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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Bits And Pieces Of P.E.I. History

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Provincial-Farm Editor

COMMENTING ON last week's column on pioneer days' travel on foot along blazed trails through otherwise trackless forests, Mrs. John D. Matheson, Rose Valley, (the former Hannah MacDonald) tells me her grandmother, Mrs. Donald MacDonald, gave birth to a baby girl on the Atlantic Ocean while she and her husband were coming from Scotland in the 1800's. She stayed for a short time with the Murchisons at Point Prim and then walked more than 50 miles to Stanchel where her husband had located and was trying to hew a home out of the wilderness.

Mrs. MacDonald carried a spinning wheel strapped on her back and carried the baby, and the last part of the trip was made through a virgin forest with the blazed trees her only guide.

THE BABY, Margaret, was later Mrs. "Squire" MacKenzie of Shamrock who was a neighbour in my boyhood days. Her husband died before my time but he had been a community leader in his lifetime, and he was the man who chose the name for the Thistle and Shamrock School district, No.109. The district straddles the Queens-Prince County line in that area on the Bedeque road, and in that time the Queens portion was peopled by nothing but Scotch, and the Prince part by Irish, so the name was a natural.

Angus MacKenzie, a big one-armed man who was caretaker of the old Post Office building for many years, was a son and Mrs. Alex Scott, wife of the man who was engineer on the new Hillsboro bridge and causeway, is a granddaughter of the "baby of the Atlantic".

For the benefit of the people who know Charles S. MacDonald, Wood Islands, Mrs. Donald MacDonald was his grandmother.

And recalling the bear stories of several months ago, Hannah tells me that a bear killed the only cow her grandparents had in the early days of their homemaking efforts.

"Child Of The Sea" Recognized

THAT "BORN on the Ocean" reference reminds me that Norman MacLeod, Murray River, told me a brother of his had been born on the Atlantic when his parents were coming from Scotland. Later the man was injured - I believe he told me he was blinded, although I cannot recall the details - but the interesting part was that "the British admiralty paid his way from Hong Kong to Halifax because he was a 'child of the sea' ". Mr. MacLeod is a former Conservative member of the P.E.I. Legislature.

Used Five Types Of Harvester

LORNE WIGGINGTON, International Harvester Company salesman at Montague, gave me an interesting item last week at the Plowing Match. Norman MacDonald, Whim Road, who died several years ago at the age of 93 was over 90 when he saw his son and son-in-law cutting grain with a modern combine harvester. After watching it for several rounds, he insisted he wanted to operate it for a few minutes. With their help he did drive it a round or so, then climbed off it and said: "Now I can say that I've harvested grain with five different kinds of harvesters. I used the sickle as a young man, I used the scythe, then the reaper, later the binder and now this machine."

And that reminds me that Ernest Coles, North Milton, recalled recently that I had reported a retired farmer as saying one man could cut an acre of grain with a scythe in a day. "I heard my father say that he used to cut three acres a day, and he and two other men had cut nine acres in a day once", Mr. Coles told me.

Unusual Land Tax Bills

MRS. COLES' father, John A. Ferguson, who lived in Little York - I believe Almon Wood has the farm now - once paid a tax bill of one dollar on 100 acres of land he owned in 1874. And Donald Ferguson, who was later Senator, paid a tax bill of two cents, on one acre of land. That was back in 1873, according to old receipts shown me by Margaret Coles. I recall that Gordon Waddell, Kelley's Cross, showed me some old tax receipt books that indicate some pretty small payments, though I cannot recall the detail of the smallest payment recorded. The interesting part of it is that those bills had to be paid.

Most people have probably forgotten now, but it was the late J. Walter Jones who abolished the land tax when he was premier from 1943 to 1953. I believe that it was done shortly after he took office.

Four Combines On One Farm

I SEEM to be roaming all over the place today, but Jim Cudmore told me at Roseneath this week about seeing four grain combine harvesters in a field owned by Emmett Power, Greenfield, the man who bought the potato harvester Donnie Allen built at Covehead. Who ever thought the day would come when that would be seen on a farm on P.E.I.? Jim couldn't get the four of them in a picture, but two of them are shown elsewhere in this edition. Two were self-propelled and two tractor-drawn machines.

I found some interesting items in some old papers in the home of John A. MacDonald, Glasgow Road, a couple of weeks ago. Rackham's potato digger was advertised as "the perfect digger" which reminded me that I worked as a boy on a job building "permanent roads", as they were called by the government of the day. But there have been many improvements on diggers and we've found that no road is permanent unless it is kept in almost constant repair.

Liquor By The Barrel

JOHN MacEACHEN, 60 Queen Street, said in a display advertisement “Jammed between railway expectations and snow banks, I am closing out my business” as he offered a list of articles at “bargain prices”.

And Owen Connolly - he’s known to this day for his generous aid to Irish male students - had a front-page advertisement listing “Flour, tea, sugar, molasses, gin and rum” for sale. He had 20 puncheons of Demerara Rum, 25 hogheads of Hotland Gin and “plenty of brandy and wine”. The cup that cheers - or does it?- was easy to get in those days, if the man with a thirst had the money.