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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1981/8/1

The Cabot Trail over MacKenzie Mountain. It wasn't paved in 1947. Photo: Stephen Homer. (Courtesy Cape Breton Highlands National Park)

get back. I dropped them off in Cheticamp and I turned right around and made for home. But I met people, said 'you couldn't get through, the fire was all over the road, everything was burnt. It wasn't a paved road then. But this was on the Cabot Trail. So I went back to Cheticamp then and we hired a motorboat, myself and the mailman down here, John MacGregor, hired one of those big longliners--there happened to be a couple of them in the harbour. And the fellow who took us down on the boat, he died about a week ago--Peter Larade. And when we got down here, you couldn't see Pleasant Bay for smoke. First thing I saw was the driftwood down on the beach, burning--I knew then that everything was gone. And the smoke was so thick, we couldn't tell/where we were, we couldn't get near the wharf--there was no harbour here then. And it was rough, blowing just a terrible gale. We found out afterwards where we were, and we got one boatload--somebody came out in a rowboat and took out a couple that were sick--they were miserable, you know. And one of them died in the hospital a couple days later. One boatload, and then we had to pull out of there. There were women and children down there, waiting to get out, people that didn't get away by land. Picked up what we could, but we had to leave there, we couldn't take them all; we couldn't get ashore. So there were a lot of people spent the night on the beach, all night. We took what we could back to Cheticamp, We didn't get back here for a week afterwards. It was burning around here all the time. Everything was black. The fields were black--the heather fields were all black.

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