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ISSUE : [Issue 52](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1989/8/1

Alex Cooke's North Mountain Diary This is a diary kept by the late Alex Cooke of Ingonish, during a winter spent plowing snow on North Mountain. The winter of 1954-55 was the first winter they kept the road open from Pleasant Bay to Cape North. March 1, 1955: North East wind; hauled 25 logs. Mr. Doak and Mr. Coleman gone to Cheticamp. March 2: South East gales, snow, hauled west; heavy flurries in p.m. George ploughed to North Aspy. I ploughed to Lone Shieling. Rollie here, and Charlie Warden, also Eddie and Charlie R. March 3: Up at 6 a.m. Eggs and bacon for breakfast. Blizzard North West, heavy snowfall all day. George across the mountain. Now, 5:30 p.m. Charlie Warden visiting also Eddie, Albert, and Charlie R. Steak for supper. Boy! is she a honey! March 4: No change in the weather. Still North West, drifting snow, frost, about zero; can't sit on the open dozer today. Road a bit heavy across top. Turner dozer here; ploughed her wide. Charlie visiting. Ben arrived with dozer parts. He spent the night with us. March 5: Fine this morning but cold; Wind South West. Assembled clutch. Ben called at 1:30 a.m. Left for home at 2 p.m. with A. G. Buchanan. Arrived home at 4:30. March 6: Sunday, at home. March 7: Here at 11:30 a.m. About three inches of fine snow and some ice. Ploughed across mountain. Mr. Doak and Charlie W. visiting. West wind, fine day; everything under control. March 8: Fine but cold. West wind, strong. Putting clutch in dozer. Jim Boyd visiting. 5:45 p.m. Supper over. Now to wash the dishes. Wish we had a dog. March 9: Another fine day. Not too warm. West Wind. D8 up. Ed. Gwinn and Dan R. visiting. George called home. Father sick. D7 repaired. Alone tonight. Taking first chance home tomorrow. March 10: Up at 4:30. Started D7 6:45 a.m. Met Albert at Charlie's. George came back with Ben. Father better. Out to the lake, no cod. Some lake! Take it off the park map. March 11: Wind South West, warm. Ploughed south side. All ice and snow gone from road. March 12: Colder this morning. Snow went a lot during the night. Wind west, turning clockwise with heavy flurries. Hope to go home today. Left at 2:30 p.m. March 13: Sunday, at home. March 14: Left Ingonish 8:30. Arrived at North Mountain 11:30 a.m. Rough road, four inches light snow; wind North, cold. Sid drove us over. Lock on camp broken. Thieves took home our bacon. March 15: Cokj. North west wind. Ploughed across mountain; ten inches in places. Visitors today were Charlie D., Eddie, Charlie R. Aucoin, and Kenny. Beautiful night; now 9:30. March 16: Wednesday. Fine this a.m. Hauled 25 logs. Starting to rain at 3:30 p.m. Joe took shovel to MacKenzie River. A plane forced down in Cheticamp. March 17: Heavy snow squalls. Cold. Hauled logs all day (79). A real blizzard, the worst of the winter. Now 7:30 p.m., a great day for the Irish. Mr. Doak and J. Boyd over. March 18: Friday. What a day! Wind W. N. W. Heavy snow, visibility zero. 4 ft. of snow. Velocity 60 mi. per hr. Now 7 a.m. Ben here 11 a.m. Joe, Chris, Charlie. March 19: Saturday. Wind N.W. Cold with snow flurries. No sign of spring. George ploughed down to Bay. Now 11 a.m. Must get dinner and make a few pies to serve with ice cream. Sunday, 20th, home. Monday, March 21: From Ingonish, cold N. W. wind, snow flurries. Ploughed mountain. Tuesday, March 22: Up at 6 a.m. Ploughed

mountain. Hauled 71 logs. Nice today. S. E. wind. Drizzle this p.m. Steak for supper.

Wednesday, March 23: The wind from the S.E., a gale it did blow, A thick, heavy fog and then came the snow. We hauled 56 logs, then the clock marked two Now to find Charlie, then to "skidoo.\*

Thursday, March 24: On this 24'th day, the sun shining bright. The storm it calmed down at seven last night. The wind is now west and starting to blow And the road is choked off with ten inches of snow.

Friday, March 25: The wind is N. W. and blowing quite hard Today we put 70 logs in the yard. Tourists are scarce coming over the trail. Some carry plenty of O'Keefe's golden ale.

Saturday, March 26: Today she looks grim, still snowing up here, But that's how it is for eight months of the year. The banks are piled now over seven feet high, Should the weather turn warm, it might melt by July.

Sunday, March 27: Stormy today as well you know. Still blowing hard with drifting snow. We may not get home, and then with some luck The bosses back there may send in a truck. We have nothing to eat and that's not so good Our coal is all gone and the stove won't burn wood. But by next week, spring should arrive. If the moon she change on twenty-five.

Monday, March 28: In writing a log in this special way Sometimes you get stuck for something to say. To keep the thing straight and not counted a loss, We had a day off, thanks to our good boss.

Tues., March 29: The weather is changed, we hope for the best, The sun is real warm and the wind is South West. But sad for to say, like a bolt from the blue One of our boys took down with the flu'.

Wed., March 30: George was up earty, left home at daylight To give Charie his jeep that we borrowed last night. The day it was nice, the forecast said fair So we went to the garage our chains to repair.

Thurs., March 31: Here's adieu to old March, we are happy to say, She finally rolled round to the thirty-first day. We were down hauling logs until late afternoon, If the weather stays fine, we will finish up soon.

Friday, April 1: So It's April the first, still the same thing, It's really mid-winter, there's no sign of spring. No ploughing today, but still logs to haul, Just fifty-five more and that will be all.

Saturday, April 2: I think I'll quit here, the weather's to blame. Nothing more I can think of, every day is the same. All night was a gale but the morning dawned nice. Every window was covered with six inches of ice. So I'll pledge here this day, not a line will I write Until it hits eighty and that in the night.

April 7: At twelve last night she hit eighty-two So now we'll pack up and bid her adieu. The voyage is over, sometimes she was rough It took four months and a half, so that's long enough. It is a fine place your vacation to spend And if you don't believe it, just try a weekend. Alex Cooke gave us his diary via Chrystal Hussey in 1976. They have both since died. \* In her letter to us, Chrystal Hussey wrote, "Where Mr. Cooke has crossed out a word...and replaced it with 'skidoo,' the original word sounded like 'subscue.' It was a word used by an old gentleman in this neighbourhood when he decided to finish a call." Find any story ever published in Cape Breton's Magazine. Send for "A GUIDE TO ISSUES 1 THROUGH 50." It's In Issue 50 • \$3.25.