

[Page 84 - Stories Told about the Bagpipes](#)ISSUE : [Issue 50](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1989/1/1

pipes could be used as a kind of telegraph, to send messages across a hill.) Oh, every tune--pretty well on the violin, too--is in words. Every tune is in words. Oh yes, yes, yes. Ninety per cent of the tunes are in words. "Tulloch Gorm," that's all in words. Somebody composed words. And some of them are ridiculous. Oh, some of the most scandalous words you ever heard in your life. Ooo, if I was to mention them here, some of them--wicked! Making fun of somebody else, yes. And Archie Beaton, the piper--my God, if somebody'd go to dance, why he'd just play a tune for him that would suit him right to perfection, making fun of him, you know. God, he was a dangerous man, Archie. This fellow was red-headed. He'd play for him, "Chew your cud, you old red sheep" or something like this. They all had words. They were all composed on words first. Joe Neil MacNeil (You were telling about Maclsaac the piper.) Oh, yes. He was staying up at Ben Eoin--Neil R. Maclsaac. I knew him well, oh, I was well acquainted with Neil R. Maclsaac. Although I didn't know all about his piping. I was only around when he was in his last stages of piping. His last years. But he was doing quite a lot of piping before I got in with him at all. Although I heard him piping, playing the pipes at a dance, yes. (Piping at a dance.) Oh yes, playing for the dance, sure, playing the same as the violin. I heard pipers playing at East Bay. There'd be 3 or 4 young pipers, each one taking his turn at the dancing stage in the evening. And a violin player, and somebody--usually somebody with an accordion, for a complement, an accompaniment. And they'd be just going on, see which one of them would get the first set going. See would they get the first set going on the stage where the piping was going on, or would they get the first set over where the violin player was playing. (What do you mean, get the first set?) Well, the first group, the first 8 that would go on the stage to dance--4 men and 4 women--to dance the quadrilles or the lancers.... I saw them. Well, that was the dancing that was going on, those years. That's all that was going on. They were dancing all afternoon at those picnics.... They'd start at the stage because the stage had poles over it and branches thatched for shade, so that it would be cool on the stage. The sun wouldn't shine (on) it, and there'd be usually a little breeze of wind blowing to keep the place cool. Yes, I've seen that. And that was the goal. But at East Bay, they had so many pipers down there. There were 3 or 4 pipers. They'd have 3 down there. There'd be Pete Morrison and Peter MacKinnon, and there

CAPE BRETON REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY TRANSIT INFO 539-8124  
539-8129 PEOPLE ON THE MOVE