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ACROSS THE ISLAND

LePage Genealogy Items Stir Interest

By NEIL A. MATHESON

MY FRIEND Guy Rollings, North Rustico has brought me a production termed "LePage Genealogy".

I have often been asked to help some families with their genealogy but that is not in my line.

I had some difficulty in deciding how to make a column out of the LePage genealogy that is factual, and yet would be interesting to readers generally.

My interest turned first to Richard Rollings, a man who had his horse shot from under him at the battle of Waterloo, back in 1815, mount another and continue the battle. Presumably Rollings was English, though Guy Rollings tells me there was some talk that his name was Roland, a Frenchman, and changed his name to Rollings later when he joined the English Army. Indeed Guy mentioned the possibility that this man – he was Guy Rollings' great grandfather – had fought in the Army of Napoleon and later joined the British Army.

Many of Napoleon's fighting men did that, Guy tells me.

However this must be charged as speculation. This LePage Genealogy classes Richard Rollings as being English and his wife Elizabeth LePage a Huguenot from the Channel Islands.

Only Speculation?

ON ONE PAGE of the LePage genealogy a Mrs. Evelyn Maynard, Victoria B.C. is quoted as saying "My Uncle Harold used to say that one of the LePages . . . fought in Napoleon's Army." As I have said, it must be charged to speculation.

I was interested in learning from Mr. Rollings (Guy) that he and Beecher Court, North Rustico are the sole surviving great-grandsons of this Richard Rollings and his wife Elizabeth.

The original Richard Rollings is interesting because he was out to this Island with the British Army under the Duke of Kent in 1805. Waterloo was in 1815 and Richard and his wife came back here in the following year. They brought with them Elizabeth's brother, Christopher.

Richard, who was a major at the time of Waterloo, served under Winsloe who was a land agent. Rollings was also harbor master – there is no detail on what the job implied. Indeed the property which Guy Rollings owns now was once owned by Christopher, Guy tells me.

Never Used Chemicals

MR. ROLLINGS (Guy) is an organic farmer. He uses seaweed and manure for fertilizer, has never used any chemicals. He even tells me that there is an insect killer –

think the name is Rotenone – that is made from the root of a plant. So he doesn't use chemical solutions, not even for this purpose. "My father never used any of the chemical fertilizers, he tells me. The father was Aquilla John Rollings and his grandfather was John Rollings.

Guy Rollings' first wife was Pearle Robinson, of the family that owned Robinson's Island. The original Robinson to come here was Peter. On the way across the ocean he was captured by pirates along with others in his boat. But the pirate chief noticed a ring on Robinson's finger, gave him a sign, and set him and his wife overside in a boat with enough provisions to reach land.

You see, the Pirate chief was a Mason and so was Robinson. It's not the first example I have heard of how strong the ties of Masonic loyalty are.

In another part of the Genealogy I find that Elisha LePage married Marie Blatch and their son, Christopher LePage married Millicent Woolner and they were parents of Bradford and James L. LePage. There were seven in that family. Bradford died in 1958, his father Christopher died in 1928.

And this Christopher LePage, I believe, is the man who built the Clara May, that scoffers called "Christopher's Folly" because he built it in his back yard, so far away from the sea that it took six days to get her to Rusticoville for launching.

Clara May – 82 Tons

THE WAY his son Garfield told the story – I got it from Helen (Mrs. Roy Bruce) – the Clara May was an 82-ton schooner.

The power for hauling her consisted of double and triple blocks on each runner – hardwood runners with greased skids underneath were placed on either side of her and teams of horses on the falls.

The hauling took six days and went smoothly until the second-last day when the descent became steeper and she started to forge ahead under her own power (of gravity), finally running off the runners and into the mud.

However that was righted and she finally left Rusticoville on her first voyage on July 1, 1871. There's more to her story but the Clara May was lost off Jeddore eight years later, when she failed to answer her helm and was piled up on the pebbly beach.

Of all the LePages perhaps William Nelson was the best known internationally for he's the man who introduced LePage's Glue.

A column I wrote on this man several years ago said he had been born in P.E.I. but went to the U.S.A. when he was very young, became a chemist and later founded the glue which made him famous.

"He lived in Gloucester, Mass., married Ruth A. Mayo there, founded LePage's Glue business and made a great success out of it," the story said. I found it quoted in a B.C. newspaper.

Guy Rollings tells me, however, that Nelson LePage took a gland out of a fish and started to make glue out of it.

"My father told me they used to gather up the Hake sounds and make glue out of them." He (Nelson) manufactured the glue in South Rustico, then he started a plant in Charlottetown.

“He went from Charlottetown to New York, then to British Columbia. He made millions out of LePage’s glue,” Guy Rollings told me.

The Vancouver Daily Province carried a story that suggested LePage had established his factory in Gloucester, Mass., manufactured his glue, and made his millions there.

First Great Advertiser

FORGETTING THE detail of where and just what sequence, Nelson LePage established the glue, or muscilage which still bears his name, the Vancouver paper said that LePage “became wealthy and in the pages of Harper’s magazine and in other journals of the Seventies, he initiated advertising campaigns which startled the American public. He is said to have spent a fortune in advertising his product. He was among the forerunners of the great national advertisers of the present time. His success with such an ordinary product as muscilage and glue having inspired other manufacturers of that period to successfully try out the mysterious products of printer’s ink in marketing their products.

“LePage invented many preserving processes. He invented a holster for a pistol. He invented a rowlock which he sold to Admiral de Gama of Brazil for a small fortune.”

In several newspapers of that time, though, including the Daily Province, it is suggested that Nelson LePage got into difficulties and his holding were in litigation.

“Though he had made a success of the selling end of his business, this Canadian was one of the old school and when the new era was ushered in, with its highly organized systems of finance and production, he was one of the old timers to be forced to give way to men with new ideas and new methods of manufacture and management.”

Finally Retirement

HIS IMPORTANT factories became involved and litigation resulted which meant retirement from the business which he had made famous.

Nelson LePage’s mother was a great-granddaughter of Thomas Spratt who had been Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster.

My knowledge of this interesting family is meager but I recalled the name of John LePage, the Island Minstrel and find he was born in 1812 and died in 1889. Two of this man’s books of poems are in the Library here, a note in the genealogy says.

James L. LePage, the youngest member of his family, married Lucy MacKenzie. I had the privilege of visiting this fine couple a day after their Golden Wedding anniversary. My wife and I thought we were making the visit on the actual anniversary day, but we miscalculated and were fortunate to have this genial couple to ourselves as we talked and chatted of just about everything. Mrs. LePage died a few years ago. Mr. LePage is still living in the comfortable home in Hunter River. I hope to visit this friendly man in the very near future.