

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming



In our story of silver fox farming and its ups and downs since its inception in the 1880's by breeders Charles Dalton and Robert Oulton, we left off at 1920 when the United States government had placed a tariff of 50 per cent on pelts and 16 per cent on live foxes. The real effect of the blow was not realized until December when ranchers started to market their pelts. That fall an exhibition of live foxes was held in Montreal. It was the first in Canada and most of the top breeders in this province were there. They practically filled the show with their entries. W. Chester S. McLure and P. J. Drolet were the judges. Some sales were made, particularly fine silvers were sold by Joe Callbeck to the Borestone Ranch in Maine. Arthur Doyle, Winnipeg, bought quite a number and the writer also purchased several. These foxes formed the foundation sires for many of the best that were bred in Canada afterwards.

Coinciding with the American duty was a drop in the demand in London for fox pelts due probably to currency difficulties which at that time were not so well known or freely discussed as they are at present. Anyhow, the outlook was far from bright, relieved a bit though by some buyers from Muskegon, Michigan, who picked up quite a number of pairs of live foxes. The industry had been started there by Frank Tuplin, formerly of New Annap, who had located on a nice farm and was very well established. Fox farming took on quite well in Michigan and the next year several carloads of Prince Edward Island foxes were shipped there and became the nucleus for very successful breeding farms.

From Bros., who in after years developed into the largest breeders of silver foxes in the world, were then just feeling their way. They had started out with rather poor stock at first but had managed to pick up some types of Alaskan and were getting some breeding results. One of them came to this province that year or the next and bought quite a number of our darker types to cross on the silvery ones they had.

The year 1922 was a good one for the sale of breeding stock and it was that year that the Royal Winter Fair, Toronto, held its first silver fox show. As in 1920 practically all the entries were from Prince Edward Island and quite a number of sales were made to Ontario parties and also to westerners. In 1923 a number of buyers came here from Norway and that trend continued until in 1926 a whole ship's deck was covered with silver foxes brought from P. E. I. It was the live sales that boosted the industry from 1920 to 1926. About that time pelts made a comeback on the London market and

prices of as high as 150 pounds were realized for some good specimens there. In 1927 Messrs. McLure and MacKinnon sold 61 per cent interest in the Vimy Ranch to the Hudson's Bay Company and a new company, the McLure and MacKinnon Silver Fox Farms, Ltd., was brought into being. The previous year - 1926 - McLure and MacKinnon had been purchasers of silver fox for H. B. C. and they continued in that capacity until 1936.

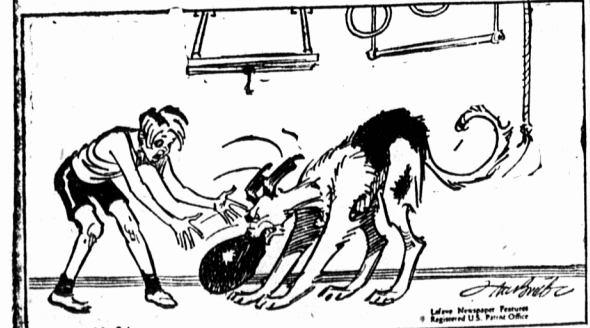
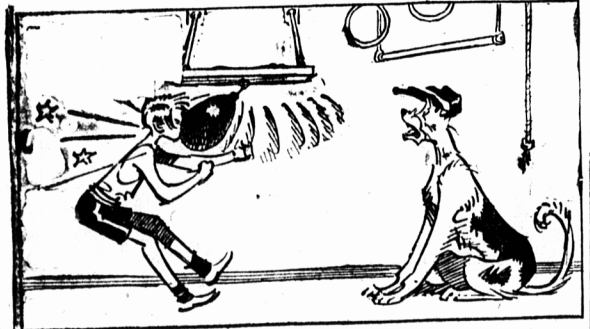
An idea of the prices paid at their sales can be taken from the fact that our records show that in 1928 silver fox pelts were sold on the January H. B. C. sales at prices of 142 pounds, 132 pounds and quite a large number at over 100 pounds. The highest price realized at their sales that the writer remembers of while we were attending them was 250 pounds for a pelt consigned by Edgar Milligan through us to the H. B. C. It was a marvellous skin, not an Alaskan, but a pure P. E. I. bred. At the same time 50 Alaskan type skins consigned by Milligan and Morrison brought an average of 65 pounds.

By 1930 Norway, the United States and Western Canada had secured their requirements of live foxes and sales became limited to certain top foxes at fox shows or some especially good individuals. The effects of the stock market smash of 1929 in the United States were beginning to be felt all over the world and prices of pelts dropped accordingly but still they were sufficiently good to make fox farming quite profitable. Looking over old records we note that we averaged somewhere around \$60 or more that year. By 1936 most ranchers had increased their breeding stock and thereby cut down the overhead which a smaller number of foxes would create.

In the 1936 and 1937 sales averages were around \$35.00 to \$45.00 and anyone with a good sized fox ranch was making money because fox was cheap, tripe around 3 1-2, horse meat .04 and cereals around .04 1-2. Labor was reasonable and silver fox farming was looked on as a good steady moneymaker. The demand seemed insatiable - Norway, Denmark, United States, Canada, were all raising foxes and by 1939 somewhere between 600,000 800,000 fox pelts were thrown on the markets. That led to very low prices, much below the cost of production and in this province - and we presume elsewhere - fox farmers cut down their herds very materially.

The advent of war in the fall of 1939 caused an upturn in prices, in 1940 most of the pelts going to Canada and American purchasers.

NAPOLEON AND UNCLE ELBY by Gilford McBride



New President Of Ford Motor Co.



WINDSOR, Dec. 31 - Ford Motor Company of Canada, Ltd., yesterday announced the retirement of Douglas B. Greig as director and president, and the appointment of Rhys M. Sale, (above) executive vice president, as his successor, effective January 1.

Mr. Greig is relinquishing his duties after more than 30 years with the company. He began in the accounting department and moved steadily upwards through a series of positions to become treasurer in 1942, and president in 1946. Mr. Sale, who is 52, began his career in Ford of Canada as a youth of 18 in the cashier's department. He became assistant export manager in 1926, assistant Canadian sales manager in 1929, and was sales manager from 1939 until his election as vice president in 1946. Mr. Sale was elected executive vice president in 1948.

It was that year that the first platinum was born on Canadian ranches and in a few years they were pretty well distributed and prices as high as \$225, a pelt were received in Montreal. They had been first introduced in New York in 1938 by Omar Brager - Larsen who brought over 100 beauties from Norway and had them sold at auction I. J. Fox paying \$5,000 for the top, and many of them sold for \$500.00 and I think the average was something over \$350.00.

Every rancher wanted to get in platinum and those who could not get the Norwegian type purchased the LaForest. This type had occurred on a French Canadian farm in Quebec. The proprietor did not realize its value but Dr. J. A. LaForest did. He made a deal and had the use of the male polygamously for two or three seasons. LaForest types became quite as popular as the Norwegian and they have continued so ever since. The fact that platinum were bringing such high prices caused most ranchers to endeavor to produce as many as possible. That of course, caused flooding of the markets and consequent low prices. Today platinum unless particularly good quality, are not bringing any more than silvers.

Another type that had great popularity for a brief spell was white face. These were popularized principally by Ollie McNeill, Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask. In 1927 he purchased a pair of silvers from McLure and MacKinnon Silver Fox Farms and they produced the original white faced male that was the progenitor of hundreds of others. Well, McNeill and Raoul Raymond were the first here to get breeding stock from Ollie and sales by them soon spread white faces throughout the province. They were bright beautiful types and had quite a vogue, but the last couple of years they have been relegated to an inferior position to silvers mainly because the trimming trade does not like them as well.

The above concludes our brief history of silver fox farming and our purpose in writing it is to acquaint the younger persons connected with the industry with its history and also to revive memories of the past among older persons. In concluding we are going to make a prediction - but we do not claim to be a prophet or the son of a prophet. However, we think we can discern signs of a revival of interest in silver fox and we have an idea that those who can hold on for two years with good stock will see fox furs once again popular and in good demand.

With this issue our year's notes will be completed and we will soon be starting in on 1950. We want to thank our readers for their kindly comments made and written to us and to wish one and all a very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

PROVINCE'S BIRTH In 1849 Vancouver Island was proclaimed a British colony, and in 1868 the territory of the mainland was organized under the name British Columbia.

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NEWSY NOTES -

By Agricola

The Red Crossbill. The Red or American Crossbill appears in the old lists of Island birds, but only as a winter visitor. In the year 1936 the late Mr. Ludlow Jenkins of Marshfield, who was an enthusiastic and careful observer, reported that this Crossbill was very rare, and that he had seen no specimens for at least sixteen years. Francis Bain (1891) wrote: "The Crossbills are wayward wanderers which come in large flocks some falls and again are unseen for years... The American Crossbill is also a red-plumbed bird, but has no white bars on its wings. Large flocks come in late autumn about our spruce groves, feeding on the seeds. They are exceedingly tame and easily approached."

This species appears in the lists for N. S. and N. B., and is said, to have nested in the latter Province on one occasion. Its natural summer range is in the coniferous woods from Alaska to Quebec, and in the winter it is found scattered down the coast to Virginia and inland to Texas.

The peculiarity of the Crossbills is that the mandibles do not meet as in other birds, but cross each other at the tips. No bird equipped like that could pick up a living in the ordinary way. The Crossbill however, picks apart the pine-cone scales with its crossed bill and secures the seeds with its scissor-like tongue.

Red or American Crossbill. AOU, 521. Rare visitor. Male: plumage brick red, wings darker; no white wing-bars in either sex. Female brownish, washed with greenish yellow. Length 6.0 to 6.5 inches.

LIFE OF GEORGE HANDEL (3)

Handel was as skilled on the harpsichord as he was in musical composition, and often played solo on the instrument in the theatre. Readers need scarcely be reminded that this venerable instrument was the parent of the piano, and that its strings were plucked by quills instead of being struck by hammers as in the later instrument. It was this facility at the keyboard that brought Handel into the company of another genius, one Thomas Britton. Thus it is a strange sort of character to introduce here for he was a coal merchant in a very small way, and carried his stock-in-trade on his shoulders in a sack, round London streets, calling out "Small Coal" as he walked! How he came to play the viola da gamba is not known, but play it he did and was so much of an artist that he attracted a great number of amateurs who were glad to perform concerted pieces under his direction.

Britton held the tenancy of a stable and he made a long narrow room above it; it was in this make-shift chamber that the first private concerts took place in England, and in which instrumental music was first played regularly. Here, from 1778 to 1714 (the date of his death), the small-coal merchant entertained the musical world of London weekly - and gratuitously. Among the patrons of this extraordinary man was the Duchess of Queensbury, a celebrated Court beauty, who never missed a performance.

In 1715 Handel produced a new opera, "Amadigi", at the theatre, in the Haymarket. The words were by the manager of the theatre, James Heidegger, commonly called the Swiss Count. The poor Count was supremely ugly, but it is rather disconcerting to find that Lord Chesterfield - that master of ceremonial and good manners - had a wager that it was "impossible to find another human being so disgraced by nature." A thorough search was made throughout London, and at length a hideous old woman was found in comparison with whom Heidegger was voted "handsome." Heidegger was quite pleased, but Lord Chesterfield wasn't; he said that in order to be fair, Heidegger must put on the old woman's bonnet. Thus attired the poor Count looked horribly ugly, and Chesterfield won his bet!

Perhaps "Amadigi" was not a hit as the saying goes, for it is seldom mentioned now. In those happy-go-lucky times the nobility of England oft-times encouraged genius by making its owner free of their homes. In this way Handel was staying with the Earl of Burlington whose house was at Piccadilly. (When King George 1 asked the Earl why he lived so far from London, the Earl replied that he was fond of solitude and had selected a place where nobody would build beside him! If he could see Piccadilly now.)

In 1717 Handel paid a flying visit to his native town and returned to London the following year to find the Haymarket Theatre closed for lack of public support. Still "when one door shuts, another opens" is an old and true saying. The Duke of Chandos had a private Chapel attached to his magnificent palace which he called "Cannons." This afterwards became the Parish Church of Edgeware, now included in London. In this church, up to about 50 years ago, there was a brass plate attached to the organ, bearing this inscription - "Handel was organist at this Church from the year 1718 to 1721, and composed the oratorio of 'Esther' on this organ." (This fine church may have been bombed as have many others in London.)

(Continued in next notes.)

TOO MANY FIRES. It is distressing to read of so many destructive house-fires in the Maritimes. We have our share too, but it is not often that we have any loss of life. Usually the incident begins with "the head of the house" rising early and lighting the kitchen fire. Then he goes to the barn to attend to his stock. In the meantime the rest of the family are roused by thick smoke, and just manage to get a ramble to safety before the house goes up in smoke and flame. There may be

a little insurance but generally there is not; so it will be long before the unfortunate people are in anything like their former circumstances.

I suspect that all the drafts were left on, that is, open, when the head of the family went to the barn. "And I know that the flue was full of creosote (sometimes called "tar") ready to take fire.

A little care would have prevented the catastrophe. (1) Be sure the drafts are closed; careful as I am I sometimes forget! But then I am a stickler for clean stove-pipes! They are cleaned once a month in summer when fires are smaller. In winter when fires must be well maintained, the flues are cleaned every fortnight or three weeks, and to keep tab on this the day on the almanack is marked with red pencil.

The creosote scraped out of the stove pipe is just unburnt fuel (from the wood) and is thrown on to the fire in the grate.

Well, "it is not in mortals to command success" - but we can deserve it by attending to the two aforementioned precautions.

SLAKEBITE TOLL

Every year poisonous snakes in India destroy enough people to make a good-sized town.

SNAKY WORLD

There are about 1,700 species of snakes in the world.

For RETIREMENT See the Maritime Life Man TODAY! T. W. BENTLEY, C.L.U., Manager 127 Grafton Street Charlottetown, P. E. I. Box No. 433



HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!

It is with a deep feeling of appreciation that we terminate the year 1949 and enter the New Year 1950. We appreciate the opportunity which was ours to serve an even increased number of patrons during the past year. We feel that this increased business was due in large measure to the sound policies followed, of giving unselfish service, high quality merchandise and at prices cut down as close as possible and to a courteous, willing and helpful staff.

We look forward to the New Year, 1950 with renewed vigour when the management will search out the best values from amongst the reliable manufacturers and in turn pass on these values at reasonable prices to our customers.

The management and staff join in wishing to one and all a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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