

Inverness Station

Settled in 1803, by Island Scots, and later in the 19th century by Highland Scots, Irish, and French, this area transformed as the immigration movements impacted our shores. These earliest settlers were welcomed by the Mi'kmaq native people who taught them survival skills, and provided invaluable guidance and support. By 1818, the population had grown to 156 people. They were farmers, carpenters, coopers, blacksmiths, and schoolmasters. They were survivors who worked the land, valued education, and held strong religious beliefs.



Streetscape, Central Ave. circa 1904

By 1860 the scattered clearings grew into communities with the names Shean, (fairy mounds), Loch Leven, Broad Cove, Broad Cove Marsh, Broad Cove Banks, Broad Cove Intervale, and Broad Cove Shore. When coal was discovered in 1863 a new age was about to begin for the residents of Broad Cove Shore. Soon renamed Broad Cove Coal Mines, and finally to Inverness in 1901, the mines were about to re-invent the nature and character of the landscape.



No. 1 Bankhead painting by Neil Campbell, circa 1980

By 1899, professional coal miners from Europe, including Belgians, Irish, English, French, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Polish, and others were attracted by a mass advertising campaign initiated by William Penn Hussey. This second wave of immigration was about to shape and define the new community. Hussey, and his manager son, J. Fred Hussey were Americans who mined the Big River seam, built a narrow gauge railway to the harbour, and attracted significant capital using creative tactics. The story is told about a Swiss investor who was invited to view the mine site. Prior to his arrival Hussey hired his workers to paint the wall of rock the darkest black. Looking from the deck of his ship the investor marveled at his good fortune and immediately invested in the Broad Cove Coal Mining Company.



No. 1 coal miners, circa 1912



Fan House (out of service), circa 1958



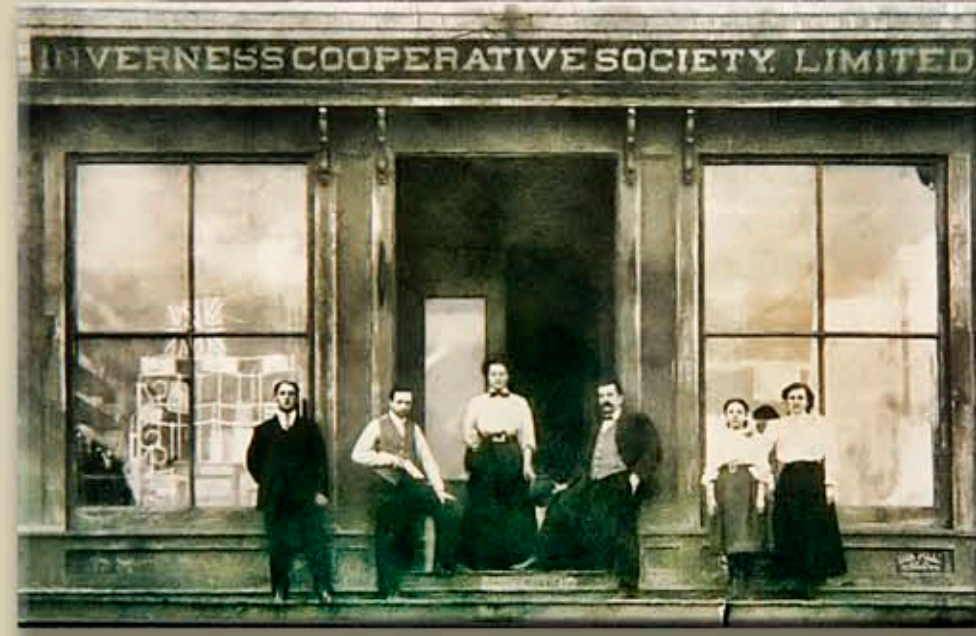
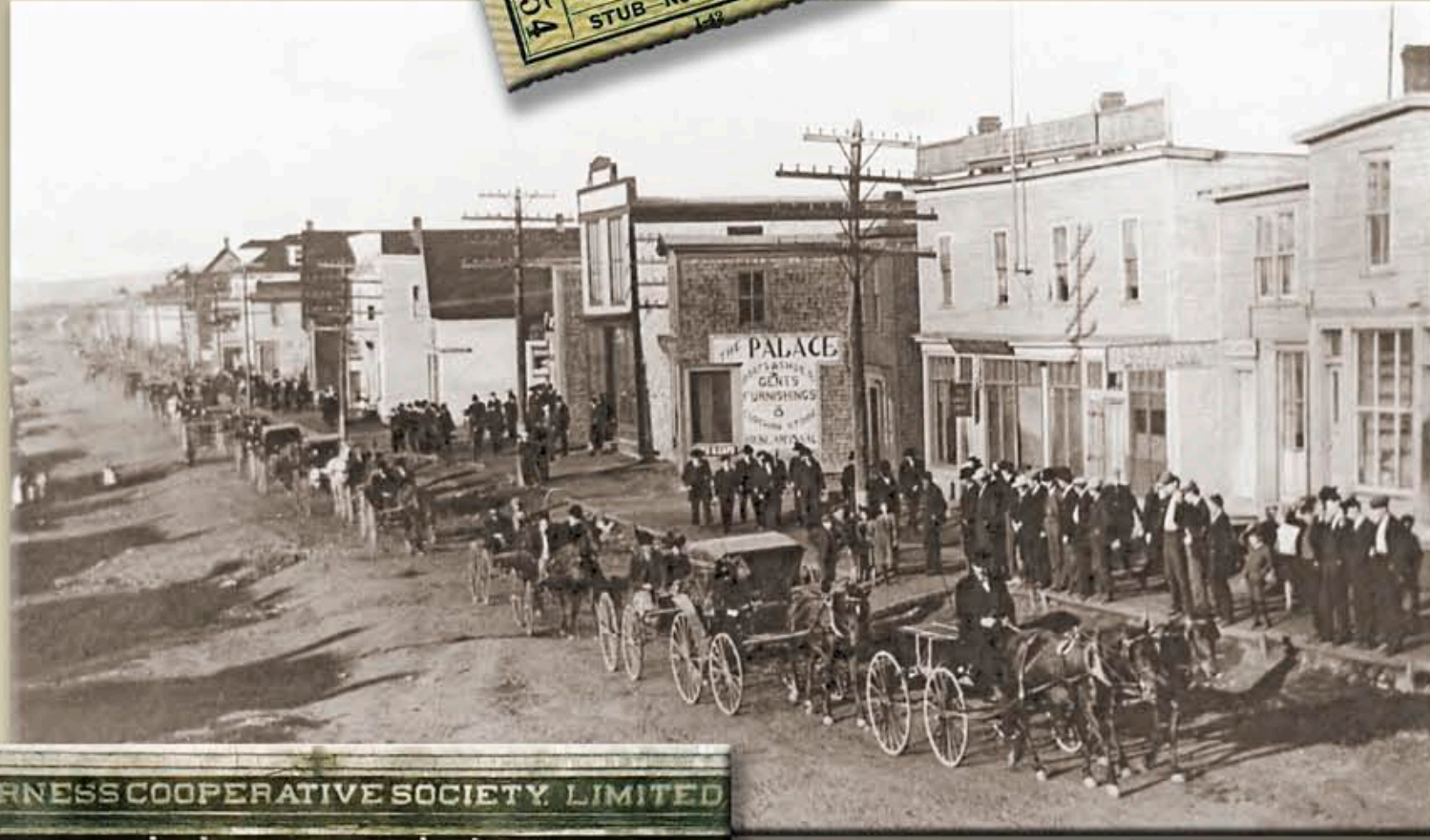
Round House Crew, circa 1918

Their legacy is their children, who were forged from the coal culture and became national and international political, social, and business leaders; professionals, writers, visual and performing artists, technicians, soldiers, peacemakers, clergy, religious; and, celebrated native sons and daughters.

We are the recipients of their sacrifice and express our pride in their accomplishments. We celebrate our home, recognize our many services and institutions, and accept the challenge to serve and grow in a spirit of cooperation and dignity.



Loch Leven (Corner), circa 1900



Cooperative Society Limited, 1933



Convent and School, circa 1908

Dr. Angus MacLennan, MP, funeral August 27, 1908



94th Regiment Pipe Band visiting July 2, 1906



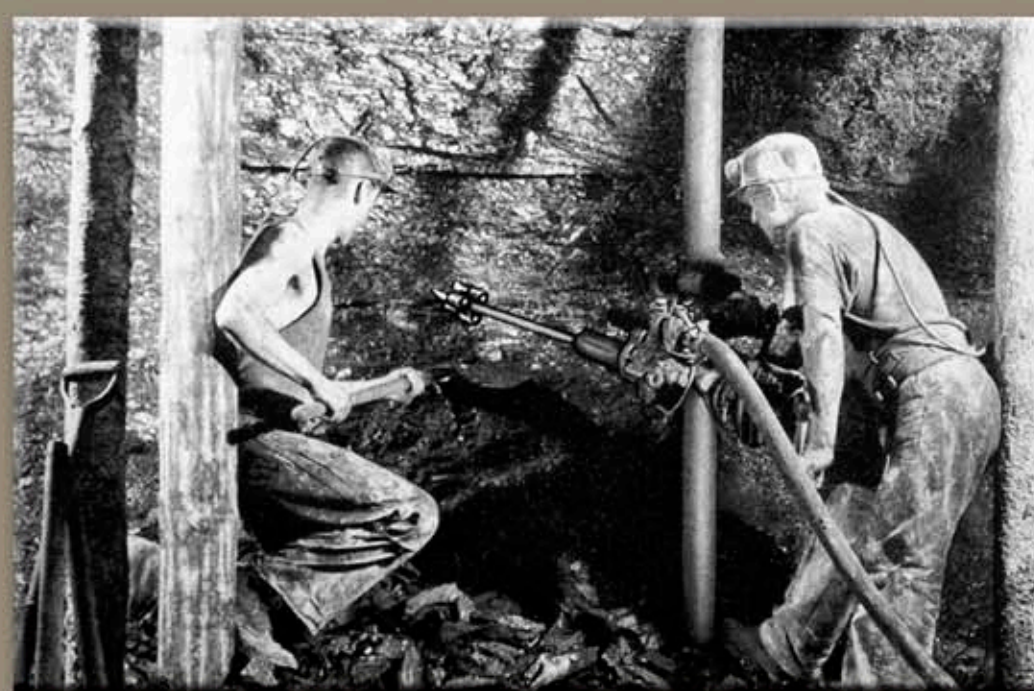
Lower Railway Street ('Grey Cottages & Red Rows') July 1, 1904.

Loch Leven, circa 1901



No. 1 coal miners' night shift, circa 1933

Hussey and Company worked the coal fields through the 1890's and was replaced by the Canadian Northern Railway builders- William McKenzie and Donald Mann. McKenzie & Mann established the Inverness & Richmond Railway (Inverness Railway & Coal Company), lay track, built stations, constructed the company houses (Red Rows), opened Number 1 mine, and developed a significant industry.



Coal Miners' work with a radialax cutter, date unknown.



The 'Blue and White' Hockey Team. "Quigley and McLeod Cup" winners, 1909. Teams comprised 7 players and an extra called a rover. Games were 60 minutes.

The Inverness coalfields attracted experienced European coal miners' who brought an international character to the booming incorporated coal town by 1904. Belgian Town, as well as, other distinct clusters soon took form. Although separated by cultural differences they worked together as one, shared a common lifestyle and formed an unbreakable bond. They entered the deep dark bowels of the earth, encountered constant hardship and danger, worked in deplorable conditions but maintained an enduring spirit. They shoveled millions of tons of coal, fought for their country, were outstanding athletes, accomplished musicians, celebrated story-tellers, and enjoyed life to the fullest.

Town Brass Band, circa 1934.



Harness Racing, circa 1922



Fire Dept. Hockey Team (Quigley-McLeod Cup), circa 1913



Railway Station (Inverness Railway & Coal Co.), 1963, now Miners' Museum.



Firemen in 'Old Home Week' Parade, circa 1954



'Big Sam' Fire Dept. work horse, circa 1910

On February 23rd, 1907 Inverness Town Council approved the creation of a Fire Brigade comprising fourteen members including a Fire Chief and a Deputy Chief.

The first chief appointed was Alexander MacInnis. J.S. Whiston served as deputy chief. A team of horses was trained to pull the fire wagon led by a white horse named 'Big Sam' with handlers Pat Hannigan and Pat Romard. A town hall/fire department was constructed in 1911 and destroyed by the 'Big Fire of 1923'.

Since 1907 the fire department has been the cornerstone of the community. Many have served and sacrificed. From 1907 to 2008 the Inverness department was served by fourteen fire chiefs and deputies, as well as, hundreds of firefighters. In 1951, the first parade and service to honour the passing of Cape Breton Firefighters was hosted by the Inverness Department.

In recent years, demands on volunteer departments for specialized equipment and training have presented challenges. Those challenges continue to be addressed. Our firefighters and auxiliary represent the ultimate volunteer whose mission is to protect the community and serve others in times of tragedy and emergency. We remember the firefighters who have passed, and honour those who continue to serve.



'Big Fire of 1923' (Railway to Hospital Street)



LOC (League of the Cross) Baseball Team

Since the early days of incorporation, the playing fields and ice surfaces of Inverness and area played a significant role in the lives and aspirations of the newly formed town. Its beginnings and development was rooted in the competitive nature of the various mining companies that operated on Cape Breton Island.

Facilities were constructed following World War I to accommodate the athletes and participants in hockey, baseball, track and field, boxing, tennis, and harness (horse) racing. Classic battles among local teams and individuals would take some of the elite players and teams to provincial, national and international competition. Some of our baseball players were invited to the 'Big Leagues'. It is said that in order to get a 'good' job at the mine you had to be an excellent athlete.

In later years, Inverness teams would excel at the established sports, as well as, win provincial championships in baseball, softball, hockey, track and field, basketball, volleyball, and soccer. To value and continue the tradition of sport is to pay tribute to the many athletes of years past. May we always be inspired and moved to maintain the spirit of sportsmanship and the sporting tradition.



Text: Ned MacDonald
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