

Inverness Harbour

In the year 1803, Angus MacIsaac, a young adventurer, teacher, and catechist from the Isle of Canna, Scotland went in search of a place that would remind him of his homeland. He emigrated to Nova Scotia c.1791 and settled in Cape d'Or and then moved to Antigonish. It was not until he landed in a broad cove on the western coast of Cape Breton did he finally arrive at his new home. He secured 600 acres stretching from MacIsaac's Pond to the banks of Broad Cove, made friends with the Mi'kmaq natives, and made a home for his wife and five boys. Other family members would follow, as well as, settlers with the name of MacLean, MacDonald, MacDougald, MacIntyre, MacLeod, MacKinnon, MacInnis, Kennedy and Gillis. By 1818 the inhabitants of Broad Cove numbered 156.

By the 1890's, MacIsaac's Pond was about to be transformed. Coal was in abundance but was not being developed. It would take a shrewd industrialist and excellent organizer to capitalize on this opportunity. That man was William Penn Hussey. Hussey was born in North Berwick, Maine in 1847 but spent most of his life in Danvers, Massachusetts working as a coal broker. By 1888 he, and his son J. Fred Hussey, were ready to re-locate to Cape Breton to make their fortune. The Hussey's opened a mine at the Big River, dredged the Pond, excavated a channel to the Gulf, built a narrow gage railway to transport coal to the new Harbour, constructed homes, and hired 50 coal miners'. The coal mining era had arrived but the community would, within ten years, sadly bid farewell to the Hussey's.



William Penn Hussey's conceptual map for Broad Cove (now Inverness) 1895

William Penn Hussey and son J. Fred Hussey



Dredging Broad Cove Coal Mines channel, circa 1894



Dredging, circa 1922 This was an ongoing activity due to build-up of sand in the narrow opening.

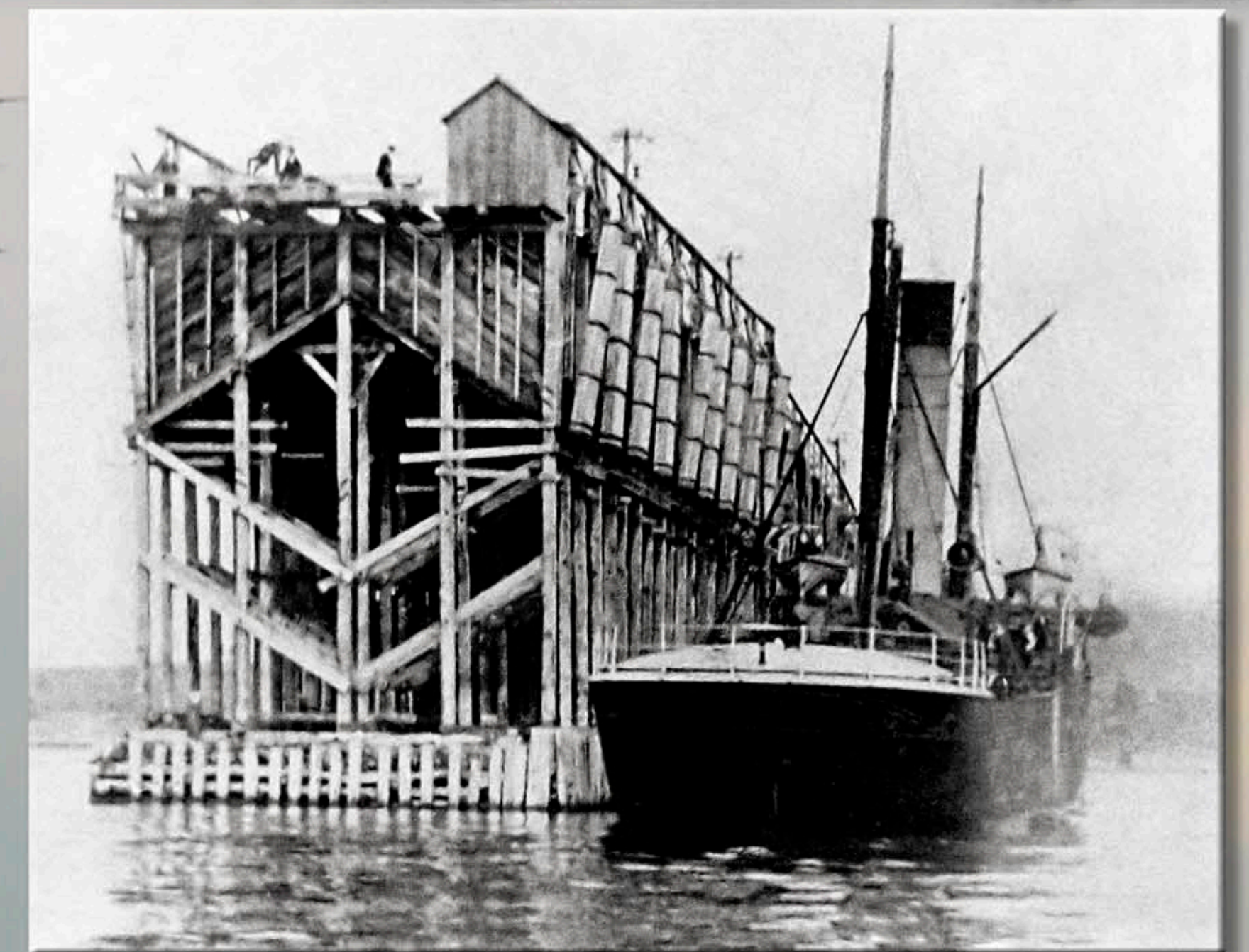
The new owners, William Mckenzie and Donald Mann were railway builders who established the Inverness Railway and Coal Company by 1901. The town of Inverness rose from the coal fields by 1904. A period of development, employment, and relative prosperity was short-lived. Succeeding years would prove challenging for a determined people who, despite the difficulties, continue to stand proud and work for a better tomorrow. The Harbour, and the fishermen who use it, continue to reflect that optimism.



Shean Cemetery Cairn marks the final resting place(1811-1825) of some of the Highland ,Scotland pioneer settlers. It was erected by the descendants of Angus and Allan MacIsaac.



Text: Ned MacDonald
 Photos: Inverness Miners' Museum Collection, and Janice Ferguson, Inverness
 Photo restoration & layout: MV Design, www.wdmv.ca
 Property of Inverness County Trans Canada Trail Project



Skow (Coal barge) is loading coal for transport to PEI, circa 1940.