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Cove in a lobster smack over to Pleasant Bay, and then go with the mail driver from there up to Margaree, and then from there with another mail driver to Inverness. So I had these pipes with me. But anyway, when I went over to Meat Cove, there was a MacKinnon there. They called him Little Hell. I don't know how he got that tag, for what reason. But these pipes had drone reeds, but the chanter reed was no good at all. And this MacKinnon fellow started into the woodbox, got some pieces of birchbark, and a knife, and he'd whittle them out, and he'd roll these things out into a half coil. And he'd give it a blow, and put that in the chanter and try it. "Okay, I'll put that in the pipes." And those birchbark reeds would last about 15 to 20 minutes. By that time Little Hell had a dozen laying on the windowsill. If a reed, if it'd go phhhp! Well, give him the chanter, and he'd throw it out, try another reed into it. I was playing there--out Simon George Mac? Lellan' s- -all evening. Well, then the wind came in northeast, and they had to haul the smack up, so I was there for 2 or 3 days. Arid boy, I got a lot of practice in those 2 or 3 days. I hadn't played the pipes for about 4 or 5 years. In those 2 or 3 days I got quite a lot of practice. And by God, if there was anything good to eat in the house, I got it! Anyway, I came around to Pleasant Bay and up to Inverness. And I was at the Mac- Isaacs' there, Danny Allan MacIsaac. I was up there at--it was Dominion Day, and they were having a picnic. Danny Allan said, "We'll go up to the picnic," he said. "No use going out around today," he said, "there'll be nobody home. We'll go up to the picnic, and see what's going on." So I went up there. And this old Burnt John was there. He was playing the pipes at the picnic--he was playing for dances, eh? Square sets. That boy, he was a marvellous old man, you know. He was pretty near 80 then. And when the square set was finished, he didn't stop playing. He'd just swing' off into a strathspey. And the first thing you'd see, boy, there'd be 2 or 3 stepdanc? ing up on the platform then. And he'd play that, and a reel, and they'd have--oh, there'd be about 5 or 6 minutes of step? dancing, anyway. Then another set would come up, and he'd carry right on. So anyway, the next day Danny said, "Look, we'll go around to John's place ,tomorrow." He said, "Get in there--my God, the old fellow was good!" So we came over to his house. I never saw such a stack of pipe music in my life. I didn't know there was that much written. Jesus, he had piles and piles of it. From the floor he had some stacked up about that high, right from the floor. (That's 4 1/2 or 5 feet.) Absolutely. Then he had a table, something like that there, with a deck on the bottom of it. And that was cov? ered, and the table was covered. Oh, pipe music. I think he had every collection was ever put together, you know. (We're talking about 19-what?) This would be around '28, 1928. Spring. So anyway, of course Danny Allan had to tell old John that I was a piper, too. Nothing much do but I'd have to play the pipes. He had his pipes going, you know, so he passed them to me. I don't know, it was one of these occasions when everything practically goes blank and you can't think of anything. The only tune that came into my head was "The Drunken Piper." And that's one of the stiffest tunes in the book, eh? Oh, I guess I staggered through it. And I passed the pipes back to old John. He didn't say a word, he just



took them and he put them up on his shoulder, and he played for, I suppose, about 10 minutes. And incidentally, Danny MacIsaac said when we went there, he said, "Now, I'm going to The Violin Shop ' Johannes Sturm Violinmaker/repairer Quality repairs to String instruments Custom work Bow rehairing New and used instruments Strings accessories For information or appointment, call (902)345-2883 R.R. 1, GRAND ANSE, RICHMOND CO., N.S. BOE IVO The Cape Breton Tourist Association Offers 100,000 Welcomes to AN Visitors to Our Island 'You will find the hospitality truly outstanding while you visit with us. And we hope you will remember us kindly when you return to your homes. IF YOU THINK THE WINTER IS GREAT - iHatPuHin COME SEE US NEXT SUMMER! 'L Don Blackwood, Executive Director, "r Cape Breton Tourist Association, '?? . "JI' 20 Keltic Drive, %g" Sydney River, Nova Scotia BIS 1P5 WRITE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, OR PHONE 539-9876 Photo by Warren Gordon