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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Pioneer Porridge Made In Boot Heel?

By NEIL A. MATHESON
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THIS WEEK'S mail brought one of the best darn stories I've ever heard about pioneer days, ways and customs.

Edwin Johnstone, New Haven – he's a former Charlottetown mayor – wrote to suggest he agrees with my idea there must have been oatmeal, and porridge available here prior to 1820. (The report of a speech by Judge Alley in an Island paper of 1882 said there was not.)

"Speaking of oatmeal", Edwin continues, "here's a story I believe I heard from a distant relative of yourself, whose memory went back to the days of the scythe and the reaping hook.

"According to the story, when men were working at a distance from the house they would often take their noon day meal with them to the field. This often consisted of nothing more than a small bag of oatmeal.

"When the time came to eat they would go to a nearby spring, remove one boot, pour some oatmeal into the heel of the boot, mix with cold water and presto, dinner was ready."

"Today we would call it instant dinner, I suppose" adds Mr. Johnstone.

Prayer Meeting – Time For Courting

BYRON BURNS, Charlottetown showed me a note recently that listed instructions for workers in a large mercantile establishment back in 1856.

The store opened at six o'clock in the morning and didn't close until nine at night. The instructions covered many things, but I thought these two were interesting.

Every employee was required to give at least five dollars to the church annually, and to attend Sunday School regularly. Male employees were given one night off per week for courting. They got two nights per week, if they went to prayer meeting.

There must have been a great many young people attending prayer meetings from that establishment.

I wonder how the modern girl would like it if she could only see her boy friend once a week. I know the girl I married would have been unhappy about it.

I wouldn't have liked it either.

CLARENCE REEVES, Charlottetown brought to me recently a bundle of old newspapers that he had found stuffed into an old upholstered chair.

One copy of "The Weekly Examiner" of May 31, 1901 noted that the session of the Parliament of Canada which closed last week "did not bring forth one statesmen like measure".

"But the money votes were enormous", The Examiner scolded, "amounting in all to \$67,426,629. Never was such a sum voted by any former parliament of Canada.

“The government has added \$8,000,000 to the public debt and upwards of \$10 million a year to the ordinary expenditures of the administration.”

The comment is reproduced here merely to show the contrast in thoughts of spending 65 years ago and at the present time.

Steamer Service Back in 1901

SHIPPING SERVICE available 65 years ago might be interesting. The Princess was leaving Charlottetown for Pictou each day except Sunday at 7 a.m. and returning about 6:30 in the evening.

The steamer Northumberland was leaving Summerside for Point du Chene each weekday “after the arrival of the early train from Charlottetown, returning to Summerside the same evening.”

The Hillsborough was leaving Charlottetown for Southport each morning at 7 o'clock, making trips from the Charlottetown side half-hourly thereafter. Her first trip from Southport was made at 7:15 and was to continue every half hour. The last trip from Charlottetown would be made at 8:30.

The steamer Southport was leaving Charlottetown on Tuesday morning at 5:30 for Hayden's wharf, East River, leaving on return to Charlottetown at 7:30. At 3 o'clock the same evening the steamer will leave Charlottetown for Hayden's wharf. On Friday morning at 5:30 the Southport was leaving Charlottetown for West River Bridge, leaving on its return to Charlottetown at 7:30. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon the steamer leaves Charlottetown for West River, returning the same evening. Apparently those trips were made on market days.

The rest of the steamer sailings advertisement is mangled so badly I cannot read it, but the Elfin was plying between Charlottetown and Rocky Point. The Electra was sailing between Charlottetown and such places as Montague and Murray River, apparently, among other places. There may have been other steamers offering service. I do not know.

'Miracle Medicines' Cured All Ills

IF YOU think modern advertising overstates the case, and it sometimes does, how about these examples of advertising 70 to 80 years ago. I found them in an old newspaper.

“Parsons purgative pills make new, rich blood. They will completely change the blood in the entire system in three months. Have no equal for curing women's complaints.

“Holloways Pills contain nature's remedy for relief and cure of disorders peculiar to women of all ages, and constitutions whether they are residing in cold or hot climates, repeatedly correcting disordered functions which have defied all of the usual drugs.”

John L. MacKinnon Compiled Book

I FORGOT to mention it earlier but I have learned the name of the man who compiled “The Sketchbook” from which I got the old story about the “Yankee Storm”

some weeks ago. It was John L. MacKinnon – he edited the Pioneer when it was published in Alberton.

His nephew, Finley MacKinnon, Marshfield told me about it first. B. Frank Tinney is another who brought it to my attention. John A. MacKinnon, Churchill, is another nephew, I believe.

When I referred to the Clementi piano in last week's column, I said that it had belonged to Walter Patterson, the Island's first governor.

I also said that his wife had taught piano, that she had two pianos etc. This information was passed on to me by a lady who has done a great deal of historical research, though she did say she couldn't vouch for that part of the story.

Now I find that Campbell's history of Prince Edward Island said that Patterson did not have his wife and family with him here on this Island. For this information I thank Major T. E. MacNutt, one of the province's best informed historians.