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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Story Is Told Of Pirate Gold

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I HAVE AN unusual story this week of pirate gold in a P.E.I. setting, with a present day flavor to lend added interest. I got the tip from a friend, Florence MacPhail Peck, a former Southport girl who now lives in Nobleboro, Maine.

She's a daughter of Finley MacPhail, and a niece of Sir Andrew, whose former home at Orwell is being developed as the Sir Andrew MacPhail Park.

The scene of the pirate gold is Earnscliffe in the Cherry Valley area, and I got it from Phillip Rooney who once lived with his father, for whom he was named, on the farm where the treasure is reputedly buried. The Rooneys bought it from Charles Mutch whose grandson Brenton Mutch owns the land now.

THE OLD home nearby has been purchased and is now being fixed up as a summer home by a young Massachusetts college professor, Dick Webber, and his bride of this summer, the former Joan MacPhail. She's Harold MacPhail's daughter and a grand niece of Sir Andrew.

The timing is vague, but I gather it may have been 100 years ago that a pirate named Townsend - there seems to have been some connection with Rolla Bay, though that is also vague - slipped into Pownal Bay and up the stream which projected into the farm then owned by an Irving man. Townsend was hiding from an English Man-O-War that had been chasing him.

The pirate spent three days in the area and his little daughter, who had come ashore, told neighborhood children "Daddy's burying money down there".

.Intended To Come Back

TOWNSEND, it was thought, had put the treasure chest overside, or had buried it with the hope of coming back and recovering it later. But he was taken by the English and never got back according to the ancient story.

There is not a sign of a stream there now, although the old channel bed contour is discernable, but Mr. Rooney remembers taking a fair size craft up the stream which had perhaps three feet of water at the lowest point.

There was a far away look in his eye this week as Phillip, 75, told me he first heard the tale from a Mrs. Hayden, grandmother of Lou Hayden. He had moved to Souris and twice took men with divining rods by horse and wagon at dead of night over the 42-mile route to locate the treasure.

THERE WAS a humorous tale of Mr. Campbell finding a gold watch, rings etc. that Phillip had buried in a potato field as a test. Campbell found them quickly in the dark, and later the rod led him to the buried treasure spot.

The Rooneys dug a hole 21 feet deep and about 4 by 8 feet in area, cased it with wood so the earth wouldn't cave in but they didn't find the treasure.

Later - and this was about 30 years ago - they brought a man from Moncton, with a better divining rod, who located the treasure about seven feet to one side of where the digging was done. He told them it was down about 16 feet.

Drills Indicate Treasure

PHILLIP AND brother - I think it was Frank - drilled three holes in the designated area with a pump drill, and each time the drill dropped through at about 14 feet, and plunked down onto something so solid that it could not be dented.

Phillip moved later to Montreal where he was a skilled builder of pleasure craft, but he has never lost his interest in the treasure "I think these holes could still be found, if you broke the surface of the ground, and I'd like to really see what is there", he told me.

STORIES OF earlier days insisted the area was haunted. Mr. Rooney did not agree with me when I suggested that maybe he had encouraged the rumor, to keep nosy people away; but there was a twinkle in his friendly Irish eyes when I added that he probably didn't discourage the belief that ghosts kept a lonely vigil.

Phillip, retired now and living near Montreal, is spending the summer vacation period with some of the other members of the family, with his brother-in-law, Ambrose Doyle in his former home in Earnscliffe. There were fourteen in the Rooney family, including five priests, and two nuns, and nine of them expect to be home this summer at the same time.

When I learned he was the brother of the late Father Joseph Rooney, I felt I knew him immediately, for I had known Father Rooney well for many years. We met and chatted many times, and football usually got into the conversation, for he was a football coach at St Dunstan's when I first started booting the pigskin with Prince of Wales College and Abegweit teams.

Finding Gold At 2 Miles

I DON'T want to clutter this up with details but I enjoyed the story of how the Rooneys tried to fool the Moncton man with the divining rod. When he claimed he could find gold as far as two miles away, the elder Mr. Rooney took him about one and one-half miles from the supposed treasure spot, and told him they thought it was somewhere around there. There was a thick bush between him and the actual spot but he kept insisting the gold was "over there" and unerringly went to the correct area.

I have been unable to find anything about any Townsend being a pirate, in old Island books I've examined. But I did find that Townsends, of whom Rollo Bay Townsends are descendants, played a prominent role in English history.

Two more recently known were George Marquis Townsend who was one of General Wolfe's brigadiers at the Plains of Abraham, and his grandson, Sir Charles Townsend who distinguished himself as a British officer in the First Great War and later became known as an author of several military books.

Keith Boswell Raised Dam

I LEARNED this week that Sir Hal, the 3-year old colt that won the \$6,000 Invitational Race at Truro last week, is from a dam that was raised by Keith Boswell, Victoria.

The mare, Lealand's Pride, is by Abner T. Clegg and is out of a well bred mare that Keith used some years ago to drive the mail in seasons when cars were not running. She was Symbol Martha and came from Maine with a mark of 2.12. She was bred by Symbol S. Forrest who had a mark of 2.01 so there is plenty of good racing blood behind the youngster.

He's quite a colt, this Sir Hal. He was second in 2.14 last year at Woodstock, the first time he ever turned behind a starting gate, Keith told me this week, and was photoed out in 2.11 in the second heat. N.D .Hal is the sire of the promising youngster and the Hal horse has some top progeny.

LEALAND'S PRIDE is a beautiful coal-black mare with four white feet and a white mark on her face. Keith sold her as a 2-year old. He's not sure what other colts she may have raised although he does know she is the mother of Hal's Pride.

I've known for years that Keith breeds good Ayrshire cattle on his Victoria Farm, but I didn't know that he also has raised some good Standard Bred horses.