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Earle Peach: A Homeville Memory An excerpt from Memories of a Cape Breton Childhood The only prototype of our famous Black Brook bridge in the area was the one spanning the tidal Homeville River, which led from the lake into the headwaters of Morien Bay. During our school days we were to become goggle-eyed observers for many weeks of a great triumph in engineering--the actual physical removal of Homeville Bridge from its site. Thereby hangs a rather long tale, though what its moral is I am still uncertain. When the news broke, I was twelve years old. A coal mine was to be opened on the peninsula, about a mile from the beach, in the Homeville area. A private consortium of investors known as the Hiawatha Coal Company were undertaking the venture. Who they were and who directed them, local locals never learned, but that did not matter. The industrial age had reached Homeville, and everybody would be prosperous. Certain problems arose early on, however. First of all, the mine site was located in a remote area. The nearest railway was at least four miles distant--the Sydney and, Louisbourg line, owned by the Dominion Coal Company, which did not look kindly on competition. To get around the problem, the new company built a wide corduroy road through the swamps on the east side of the lake, a formidable task in pre-bulldozer days. This road connected with the dirt road near the iron bridge. The company hauled mine machinery over the bridge, and soon coal was being mined in Homeville. They quickly discovered, however, that only an insignificant amount of coal could be hauled away by the trucks then available. If the project was to continue, the mine would have to have a connection by water. But to build a coal pier that could withstand the southeasterly storms of Mira Bay would cost a fortune. Before their eyes lay the only alternative--Homeville Lake, a quiet, peaceful harbour separated from Mira Bay by False Bay Beach, a seemingly insignificant obstacle. All that had to be done was, cut a passageway through the beach, and voila', the lake would provide a natural harbour for shipping coal. At this point, the story of the "drudge" begins--none of us ever called it a dredge. Where it came from or how it got there I never learned, but early in the year, this monster suddenly appeared outside the beach. Perhaps I exaggerate, but I remember it being one hundred feet long, forty feet wide, and bearing an enormous crane. In its control room sat a huge genial Italian named Carlo who, rain or shine, would suddenly erupt, in a fine tenor voice, into "Addie Ma Bella Napoli, Addio, Addio" ala Caruso. But life for Carlo would not be a sweet song. The tale that follows has a Conrad-like ring to it--the irresistible force against the immovable object. As Carlo sang and manipulated the levers, the huge orange-segmented scoop ground its way into the coarse beach rocks and sand, obstacles that had existed for centuries. Excitement in Homeville rose to a feverish pitch; there would be a Homeville harbour. Then came the familiar autumn storm. Towering breakers from the bay swept sand into the area behind the drudge, leaving it marooned and only a quarter of the way Doll Museum of Over 1900 Dolls Antique to Modern Dolls, Bears, Toys & Furniture * We Feature The Louisbourg Doll * Handcrafted Puffins and a Large Selection of Local Crafted Gifts



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