

# WORK THROUGH TIME

*Cape Breton Stories of Land & Sea*



## David Jones, Printing in Port Hood

The Port Hood Greetings - Chestico Museum Newsletter

The last editor of The Port Hood Greetings and The Inverness County Guardian newspapers was Mr. D. W. Jones. This past summer, both his son David and daughter Violet visited the museum and the Chestico area. It was a delight to welcome them. Mr. David Jones placed on permanent loan to the Chestico Museum a portable printing press used by his father in the printing office. What follows is a history of that printing press as supplied by David Jones. The newspaper building was located on Fraser's Hill, in back of D.F. MacLean's store and between the store and a house occupied by Sidney McLean and family.

June 1990

*This is a little story about printing in Port Hood.*

The newspaper The Port Hood Greetings has been documented in other publications so I will just touch upon some of the personal experiences that I can recall about that enterprise. One of the first things that I remember is seeing a great big (to me) machine being turned by a tall man whom I later knew as Angus MacMaster (a cobbler and academy janitor). I noticed that Mr. MacMaster had worn a hole in the floor where he placed his feet while turning the machine. Later on of course, I observed other operations such as typesetting which I learned to do from watching and with a bit of instructions from the typesetter, all of the type was set by girls on the second floor (south part of the building). The page make up was done by George Totten and my father David W. Jones, both of whom would set type as necessary, my father was editor and did all the proof reading and most of the layout of the pages.

The north room upstairs was taken up mostly by storage of standing type (type forms being saved in anticipation of the contents being repeated later) and also the type which made up the mailing list, this list was one of my first responsibilities. I was charged with the additions of new subscribers, address changes, cancellations etc. The type making up the list was kept standing on galleys (a galley is a sort of metal tray), after the list was updated I would pull a proof of the type by first inking it by means of a small roller then laying a strip of paper over it and tapping the paper with

a mallet and a block of wood (a mallet and planer) until the type was reproduced on the paper, thus a strip of mailing labels was ready to be individually separated and affixed to the wrapper of the newspaper and that again is another story.

The Greetings was printed on Wednesday of each week. A part (one side of the sheet) was done on Tuesday, but Wednesday was the big day, as the ink dried sufficiently to be handled and all the available hands were called upon to do the folding, wrapping and labeling, girls from the typesetting, my sister, me and any other person capable of folding and handling paper. After all of this the paper was put into mail bags according to their destinations and taken to the post office which was located in the Oddfellows Hall building at the "corner". Dan Lewis MacLellan was the Postmaster and five o'clock was the deadline at the post office. At that time John A. MacDonald, the mail driver left the post office carrying the mail to the station.

In addition to the newspaper, commercial printing was carried on letterheads, posters, reports, invitations, envelopes, forms, etc. And all of this activity was done without the aid of electricity and not even a telephone; a real achievement by today's standards when almost everything stops when the power fails.

The Greetings was sold to the News Publishing Co. of Truro and with the exception of a foot driver platen press and a hand operated quilletine paper cutter, all the machinery was moved out, most of the type and some cases were left. My father accepted a position with the News in Truro and went there along with George Totten and my sister Myfanwy (as typesetters). I was left in Port Hood and while my father was away I was able to do work for local customers and any that I could not do I sent to Truro and had it done, this was 1930. The Truro job did not work out for my father so he returned to Port Hood and set up a business in a little shop across the road from the bank. It had once been occupied by a tinsmith named John MacKenzie (Kenny Murphy's grandfather). The machines were moved in and the business remained there for a couple of years, after that a group of businessmen in Port Hood decided to start another newspaper and this is where the little press comes in.

A cylinder press was very modern by the Greetings standards; it was driven by a gasoline engine. Fred Reynolds would remember that engine, it broke down quite often and Fred was called to administer first aid, I was the engineer but I only knew how to start and to stop it. This press and the little handpress came to Port Hood from the defunct Victoria News in Baddeck, the paper cutter and the foot driven press here then moved back to The Greetings Office and The Inverness County Guardian was born. While the first issue was on the press, Angus MacIntosh (Ralph Watts' grandfather) came in and when he saw a copy he plunked down his \$1.50 (or maybe \$2.00) for a year's subscription. We immediately stopped the press and inserted on the front page the fact that the first paid up subscription had been received.

The enterprise didn't last long (depression), times were hard and the newspaper closed out. The commercial job printing continued and my father was able to eke out a living from it. He did work for the County, Town and local businessmen and professional people. His next move was to build a shop of his own and in the early '30s with very little money at his disposal he hired Alex and Johnny Batherson to build a small shop adjacent to his house (across the road from A.E. Leadbetter's big house, Hillcrest Hall). He carried on business there under the sign The Only Jones – Printer. He assumed the name "The Only Jones" from the fact that his family was the only Jones in the county electoral list at that time and maybe the fact that the County in Wales where he was born had thousands of Jones.

I worked with my father off and on (when there was work to do) until I left Port Hood in January 1937. I followed the printing trade as a career until my retirement several years ago. After I left Port Hood my father trained Douglas MacDonald (lighthouse) and when Douglas left Port Hood and settled in Montréal he found a job in an allied trade (box making) where he made his living until his retirement at age 65 (Douglas passed away last year).

At this time my father could not do much fine work due to failing eyesight but he remained in business until his death in June 1949.

After my father's death I was contacted by a member of the Christian Brothers (through Dave Smith). This brother had had printing training in the Christian Brother's printing plant in Montréal and was now living and working in Cheticamp and was active in Boy Scout work. He wished to instruct some of the Scouts in the art of printing and wished to acquire some of the equipment in Port Hood. At that time I sent a little hand press, along with some other bits and pieces to my home in Montréal. The remainder of the shop I gave to the Christian Brother whom I later learned was instrumental in setting up in business two young men in Cheticamp. This business is still running although under a different ownership.

That was the end of the printing business in Port Hood but not quite the end of the story. I installed the little hand press in a corner of my basement and taught the children in the neighborhood some of the art of printing. The following is a translation of a part of a book entitled Montréal it is one of a series on cities of the world and authored by the son of my neighbor, Francois Herbert:

The neighbor to my left was called Brown, the one to my right, Jones. Brown was a ships captain on the Great Lakes, one saw him rarely, only when his ship was in port. Jones was a printer, he had in his basement a little hand press with which all of the children of the neighborhood made business cards giving ourselves magnificent titles, but generally poorly balanced, poorly inked, poorly spelt.

I have now given on permanent loan to the Chestico Museum and Historical Society the little press and other things pertaining to this little story in the hope that visitors will find the display interesting.

This story is based on an interview with David Jones' son David Sydney Jones, conducted in 1990 by John Gillies of the Chestico Museum and Historical Society.

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