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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Treasure Hunt At Blue's Cove

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MANY A blood-curdling tale from the storied and colorful past indicates that piratical sea rovers lurked at times along the sea lanes, and slipped out from hidden Island inlets to grab ill-gotten gains and vanish mysteriously into another uncharted harbor or cove, or up the quiet waters of a hidden inland stream to bury their loot and wait for another day.

There are many such tales but this one concerns the treasure at Blue's Cove in the West River area, and I have to thank Premier Walter Shaw for permission to take it from his "Saga of a Community", an interesting manuscript he has written on his beloved St. Catherine's and vicinity. Much of this story is in my own words to shorten it where necessary and fit it into the style of this column, others are direct quotes from the "Saga", even though I do not always use quotation marks.

"MOST OF these tales have never been substantiated and the real truth will never be known, because those who first told them have long since departed this earth, but "Is it reasonable" asks Mr. Shaw "to conclude that Prince Edward Island's bays and rivers, contiguous to the usual trade routes but infrequently visited by inquisitive travellers, may have provided ideal repositories for fabulous amounts of pirate gold?"

And where, he suggests, could more inviting hiding spots be found by those ancient sea rovers than the heavily wooded slopes extending up from the security of the quiet and infrequently used land locked harbour? And what more favorable spot could have been selected than Blue's Cove on the upper reaches of the tortuous Elliott, easily approached and easily identified by its deeply indented hills and valleys and the white rippling stream of fresh water flowing into the main river from an adjacent hillside?"

The old story says that a Dr. MacRae of Rice Point organized a group who enthusiastically commenced the work of excavation near the shore of the Cove, and close by the landing utilized by early settlers and winter as a short route to Charlottetown.

Digging Done In Utter Silence

DIGGING OPERATIONS were done in utter silence, as was the case in many of those old incidents, and in the quiet hours of the night. The habit of silence, apparently, was developed with the idea of not disturbing grim guardians of the buried loot. Many of the old tales said the pirate chief ordered one of his men to dig a hole for the treasure, then slew him and threw him in the hole atop the loot.

The tales suggested great care was taken by the treasure seekers not to disturb the spirits of the villains who were sworn in their last minutes to secrecy, and to defend the buried treasure. If that is unreal, and it is, it's no more unreal than the actual stories.

THE BLUE'S Cove treasure seekers suddenly abandoned the diggings in unseemly haste and "abruptly left the region for foreign parts, never to again return" the "Saga of a Community" chronicles.

"An incoherent account of a frightening experience was heard following the retreat but the lips of those directly concerned with the project did not, during life, clearly divulge any first hand knowledge covering the venture, and death sealed the details forever."

Scanty details that have been handed down through the generations indicate that as the eager treasure-hunters investigated shortly after midnight in the eerie half-light of the moon evidences of the fulfilment of their hopes became apparent. Overjoyed and overcome by these manifestations of success and untold riches, the ban of silence was unconsciously and rudely broken.

Dark Visaged, Sinister Figure

"THE LAUGH-SHATTERED quiet of the night seems to have awakened the spirits of those sworn to defend their ill-gotten spoils, for suddenly there appeared over the rim from the river the commanding and sinister figure of a dark visaged rover of the sea, who in eerie silence pointed up over the hill with a sharp edged, curving claymore whose blade dripped with crimson.

"Shovels dropped from nerveless hands. With blanched faces and muscles activated by a horrible fear, the workers and their leaders precipitously scrambled out of the depression, and hastily departed over the hill never to return, either to the scene of pirate treasure or to the locality in which they resided."

THERE ARE variations of the tale, of course, and one of the more interesting suggests that two neighbouring Scots concealed themselves in nearby trees and hurled rocks at the backs of the diggers as they toiled in the dead of night. The treasure hunters survived two of the attacks and resumed their digging, but the third volley of rocks from unknown attackers broke the diggers' resistance, and they fled the spot as though the "Arch Fiend of the infernal regions" was at hand.

But the two pranksters also kept silence about their feat, for they were just beginning to enjoy the discomfiture of the men they had routed, when "their laughter froze into an expression of stark terror, as they also saw something that gave an unnatural speed to their limbs as they fled the area in a lung-bursting flight from terror."

Treasure Hunt Discontinued

THE TRUE story never was known, nor was there ever another attempt to take the treasure, so far as the history of the area is known.

The author of "The Saga" lets his imagination roam a bit as he looks down in reverie over Blue's Cove and wonders:

“Is there a movement there? Is that the gentle swaying of the trees in the wandering night breeze, or is it a high prowed ship’s boat resting quietly in the shadow’s gloom, manned by a number of dark , scowling, quaintly clad sailormen? Is there a figure of a giant leader standing in the prow . . . Is it imagination that pictures a cruel mouth . . . a beaked nose, hard vicious features and eyes flashing and bright as he grasps a tremendous cutlass in one hand, and scans every possible avenue of approach?

“Are the spirits of the rovers and the pirates of a bygone age still keeping an eerie vigil at Blue’s Cove?” the reference concludes.

Winners Are Congratulated

CONGRATULATIONS to the four men who were winners in Monday’s electoral contests here. Angus MacLean and Heath Macquarrie have the satisfaction of recording virtually undiminished strength in Queens. MacLean’s margin of 2,476 over the highest Liberal compares with 2,745 last June and Macquarrie actually increased his margin on the basis of incomplete and unofficial returns.

Watson MacNaught made a comeback in Prince, something that mighty few accomplish these days, and John Mullally at 32 merits congratulations for his triumph. Incidentally Mr. Mullally must be one of the youngest people this province has ever sent to Ottawa.

Predictor Jumps The Gun

BEST STORY I heard about the election - and it’s true - concerns J. Calvin Lewis, editorial writer for the Patriot. At 12:30 noon on Monday Mr. Lewis sent the following wire to Lester B. Pearson at his Stornoway residence in Ottawa:

“Confident within few hours Pearson new Prime Minister. Congratulations. Best Wishes.”

Calvin was brave enough to tell some of us , and he was in for a terrible razzing next day if he was wrong. But he had the last laugh as his man won the most seats, and seems likely to be the next Prime Minister.

Mr. Pearson doubtless received hundreds, perhaps thousands of telegrams, but I’ll bet you Calvin’s was the first congratulatory wire.

E. D. Reid came the closest to calling the correct result, of all those who gave me predictions. He called 128 Liberals which is right on the nose, unless the service vote causes some changes. Managing Editor Gus Flynn topped the newsroom staff and won a modest pool by calling it 133 Liberals.