

[Page 26 - Ferries in the Strait of Canso](#)ISSUE : [Issue 20](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1978/8/1

A couple of times we got hung up an hour or two. You know, the ferry was important, but it got beyond • it couldn't handle the traffic. The official opening of the causeway was pretty well the last day of the ferry operation. But people liked the trip across and they missed it. There was a petition to keep a small ferry on, to take cars of people going to work in Mulgrave • but nothing came of it. Rt Top; "Mulgrave" towing trains on scow; belowt "Scotia" train ferry in the Strait. H. L. Crittenden* Mulgrave: I was on the Scotia, the train ferry, until it tied up when the causeway opened in 1955 • The Scotia was the link in the railway system, carrying boxcars and passenger cars across the strait. Where the boat came to the wharf, there was an apron that would go up or down about 5 or 6 feet, to correspond with the tide and the boat. The apron had rails on it, and had to come right down aboard the boat • and they'd couple it up with what they called latches. That would link the boat to the wharf, and the three sets of tracks on the Scotia would be linked up to the tracks in the railway yard. Mulgrave was a railway centre. They'd make up the trains right here, push them on and haul them off the boats with the yard engine. Some others called it the shiinter. And they had all this on the Cape Breton side as well • because normally locomotives weren't going across, only the cars. I was second engineer on the Scotia. I had charge of the boat below. I had nothing to do with the operation on deck. I had the third engineer under me, and two oilers, and there were four firemen. The firemen kept up steam. There were four big boilers aboard of her. Each boiler had three fireboxes into it, and one man looked after the three boxes • and on the other side of the shaft another boiler. And further down two more boilers • mostly three in operation in the summertime. And the heat down there • oh my god, she was cruel. I've come Cape Breton's Magazine/26 home here in the morning, about 6 o'clock, and wearing something heavy on your feet you know, and my boots would be white with the salt out of my body. I used to tell the boys, people would wonder if we had our right senses, to work down there. And you couldn't see anything. Someone would come down now and then, tell us where we were. Say, for instance, "We'll just get by this ice pan and we'll be all right." I ran both Scotias. Old Number 1 came here in 1901. Before her was the boat called the Mulgrave. She looked just like a passenger boat. She used to tow a scow. The train cars would go aboard tracks on the scow. I think she carried 3 passenger cars and probably 3 or 4 freight cars. The load would be only small. Then the Mulgrave would hook on the side of that scow, and she'd weather that thing over through the ice nearly all the winter. I find it hard to believe • on account of the trouble we had with the Scotias, going over on the ice. We'd get so far to the docks, we'd be almost ready to couple her up • and something would happen down below • shut everything off. Now that would be the ice, clogging the condenser. Normally, the salt water came up through the bottom of the boat and went into the condenser, and you could see the stream of water flowing out again, out the side of the boat. And when the ice would clog the water it would kill the dynamo • lights went out and we'd have to shut our engines down. Oh, it happened



quite often. We couldn't answer the cap-