

[Page 46 - Mail and Snow and Roads and Mud](#)ISSUE : [Issue 16](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1977/6/1

• and the next winter was just the opposite\* I never shovelled a pound of snow or had any trouble • until the 7th day of April. I left Sydney at half past 8 in the morning and at half past 5 I was stuck in the snow just this side of Ben Eion. And I was buried • the rear end of the car • was buried and I was digging it out • when I heard someone walking. It was my friend Mickey MacNeil and the horse coming to meet me. And that was the only time the horses worked that winter\* way\* Got down to Big Pond. And I was there for 3 days. In the morning I'd get up and put the mail in the sleigh going west and I'd only go 100 yards and there was a great big drift of snow. You couldn't get through ito I'd turn around and go back to the post office and take the Sydney mail and start off that way • and there was another big bank about the same distance from the post office. Go to the bank, turn around, put the mail back in the post office. I did that for 3 days. Danny MacAskill and the Ingonish Mail, and Jimmy MacIver with mail from Baddeck. I had a big studebaker first • big 7-passen- ger stude • and the winter the mud was so bad I had a 4-cylinder '27 cheve. I just used it for the month in the mud. Wore the car out in a month in the mud. Oh, this mud was deep • the axles would be dragging in it. I tore the four fenders off in the mud. I wore the arms that held the running boards • wore them out. There were four camps on the road, men who were building it • and men were going back and forth. Well, you'd pick up the husky guys to lift the car out of the mud, push it or pull it. And get stuck? I put 13 tires on the car in one month. Ruined them, tearing them up with rocks. There was one place I'd leave the post of? fice at Big Pond for a few days and I would go from a mile and a quarter to a mile and a half in low gear wide open. And sometimes she'd catch up and I'd have to get out and get under her with boughs or rocks and get her going again\* 6 days a week. There were no holidays in the post office those times\* And if you went out the road and you got stuck you didn't come back. You were sup? posed to keep going and somebody else come behind you with the next mail. We didn't always do that \* But I went out with the horse one day and it started to storm • and it was a real bad storm • got to the top of the hill in Big Pond and it was a desperate snowstorm. And I had an old black mare • a very very faithful horse--and she got buried in it • all you could see was her head and part of her neck. And I couldn't see a thing • just blinding • and the mare buried in a snowbank\* But there was no snow down in the ditch\* I got the harness off her and got her out of the snowbank and tied her to a telegraph pole. Then I car? ried the mail out and put it in the ditch and then rolled the sleigh over and put the harness back on the mare and the mail back in the sleigh • and got out of it that People would help to shovel. But we never paid anybody to shovel. Mail contractor couldn't afford it with the money he was getting. I was getting \$1800 a year to take that mail to Irish Cove • roughly \$6 " a day. And you hired a man and fed 4 horses\* One storm I went out • the storm was over but the roads were blocked. And I had the bus that day and I got up beyond the East Bay church going in low gear and I knew the road would be a lot worse ahead of me --so I just swung the bus around. I said. To heck with this\* I'll argue xvith them a-



bout going through this. I got back as far as the church and I met a car. Some people from beyond Irish Cove had been in to 'AOi the night before and got word their father had died through the night at home....Well, ' that's a different story. I swung the bus around and told them to follow me\* I got to a phone in Ben Eion and called Big Bond and told them what happened and that I was coming along. There was 3 or 4 fellows met me at the top of Big Pond Hill. They had taken the tops off the banks with shovels. And as I was going along the road I kept picking up men with shovels and when I got to the upper end of Big Pond I believe I had 19 men with me with shovels. And so we went right to Irish Cove\* I remember one bank of snow we went through • well, we didn't open the whole thing • but I had a bus by that time and it had a rack on the roof • and I have a picture someplace where the fellow was standing on the roof and the snow was higher than the man\* But the biggest, deepest bank of snow I ever saw was at Red Islands • the engineer on the highway measured it • it was 26 feet 6 inches of snow\* It took three men passing the snow up to one another to open it. And that '27 chevy, often the running