

[Page 24 - from D.N. MacLennan's History of Grand River](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 17](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1977/8/1

from D. N. MacLennan's Geography Grand River is one of Cape Breton's largest rivers, about 20 miles long. It is on the southwestern coast or watershed, draining the Loch Lomonds in the highlands of Richmond County. The first three miles are tidewater and wide, more like a loch than a river, with several small islands, named for the farmers whose place was nearest. The tidewater comes in past the village. A small arm called Black River runs in to the west, draining the Lewis Cove Lakes and Loch Cailean, and a bridge crosses it at the village where it joins the Grand. And there is a larger bridge a short distance down, crossing the main river. From tidewater the land rises and the river runs faster with several rapids called fords. About halfway to Loch Lomond the settlement is known as Grand River Falls. At one time it had its own post office and schoolhouse. Both are now gone. There was also a bridge across the river as there were families on the west side. The houses are now vacant and the bridge is gone. In early time, the entrance to Grand River was wider and deeper • but it is very sandy and it filled in. Once a schooner drifted in, and the sand banked up and that was the end of the entrance. Before that, small schooners could come up to the bridge, as we called the village. Finally several years ago it closed up all together and the roads were flooded. Instead of opening the old passage they went further west and opened a new passage and had no more trouble so far. Black Point on the east side of the mouth of the river was used by fishermen, but was not a good shelter. Their shacks were burned down many years ago. A breakwater was built there but it is also gone. A hill on the Matheson farm by the shore was the first cemetery. On the west side, starting from where the old entrance was, is where the sheep corral used to be. The sheep were pastured at the shore all winter. They fed on kelp and seaweed on the shore and took shelter in the scrub woods inland. A little further west a low hill was called MacDonald's Hill or Horse Hill. The horses would get up on it to get the cool sea breeze. And a cove near there was called Mary Ann's Cove, after a schooner that was wrecked in the drift ice. A higher hill we called Red Hill or Red Bank. In the mouth of the river, by the flats on the west, was Indian Point, named after Black John who used to camp there in winter. Black John had a blind and a stuffed fox skin fixed on the end of a pole. The river was open here most of the winter and the ducks would collect. John in the blind would push out the pole with the fox skin and this would attract the ducks. They would move nearer, giving John a better shot. Another coming there was John Alex Scotchman. He was a small boy coming with his father from Scotland. The father died on the way over and the captain gave him to the Indians. He grew up among them and married the chief's daughter and had a large family. They liked Scotch people, and at one time the boys took their side in a fight. Indians were plentiful then. They used to come around selling baskets the women made and butter tubs and kealers (shallow tubs for setting the milk in) and axe handles made by the men • and they begged. They were good at that. There was a story of one who was begging a woman for a skirt and ended up by asking her for the one she had on. In winter they would come to Grand River to spear eels.



They would camp on the shore, build fires, the men would spear eels, and the women would visit the houses and beg and get a lunch. When the men got tired they also would go to the houses. When they wanted to stay at a house all night, when they came in the first thing they did was remove their shoes. There were some houses they- avoided because the people there were not friendly to them. The women smoked as well as the men but I never heard of them bumming tobacco. Neither did I hear of an Indian blamed for stealing. On the west side of the river, on the farm Cape Breton's Magazine/2'