

Heritage/Archives Newsletter
August, 2005

August has been both a busy and exciting month for the heritage and archives department.

From the beginning right up to the end of the month, numerous visitors came by seeking information with regard to local history, people and buildings.

The archives was given a photo of a portrait of James Duffus. Graeme Duffus, a descendent of James Duffus is in possession of this painting of his great, great, grand uncle. This photo is now on display in the Court House in the main lobby. James Duffus was the founder of what is now the village of Baddeck. He arrived here in 1819 and settled on the island where he proceeded to build a residence and stores, and operated a business there until his death in 1833. Now, with this photo, we know exactly what our first settler to Baddeck looked like. The archives is most grateful to Graeme Duffus.

Mrs. Margaret Powicki of Kempt Head paid the archives a visit in August and she provided a copy of a picture of the second dwelling belonging to Alexander and Catherine (Weir) Munro. They arrived in Boularderie in 1839 having been chosen and sent to Cape Breton by the Edinburgh Ladies Association. Both were qualified teachers, and their mission was to attend to the educational needs of the children of the Scottish settlers in the area. They founded the “Munro Academy” which was known throughout the entire island and beyond. In 1995, the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized the important contribution made by the Munro’s in the field of education by erecting a cairn and plaque on the property on which their school was located. The newspaper article for August which appeared in the last issue of the Victoria Standard was written about the Munro house and the photos of both the house and Alexander and Catherine Munro are also on display in the Court House.

On Saturday, 13th August, the Canso Causeway marked its fiftieth anniversary having been officially opened in 1955. Celebrations were held which included a re-enactment of the first opening with a parade of period motor vehicles and pipers and drummers. Of interest to note is Victoria County’s historical role with regard to the causeway. In the May session of Municipal Council in 1902 a motion was put forward and passed which went as follows: Moved by: Daniel A. MacDonald, Councillor for Iona and seconded by: Alexander W. Ross, Councillor for south side Little Narrows that,
“Whereas, the feasibility of bridging the Strait of Canso from Port Hastings in the County of Inverness and Cape Porcupine, in the County of Guysborough has been shown beyond a doubt by recent surveys; and,
Whereas, there is a large and growing trade and travel at the Strait of Canso and a great increase is expected in the near future as a result of the development of our coal and steel industries, and in view of the fact that Cape Breton ports will be used as the terminus of a fast Atlantic service; and

Whereas, the existence of three important line of railway on the Island and the probable completion and operation of other lines in the near future make it imperative that the best means of transferring traffic at the Strait be adopted;

Therefore resolved, that the Council is heartily in favour of bridging the Strait of Canso, and would urge upon the Dominion and Provincial Parliaments its favourable consideration, providing building of said bridge will not cause any obstacles to navigation.” Motion carried. The above motion displayed the wonderful insight that the Municipal Council of Victoria County had in recognizing the need for a permanent crossing at the Strait – it took a further fifty-two years before a permanent crossing was established, however, Victoria County took the lead in proposing the idea.

That is the news from the Heritage/Archives for August. Looking forward in September to getting on the road and heading up north discovering new “old” buildings for the built heritage inventory. We will be reporting once again via the newsletter at the end of September. Hoping everyone enjoys the Labour Day weekend.