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James D. Gillis, a Little sketch of My Life We have planned for some time to offer James D. Gillis to our readers, and offering his brief sketch of his life seems a good place to start. It is "little" and it is a "sketch" but it does give both some background ?? and a sense of the man who wrote The Cape Breton Giant: A Truthful Memoir (first published in 1898) • a book quite unlike any other, and the publication he is best known for. Other books of his you might be able to find are Modern English; "Leave the Old to Old" (190A), The Great Election (1915 or 1916), and My Palestine Pilgrimage (1936). The man was a product of the place • proud and outrageous, quick and eccentric • clearly a Cape Breton original. I was born July 11, 1870. At this time my parents lived at Broad Cove Intervale New strathlorne. Formerly they had homesteaded at Grand Mira. My father was a house painter and a blacksmith. He was also a noted violinist and piper and a wit. My mother, Christina MacAulay, was descended from the MacAulays of N. Uist and a distant relative (it seems) of Lord MacAulay. I'en I was seven months old, my father died. Then I was removed to Upper Margaree, where I climbed the years of probation. When I was born I had my first teeth and my mother often remarked that people then said that this was a sign that I'd be a poet. At the age of 5 I read the 4th book. This book corresponded to the 3rd Royal of a later period. In short at that time I could read any English book and my reason would divine the meaning of hard words. Inspector Jno. Y. Gunn said I had a good memory. But my reasoning powers were far superior. A noted scholar from Scotland (from Kircudbright) said I resembled Sir Walter Scott, my forehead etc. I never cared for taking things on authority. I abominated ambiguous problems. If left to myself I could solve any problem as well or better than I can today tho I have solved and straightened out some use less and puzzling ones. But much of the education of many years was coming and going. On Grammar and Composition in early years I saw the idea of function and it consoles me now to see others at long last come to this altho they never ascribe any credit to me. But I see a few writers on Gram, theory try to twine our hard fought for English with college made Italian usefully designated Latin. It is absolutely impossible that any nation of that age or any other would move among such a machine of a Language as that. When I think of all our boys of all generations did for our language, I blush to think of grammars with Non. Case, Dative Case, Ablative Case, Accusative Case, supines, etc. But enough. At eighteen I opened school at Big Cove Banks. I taught the largest at MacFarlane's Bridge, Piper's Glen, N. Ainslie, Judique Intervale, Miller Sec. (Melrose Hill) and Sask. Among pupils are Rev. M. McCormack, East Bay; Rev. Flavian Sampson, L'Ardoise, N. S.; Rev. Chas. Alison McKenzie; Rev. Arch. D. McKinnon, Lake Ainslie; Prof. Murdoch C. McLean, Sc. Dept. Ottawa; Rodk. McLean Kenlock, merchant. 1. I may issue a biography--a fiction before Xmas. 2. I am not married. I don't approve of love at first sight. I think divorce as justifiable as swearing, etc., i.e., if there be grave reasons. 3. I



favor sports and "physical exercises" as prescribed for schools; but I don't approve of the diplomacy shown by inspectors in giving prizes. The judge should be a Sergeant of the Militia or Permanent Force. We are too well acquainted with the prize to 1 Religious Sister Cath. 1 Teacher in a town. A Prot. 1 Cath. pet Balance carried forward 1 Prot. pet --where? 1 Another politics pet. But all harmless sports I approve of. I can fish, swim, walk on stilts. I can't cycle. I seldom play cards. 3. I farmed some and worked in the lumber- woods in an Insane Hosp. and was watchman at Simpsons, Regina. 4. I issued the C. B. Giant 1898. It was printed by Jno. Lovell & Son, Montreal. I sold the rights to Messrs. T. C. Allen & Co. Halifax in 1907. I issued Modern English or (Can. Gram.) in 1904, and not long after sold the rights to Messrs. T. C. Allen.--Printer A. C. Ber? tram Prop. N. S. Herald.  
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