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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Note Book Given In Lieu Of Grant

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I HAD an interesting chat a few days ago with members of the York Women's Alpha Institute that took us back 52 years to the April 10, 1911 date the Island's first Institute was organized.

The first thing I noticed about the original minute book was a note on the first page that the book was given in lieu of a grant by the minister of Agriculture, Hon. John Richard. And I wonder what a group would say now to Agriculture Minister Andrew MacRae if he offered a minute book when they asked him for a grant.

Mr. Richards by the way, was member for Second Prince and he and his colleague John McWilliams were the only two Liberals who survived the Conservative landslide of 1912. Professor J. H. Blanchard who has a phenomenal memory for political events - he can recall entire cabinets and even tell you their seating arrangement - tells me that the Liberals had been in power for 20 years previously, and this was one of the reasons they got kicked out almost to a man at the time.

JOHN apparently succeeded his brother, James W. Richards who had a lengthy career as member for the district before he was elected to the House of Commons for Prince in 1908 and 1911. He was the first Liberal elected after Prince was made a one-man riding in 1903. A Conservative, A. A. Lefurgey held the seat prior to that. And it wasn't until Dr. O. H. Phillips won in 1957, that a Conservative was victorious again in the riding.

To get back to the York Institute, I looked over the old minute book with its interesting entries.

Abraham Brown contracted to light the fires through the winter for one dollar. The ladies decided at their first meeting to meet at 7:30 sharp, and quit at 9:30 two hours later. They met once every two weeks.

Hen and Rooster Sold For \$16.50

ONE MAN donated a rooster and hen to help out on a Red Cross drive and the pair brought \$16.50, a princely sum in those far off days, before the selling and bidding stopped.

And speaking of "princely sums", how about the \$867.00 the York Institute raised for Red Cross work and other patriotic needs during the First Great War years of 1914-1918. More than six hundred pair of socks were knit by the women of the community, more than 100 shirts were made as well as pajama suits, balaclava caps, bandages, etc., along with bedding and clothing for Belgian relief.

AND ONE lady, Mrs. Elmer Brown, never did stop working for just about any needy, or worthy cause. The modest lady admits to almost 200 quilts, and socks - "I just couldn't begin to count them", she commented when asked about that part of her work.

"She still makes them. You never visit her but she is knitting. Her hands are never idle" a neighbour told me this week.

Farmers Institutes were a powerful and valuable organization fifty years ago and the York Excelsior institute was largely responsible for getting the ladies organized, I was told.

If the "presentation of a minute book in lieu of a grant" seems cold to you, just remember that money wasn't thrown around nearly so freely in the old days as it is now, and a small amount of money meant a great deal more than it does today.

Docked 3 Cents For One-Half Hour

SEVERAL MONTHS ago I talked to one of the province's leading businessmen and he told me a tale I must pass along to you. It was back in the early years of the century and the boy was learning his trade in a wood working shed. He was getting six cents an hour and working a 10 - hour day.

He had started to work Tuesday morning, had a terrific toothache Wednesday night and asked the boss if he could get off one-half hour early at noon on Thursday, so he could get the tooth pulled.

The pay lady came around on Saturday and asked him how many hours he had worked. He told her he had started Tuesday morning so he would have five days, or three dollars coming to him. Next Wednesday she came around and accused him of lying about this time. The boy resented the accusation, for he had been taught to be honest, and insisted he hadn't lied.

"BUT YOU told us you had five days coming to you", persisted the lady time-keeper, "you didn't say anything about the half-hour you had off."

"You owe the firm three cents, and it was the boss who caught the error in the payroll. Normally we take off twice the amount from the pay the following week, but in your case, I believe you made an honest mistake, so we'll only take off three cents from this week's pay," she told them.

Next morning I was leaving for Bothwell to get the story we had on Daniel MacDonald in the Farm Edition. I had to stop at the Telegraph office, couldn't find a vacant spot for my car, so went around on Queen Street, slipped a penny in the parking meter, and just by luck noticed that it didn't have any effect.

The pennies are no good in our parking meters, I found, and the thought of the three-cent pay reduction came back to me, as I contrasted the value of money then and now.

Gun At DeSable Is Interesting

ONE OF the most attractive old guns I have seen is the "Fowling Piece" owned by Clifton Ince, DeSable. We estimated the bore to be about 18 gauge, although it is not calibrated in that way.

The beautiful old gun must be close to 150 years old, perhaps older, for it was brought here by his maternal great grandfather John Beer from Devonshire, England who came out 143 years ago.

Made by Rich Collins, the workmanship is unusually good. It is obviously a custom made job, and the work of a master craftsman.

SILVER ORNAMENTED, the cheek rest is unusually fine and the butt plate is set into the wood, not screwed on or attached as is normal in fire arms of this kind.

It is filled by a powder horn with an ingenious device for measuring the charge and shutting off the flow of the powder from the reservoir, in keeping with the weight of charge that was decided on.

The old gun is like new in appearance. There's not a stain or a blemish to indicate its age.