

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Mon., Mar. 30, 1970

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Society Preserves Reminders Of Past

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I WAS SITTING in our car one day with Mrs. Matheson on lower Queen Street when she called my attention to a plaque on the face of the building occupied by Halifax Seed Company Limited.

It read like this:

Site of Crossed Keys Tavern – “The first public building in Charlottetown in which many early functions were held, and where the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island met on July 7th, 1773”

The plaque was erected in 1961 by the P.E.I. Historical Society, a group of people who have done much to preserve reminders or memories of our interesting past.

“Gophering Iron” Seen

LOOKING THROUGH my files this week in search of material for this column, I found some notes I took last fall at LanRest Museum, Alberton.

One of the many items Mrs. William Oulton showed me in the interesting collection she has developed was a “Gophering Iron”.

In the early 1800's, she told me, married women wore ruffled bonnets to distinguish them from the unmarried ones. The gophering iron was used to press the ruffles.

The iron was also used for mulling the wine, beer or ale. The people would heat the iron then thrust it into the drink.

Mrs. Oulton told me too that the iron was sometimes called a “Logger-Head” and that yokels at a fire place, if they got into a quarrel, would use the logger-head to maintain their position, to defend themselves, or perhaps to attack at times.

This, she added, is where the term “At Logger-Heads” originated. And that term is usually used to describe people who are bad friends with each other.

Calendar Clock

A CALENDAR CLOCK was interesting. It told the phases of the moon as well as the time. It was made in Ithaca, New York.

This one came from the Myrick home in Tignish. There is none of the Myrick family left in the area, so far as I know. But a store on Alberton's main street, with the Myrick sign is a credit to the name.

There are two large iron pots in LanRest Museum and one is recessed on the side so the other will partly fit into it and this takes up less room on the top of a stove, for example, than they would otherwise.

I've seen housewives test the heat of an oven in many different ways when they lacked an oven thermometer, but how about this one.

Testing Heat Of Oven

THE COOK WOULD thrust her hand into the oven and the number of times she could count before she had to withdraw her hand told her whether the oven temperature was right for whatever she wanted to bake.

I don't know what sort of a table, or scale of heat values they used, but Mrs. Oulton says that's the way it was done.

"If you could hold your hand in the oven until you counted to 30 it was considered to be a very cool oven. If you could only keep your hand there while you counted to ten, it was rated a hot oven, she told me.

A "settle bed", she told me, "was very hard to come by" and this surprised me because they were still plentiful when I was a boy. We had one in our kitchen. Hard and uncomfortable, they could be used for a bench, or a hard couch in daytime. At night they opened out and became beds.

Wringer Washed Clothes

A WOODEN WRINGER became more interesting when Mrs. Oulton said it had sometimes been used to wash clothes. The clothes were put back and forth through the wringer.

An old cheese press could also be used as a cider press, she told me. It belonged to W.B. Dwyer, a druggist in Alberton many years ago.

The cover of an old ointment jar indicated it would cure many ailments. Among them were such things as sore breasts, sore head, bad legs and many other things. On the back of the jar the lettering said it was also good to cure gout and rheumatism.

The late Keith Matheson of O'Leary had picked it up at Black Banks and brought it to LanRest.

One bottle contained "Bed bug poison". It was in liquid form and some of the liquid was still in the bottle.

One unusual item was an instrument "you dip into the milk bottle to get the cream at the top for your tea. Then the instrument empties the cream into your cup of tea." It came from Massachusetts with the Myrick people.

Wall Telephone Seen

AN OLD WALL telephone box is interesting for the reason Mrs. Oulton explains:

"I placed it there at that particular height", she told me, "because of an old woman with whom I lived once. She had it placed at a certain height so she could lie down and listen to the news, or sit up and still listen to the news she could hear over a party line telephone."

One item was a round box which was used in former years to hold a man's hard collars, some of them fairly high. That reminded me of a conversation I had had recently with a former Prince of Wales College student in the time Dr. S.N. Robertson was principal. We were thinking of the high and hard collars he wore and were thinking how uncomfortable they must have felt.