to increase our standards, but we also have to be able to maintain these standards. Our Nova Scotia Museum grant has been red circled. This gives us special status within the parameters of this program. If our score slips then our status and the protection of our grant amount is in jeopardy.

As the Christmas season approaches I would like thank everyone who has supported us in any way over the past years. It is because of your effort that enables us to attain our vision. I also wish you all a very *Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*.

Nollaig Chridheil
Agus Blaidhna Mhath Ur

Membership - Fàilte!

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society would like to welcome several new members to the Society and would also like to welcome back members whose memberships have lapsed:

Pat & Catherine Bates, Sydney
 Dr. Mike Kennedy, Scotsville
 Yvonne & Robert Fox, Port Hastings
 Geoffrey May & Rebecca MacDonald May, Margaree Harbour
 Kate Currie, Sydney Mines
 Arlene MacLennan, River Denys
 Roderick MacGillivray, Sydney
 Donald MacEachern, Sydney
 John Joe MacGillivray, Sydney
 Cliff & Mary Murphy, Sydney
 John J. MacEachern, Mabou
 Mary Jane Lamond, Glendale
 Neil John Gillis, Jamesville
 Tim & Verna Murphy, Howie Centre
 Carleton MacNeil, Antigonish
 Jerome & Claudette Chaisson, Pictou
 Mary Decoste, Brookfield
 Anthony MacAdam, Halifax
 Scott MacMillan & Family, Halifax
 Joanne MacGillivray, Inukjuak, Quebec
 Cathy Czikk, Brantford, Ontario
 Daniel MacKinnon, Stroud, Ontario
 Elliott R. McDonald Jr., Davenport, Indiana
 Mary MacKenzie, Waltham, Mass.
 Larry MacNeil, Orlando, Florida
 Marlene & Michael Egan, West Lothian, Scotland

Our membership base has increased this year by 35% over last year.

Thanks for your support! Tapadh leibh

Message from the President

by J. Bruce MacNeil

TAPADH LEAT - ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD of Directors of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society, I wish to thank all the volunteers and staff for your contribution during the 1996 visitor season which drew to a close on October 25th, with a visit by 84 passengers from the Cruise Ship Royal Odyssey.

Special thanks is extended to the Little Narrows Gypsum Company and their staff who generously donated the use of equipment and volunteer labour in hydro-seeding our site. Also, thanks to the volunteers who assisted in finishing the roof on the newly constructed Taigh Dubh (Black House). As well, thanks to the many volunteers who donated in excess of 3000 hours to ensure the success of our operation, especially our outdoor concerts; including Highland Village Day, our canteen service, Family Square Dances, Codfish Suppers, and Pioneer Day were carried out in an efficient and professional manner.

While many of us were discouraged by the devastating results of our closing concert held Labour Day weekend, it needs to be noted that in all other respects, 1996 was a positive year. For instance:

- Highland Village Day resulted in an improved bottom-line and a very fine day of excellent music with a strong family focus.
- Museum attendance increased by 6% despite an overall decrease in museum attendance across the province. As a result, our admission revenues were up by almost \$2,000. We are very pleased to see the cruise ship tours return to our site after an absence of several years and according to responses received we expect more visits next year. We are now a regular stop for DeNure Tours of Lindsay, Ontario.

- Our Traditional Codfish Suppers and Pioneer Day activities continue to be popular with attendance up 14%.

- Our membership base has been increased by 35%.

- The results of this year's Museum Evaluation conducted by the Nova Scotia Museum placed the Highland Village in third position across the Province out of a total of 56 community museums. This is an improvement over our placement of 10th last year.

- A recent review of our Gift Shop operations by Mr. Roeland Hakkert, Retail Operations Manager of the Nova Scotia Museum has resulted in very positive feedback. Our average sales per visitor is the highest in the province for museum gift shops, as well as our profit margins are in line for the scale and scope of our retail outlet. He also made some very worthy recommendations to help improve our merchandising ability which we hope to incorporate before next summer.

As you can see, the Highland Village is moving in the right direction. The major concern we have for our future is the low level of base funding we receive from the Department of Education & Culture which has not increased since the late 1980's; in fact it has actually decreased. In addition to the obvious problem this places on day to day oper-

ations, it is also frustrating to the efforts of our volunteers over the decades who have supported us.

Next year, however, we must face reality with respect to outdoor events. There is so much competition throughout Cape Breton Island on a daily basis, all summer long, that crowds are getting smaller. As a result we are all competing for the same entertainment dollar. Therefore it is our intention to consolidate our efforts and concentrate on fewer events; those that have served us well over the years; and place more emphasis on increasing our daily museum attendance.

Our 1997 Schedule of Events is as follows:

| | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| July 12 | Codfish Supper |
| August 2 | Highland Village Day |
| August 23 | Codfish Supper |
| September 6 | Pioneer Day |

With your continued support we know that 1997 will be another good year.

Once again, thank you for a job well done. We look forward to your continued support as we work together towards the vision of making the Highland Village a world-class attraction and continue its important contribution to the local economy.

Check out the Highland Village on the World Wide Web.



Our temporary sites:

on the UCCB Eagle Server;
<http://eagle.uccb.ns.ca/lona/>

or on the Nova Scotia Ednet;
http://www.ednet.ns.ca/educ/museum/other_ns/highland_village/

Our sites are under construction. There are more features to come in the future. Stay tuned...

The Summer of 1996 in Review

EVERY FALL, THERE COMES A TIME TO LOOK BACK ON THE SUMMER. This past summer we have experienced many successes and achievements from a new orientation video, to an increase in admissions, to positive changes to Highland Village Day, to a increase in our evaluation scoring, to growth in our membership numbers, to the completion of our blackhouse roof. Much has happened since the spring of 1996. (The photos shown on these two pages were taken in August 1996 for promotional purposes and centered mostly around the newly completed blackhouse.)



(L-R) Emma MacKenzie & Jena Redden in the lazy bed at the blackhouse.

Orientation Video & Map

Our interpretation aids got a lot better in 1996. Last February, we unveiled our new seven-minute orientation video for the site. The video provides visitors with an introduction to the Highland Village and to Scottish immigration and settlement in Nova Scotia. The video was very well received by visitors. We have also been using it as a promotional piece distributing to visitor information centers and operators around the Island. We are hopeful of getting the video introduced in the public school system.

In addition, we also completed a new walking tour map and brochure for visitors to the site. This map and brochure made site direction and orientation much less confusing for visitors. The next step is a series of on-site directional and information signage, which we are hoping to have in place within a year or two.

Corporate Contributions

We want to thank two corporate partners for in-kind assistance this past summer. First, Little Narrows Gypsum Company donated their equipment for hydroseeding of several key areas around the site. We thank them for this contribution and also thank the LNG staff who donated their time to this project. We also want to thank Stora Forest Industries for donating a truck load of lumber to the site.

Blackhouse "Taigh Dubh"

In July, the final piece of the blackhouse puzzle was completed. Thanks to many volunteers (especially Walter MacNeil, Donald Beaton and Dan E. MacNeil) the blackhouse roof was finally completed.

Year of the Wooden Boat

The Tourism marketing theme for Nova Scotia for 1996 was the Year of the Wooden Boat. To commemorate this year we chose an exhibition of the Kennedy Boat, built by the Kennedy brothers of Alba. The exhibit is set up in the Carding Mill. Special thanks to Bruce and Walter for interviewing Joan MacLean, daughter of one of the Kennedy brothers.

Highland Village Day

Our format changes to Highland Village Day met with considerable success. The changes were made as a result of liability and risk concerns. The result was a safer and more profitable day. The concert was filled with the finest of entertainment on the Island.

Codfish Suppers

Our Codfish Suppers just keep on growing, and growing. We saw yet another increase in our attendance at these events. In fact our August supper hit a record with over 462 suppers sold.

Cruise Ships

There baack!. For the first time in several years travellers visiting the ports of Sydney and Baddeck arrived at the Highland Village. This year we had three visits from cruise ships which amounted over 200 visitors. Every indication is that we will have even more next year.

James Symonds Lecture

We were very fortunate to have British Archeologist James Symonds for a public lecture in October. James is doing a lot of



(L-R) Rebecca Redden, Curtis MacNeil, Emma MacKenzie & Jena Redden in the blackhouse box beds.

work in the Islands of Scotland. He spoke of his findings on material culture. He, Jim St. Clair and Mary K. MacLeod (UCCB) are also working on a project to identify Scottish Settlement sites on Cape Breton Island.

Gaelic Program

We are very pleased to have been part of Bernadette Campbell's Gaelic Drama Camp in Mabou in July. Our Gaelic Instructor spent a week helping out at the camp. As well we also sponsored the Feis an Eileen in Christmas Island by contributing the time of both Jim Watson and Beth MacNeil of our staff.

Artifact Donations

We have received several donations over the summer from Elizabeth Weiss, Gerald MacNeil, Marilyn MacLeod, Jack Shneider, Rod C. MacNeil and Sharron Digout. New objects in the collection include a kerosene incubator, raking machine, cigar box, grain masher, washing machine, desk and several photos. We thank all of our donor for their contributions to the enhancement of our collection.



Jill MacLean serving children in the post office.

Summer Student Staff

We had three very talented and capable summer students on staff this season; Jill MacLean (Washabuck), Kim MacKenzie (Christmas Island) and Erin Lynch (MacKinnon's Harbour/Sydney). Jill and Kim worked as animators on the hill, while Erin was deep in death records in the Roots Cape Breton office. Thanks to all for a job well done.

Births

Congratulations to Michael & Helena MacNeil on the birth of their daughter Allissa Michelle. We wish them all the best. Helena is a receptionist at the Village.

Summer 1996 Statistics

Here are some statistics from the Highland Village Summer of 1996 (as of October 31, 1996):

- School Visits ↑ 52 %
- Total Museum Visitation ↑ 6 %
- Admission Revenue ↑ 10 %
- General Store Revenue ↑ 48 %
- Codfish Supper Revenue ↑ 14 %
- Highland Village Day Revenue ↑ 7 %
- Memberships ↑ 35 %



(L-R) Deanne Kosick, Rebecca Redden, Curtis MacNeil, Emma MacKenzie, Jena Redden and Tim MacNeil get ready for supper in the Blackhouse.

Deaths

Our sympathies are extended to the families of Peter F. MacLean (Iona) and Cpt. Angus MacNeil (Grand Narrows). Both of these men were instrumental in establishing and developing the Highland Village in its early years. We also send out sympathies to the family of Vera MacLean (mother-in-law to Pauline MacLean of our staff) and Joe MacLean. Also, the Gaelic world lost a great story teller with the passing of Joe Neil MacNeil.

Get Well

We also send out get well wishes to Marie MacLean (former staff member), to Roderick MacNeil (husband of Betty MacNeil) on our staff, and to Archie Neil Chisholm in Margaree Forks. We also send out get well wishes to our blacksmith John MacDonald.

Pioneer Church Fund

We have established a fund to aid with the construction of a non-denominational Pioneer Church on the site.

Help realize this dream, please donate to the Highland Village Pioneer Church Fund.

All donations are tax deductible.

We Remember

Margaret MacPhail

On October 24th, the Highland Village Remembered one of Cape Breton's great woman authors, Margaret MacPhail, the author of the Loch Bras d'Or series. The "We Remember Margaret" evening heard many stories and remembrances of Margaret of Loch Bras d'Or.

The following story, entitled "Christmas" was taken from a chapter of a book called Aunt Peggy from Loch Bras d'Or written in the 1970's by Mabel (MacPhail) Pillar. In this book Margaret MacPhail's only daughter, Mabel, shares her experiences and remembrances of her mother. We are very pleased to be able to reproduce this story both to remember Margaret as well as to celebrate this great holiday.

"Christmas"

CHRISTMAS WAS AN EVENT LONG AWAITED by adults and children alike. For adults it was a brief respite before preparing for the next season's chores. The harvested crops were stored in the cool dark cellars and the butchering chores were completed with a quantity of meat salted or hung frozen for the winter's use.

Many references were made during the year to something taking place or being done before or after Christmas, as the case might be. It was a significant time in the year.

Indeed in early day's, events such as births, marriages, and deaths were not necessarily mentally recorded by calendar months but by seasons such as 'planting time', 'hay-making', 'Christmas', 'Valentine's', 'Easter', '24th of May' (Queen Victoria's birthday and a school holiday), etc. or remembered by some catastrophic event such as 'the August Gale', 'the year of the floods', or 'the year of the big snow'. Only in those homes fortunate enough to have a Family Bible were the births, marriages and deaths accurately and conscientiously recorded. As a result of this inaccuracy many old people were vague and forgetful about their ages, as the years slipped by and other members of the family passed away.

Christmas was a time for celebration either in the churches or in the homes, depending on how seriously religion was taken. Students returned from high schools for their break from studies and visitors from Town were eagerly welcomed. Christmas concerts and dances were held in various school house throughout the countryside. Mail became

more interesting and at the little post office, waiting for the mail became a favorite pastime.

As country stores carried only a minimum of items representative of Christmas shopping, mail order service was essential for those who lived far from Town. In fact it was a year-round necessity for shopping. The T. Eaton catalogue was the common book which appealed to every member of the family. Even toddlers searched the pages for wind-up toys and cuddly stuffed animals. Young girls pored over the latest styles in wearing apparel and longed for the dreamed of luxuries. Young boys yearned over the sporting goods section, dreaming of zooming down hillsides on a toboggan or skis. With a little imagination a housewife could mentally transform her every day humdrum life into a world of beautiful china ware, soft falling draperies, and luxuriant surroundings. A husband could visualize using the labour-saving machinery and even imagine himself transformed by means of a new outfit into a 'gentlemen farmer' or 'city slicker', whereas in reality he knew he would settle for dark denim work clothes!

It was no wonder the Eaton's catalogue was referred to as 'the wish book'. Every household has one and many blissful hours were spent with the wonderful, nostalgic book.

When it became 'dog-eared' and smudged and another season's replacement arrived, it was indeed ready to be placed in the out-house for further perusal and final necessity.

It was common practice when someone sported a new dress or other article of apparel to rush home and look up the price in the catalogue - if one did not already recognize it and know the price from memory! If it was not found in the catalogue, the next speculation was that it was sent home from Boston.

By the time December drew near the order to the catalogue was mailed. Although a dollar then had great purchasing power, one had to hoard pennies, nickels, and dimes for practically the whole year for these coins were not easily accumulated. Whispered conversations between the youngsters, usually pooling their resources, resulted in a pair of slippers for

Mom and a shaving mirror or brush for Dad. A youngster might hint for some special item, but he realized if it was too costly he was to be content with a reasonable substitute. The attitude was "Take what you get and like it; we are doing the best we can!"

Many school teachers arranged a Christmas concert which included every pupil in the programme. Indeed the record of having a Christmas Concert was a factor in the teacher's favour when being hired and depended on the quality of that concert.

It was a big night for the whole family.

Shyly the little Grade 1 curly-headed tot lisped through her opening lines of greeting:

Although I'm very small

And little I can do

I can wish you, one an all

A Merry Christmas, too!

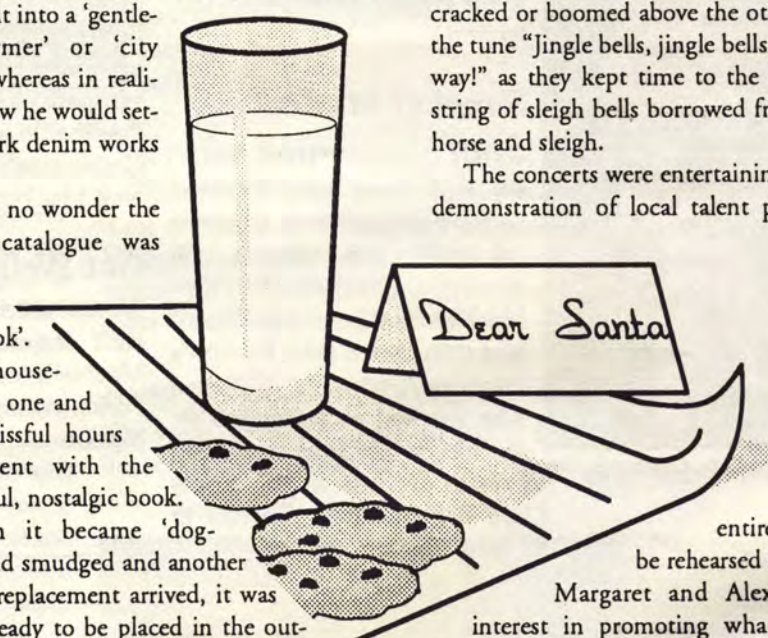
before bolting into the shadows of the stage curtains. The long lanky boys shifted their loose frames in embarrassment as their voices cracked or boomed above the other singers in the tune "Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way!" as they kept time to the music with a string of sleigh bells borrowed from a waiting horse and sleigh.

The concerts were entertaining and a good demonstration of local talent plus hours of

dedicated rehearsal either at home or after school hours. Some families were large enough that an entire play could be rehearsed at home.

Margaret and Alex took great interest in promoting what talent their family possessed. Alex would direct the play rehearsal, giving stage advice about sound effects and offering suggestions (seldom accepted) about changes in the script, while Margaret corrected diction and expression. Margaret also played accompaniment on the old parlour organ for learning new songs and choruses.

One teacher who was an excellent French scholar taught the school children the French song "Alouette" which they sang lustily as they did their chores. Alex took exception to the introduction of the French song in the concert. He maintained that Gaelic was the language of our forefathers and if anything other than English was sung, it certainly should be Gaelic! The family knew that Dad lacked a



singing voice, remembering that when he baby-sat them he sang off key:

Old Dan Tucker was a fine old man

He washed his face with a frying pan

He combed his hair with the leg of a chair

And died with a toothache back of his ear

so they laughed and encouraged him to rave on. It became serious only when he threatened to get a couple of his old cronies to join him in singing the chorus and few versus of "Ho Ro Mo Nighean donn bhoidheach" (Gaelic for "Hello, my nut brown maiden"). Margaret went along with Alex's threat to tease the youngsters saying, "I wouldn't put it past him, he is very loyal to the Scots!" The night of the concert the youngsters breathed a sigh of relief when the final curtain call of the evening had not brought Alex's trio of singers onto the stage.

For these concerts the school houses were packed to standing room only with parents and friends applauding again and again the efforts of the youth in the area. With a loud "Ho! Ho! Ho!" Santa would appear in his scarlet red suit and cap with sheep's wool beard enveloping his entire face, except for his eyes and cherry red nose. (The suit was made by Margaret and was used year after year by a new Santa who 'grew into it' until finally it wore out completely.)

Each child was called forward to receive a gift from Santa (each child exchanged a name) and a bag of candy (teacher's treat). The glow from the starry-eyed youngsters and their pride in performance made it all worthwhile for parents and teachers alike as compliments were exchanged freely.

Tea and sandwiches were hastily served before families gathered up their sleepy but excited children, still clutching a lop-sided crown or battered angel wings as they trailed off the stage. It was over all too soon after the months of anticipation and the weeks of preparation.

One by one, the horses and sleighs disappeared off into the starry night, the echo of the sleigh bells being carried into the hills as the families sped homeward. The horses, which stood patiently in the school yard with only a blanket slung over their back, were eager to return to their warm stables and hearty feed of oats as their reward for patience.

For the young child of the family it was easy to catch the magic of Christmas and to cling to the world of make-believe long past the age of logic and reasoning of our present day generation. The country child took for granted the birth of a baby calf or a woolly lamb and beheld the miracle of a fluffily yel-

low chicken bursting forth from an egg shell as an every day occurrence in the world of reality. This child was also familiar with the fleetness and the startling beauty of the wild deer in its graceful bound over a hedge or ditch. Could not this familiar creature be related to the imaginary (then) eight tiny reindeer which hovered over the chimney tops while Santa descended to leave his bounty of toys and gifts, then scurried across the starry sky to the next stop? And could not the little twittering birds which carried twigs and straw to build their nests in the eaves of the barn or in the crotch of the old apple tree, also carry the child's Christmas wish from the cherry tree where it was tied to Santa's elves - elves who hid nearby to observe those children who were good and those who were bad?

The youngsters always put aside a small jar of strawberry jam, made from berries they picked on the hillsides in June, to be placed with Santa's snack on Christmas Eve. What delight! what joy! to find the dish scraped clean and only crumbs from the oatcakes and molasses cookies remaining on the place to indicate how much Santa really enjoyed the refreshments.

One year, however, Santa must have been absentminded for when the youngsters rose early on Christmas morning they found the food untouched. With cries of dismay they rushed into their parents' room for an explanation. Soothingly their mother replied that Santa must have eaten at Morrison's and it was too soon to eat again. Somewhat mollified they returned to explore their stockings, squealing with delight as the mystery of each misshapen bump was revealed until the last item - an orange - was drawn from the now limp stocking. "Santa is the bestest, bestest man in the whole world," cried Mabel in her ecstasy of finding Santa had also left her a set of doll's dishes.

The incident of Santa's lunch was forgotten as the youngsters played happily with their gifts and Margaret prepared dinner. Alex dozed in the kitchen rocker, content with the hum of activity about him, as the whiffs of succulent roast chicken and roast beef mingled with the fruity aroma of plum pudding and whetted his appetite.

It was Margaret's turn in the yearly

exchange of family dinners to have the Morrison family has guests. The youngsters looked forward to showing Catherine their gifts and to learn what she had received. Before the Christmas greetings were exchanged, the youngsters ran to the door to tell how Santa had not touched his treat. A look of utter dismay crossed Catherine's face as she blurted out "He didn't eat mine, either!"

Mouths dropped open, eyebrows were raised, bewildered glances were exchanged between parents, yet no one ventured an explanation. Perhaps the youngsters accepted it as one of the mysteries of Christmas, but ever after, while belief in Santa remained, lunch was cleared away to the last crumb!

Every Christmas a huge bulky parcel arrived a few days before Christmas without fail. It was from Aunt Mabel and it contained individually wrapped gifts for the entire family - usually a dress for her namesake and suitable wearing apparel for Margaret and the male folk. Besides it contained candy, nuts, and toys or books. It was a dandy parcel!

One Christmas there was a special surprise for Margaret in the heavy express parcel which Alex brought from the post office. Excitedly Margaret opened it to find a complete china dinner set. It was a beautiful robin egg blue with a pattern of black band and white polka dots throughout. It was from here sister who must have known how Margaret loved to 'set a nice table' and that most of her wedding china was inadvertently broken when they moved to the Farm. For years and years those dishes gave Margaret great pleasure and she always remembered that Christmas as a very special one.

*From Aunt Peggy from Loch Bras d'Or
by Mabel (MacPhail) Pillar*

© Mabel Pillar, 1976.

Reproduced with permission of the author.

Nollaig Chridheil

Agus

Bliadhna Mhath Ur

From the Board &

Staff of the

Highland Village



Crossing the Strait of Julia

An 1896 Proposal for a Bridge at Little Narrows

The following is a proposal prepared in 1896 by M. Murphy of the Nova Scotia Department of Works & Mines for a permanent crossing at Little Narrows:

Proposed Draw-Bridge,
Little Narrows
Description of Site

St. Patrick's Channel and Whycomomagh Bay are connected by a marine channel of about 400 feet in width, called Little Narrows. There is easy navigation through this channel, at present there being about 36 feet in depth of navigable water.

The proposed bridge is to enable the residents of the North side of St. Patrick's Channel to reach the Intercolonial railway station at Alma (sic), a distance of only four miles from the proposed bridge site, thus saving twelve miles in comparison with the present route to Orangedale Station. It would also enable the residents of the South side to reach the church and Shire town of Baddeck on the opposite shore.

The proposed bridge would consist of two steel cantilever arms to be worked from pivot piers of concrete on each side of the stream, the short lever arm being anchored to the abutments when the bridge is closed. The total cost of the structure would be about £33,000. This is the same class of structure which has been working so well across the mouth of the Mira River, in the adjoining County, for the last seven years. A print of Mira River swing bridge is also attached.

Extract from Sailing Directions

ST. PATRICK CHANNEL, the entrance of which, between Red and McKay Points, is 1-3/4 miles wide, extends from Red Point to Whycomomagh, a distance of 21 miles in a westerly direction, with an average brandth of one mile. It is navigable throughout for vessels of large drought, but not much frequented nor much known. Its banks, moderately high, rise into hills of considerable elevation at a short distance from the shore, and the land is

generally suncaptible of profitable culture. The settlers, however, are few.

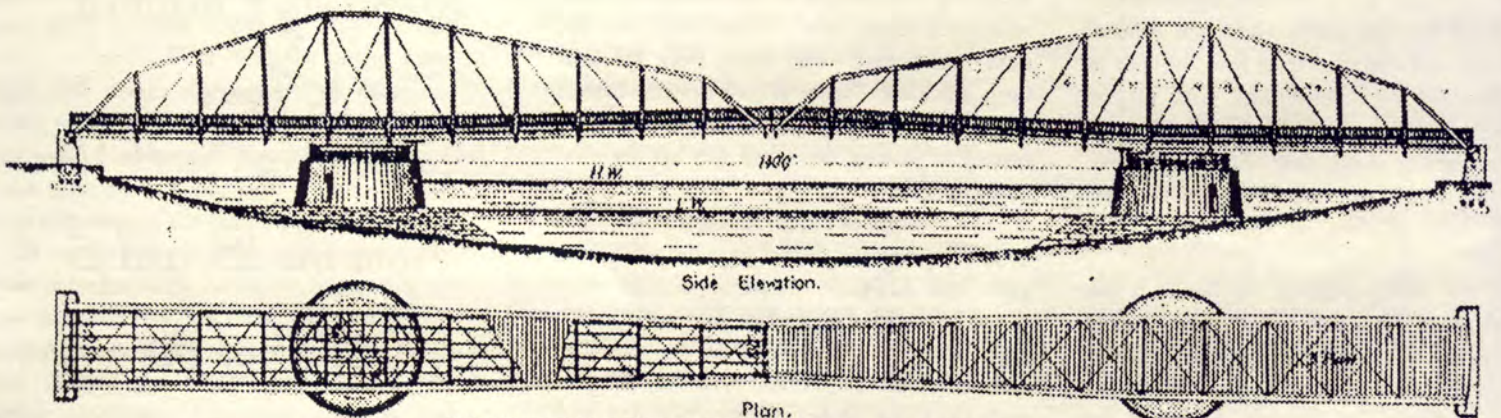
This channel during rough and blowing weather is subject to heavy squalls of wind, making its navigation often dangerous to open boats under sail.

Anchorage - There are excellent anchorages in Baddeck, Cow and Indian Bays on the north side of the channel, and Washabuck River on the south side: indeed the whole affords fair anchorage and good holding ground. But for these anchorages, as well as to navigate safely St. Patrick Channel a pilot should be employed.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Murphy, P. Eng.

Below: Diagram of Mira River Bridge. A similar design was proposed to cross Little Narrows 100 years ago.



THE MIRA RIVER BRIDGE, CAPE BRETON CO., NOVA SCOTIA.
M. Murphy, P. Eng. Provincial Government Engineer.

Alex Matheson's Blacksmith Shop

Alex Matheson was born in 1898 in Big Hill and began blacksmithing in 1919. The forge at the Highland Village is named after him. These pictures of Alex and his shop in South Haven were taken in the 1970's by Ron Caplan of *Cape Breton's Magazine* and appear in *Down North: The Book of Cape Breton's Magazine*. Thanks to Ron for his permission to reproduce these in *Naidheachd a' Chlachain*.



Last Word

From *The Spirit of the Times and Cape Breton Free Press*, December 19, 1843:

A Profitable Cow

Dugald MacKinnon, residing near Long Island, has in his possession a Cow of 18 years, which has never failed to yield her owner a plentiful supply of milk, one year only excepted. She has brought forth 14 calves and is constantly employed hauling wood and ploughing since he has no Ox.

Membership Application

Nova Scotia Highland Village Society

Name: _____
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Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Fax: _____
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Areas of interest: Museum Activities
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 Gaelic
 Cultural Activities
 Other _____

Membership Fee Schedule:

Individual Membership - \$10.00
Family Membership - \$25.00 (3 or more persons in one household)
Life Memberships are also available, please call for information.

*(New schedule effective - August 5, 1995 -
Membership is renewable each Highland Village Day)*

Please send application and payment to:

Nova Scotia Highland Village Society

P.O. Box 58, Iona, NS, B0A 1L0, Canada
Phone: (902) 725-2272 Fax: (902) 725-2227
E-mail: nshviona@fox.nstn.ca

Support the Highland Village!
Join Today!

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