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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Fine Summer Hotel Recalled At Rustico

By NEIL A. MATHESON

A REFERENCE to Campbell's History of Prince Edward Island last week had something about the hotel of John Newson at Rustico "being well reported".

Mrs. Matheson and I visited Rustico last week and we were shown the beautiful location where the "Sea Side Hotel" – that was its name – was located just across the harbor from where we were sitting in the home of Beecher and Ella Court and their family.

Beecher gave me an old brochure which said in part:

"This watercolor of the Sea Side Hotel, at Rustico Beach, Prince Edward Island, is by the Ottawa artist Herbert Dassel (?). The Sea Side, operated by the P.E.I. firm of J.K. Newson and Company, served the fashionable gentry of all parts of Canada from the mid -1870's (?) until its demolition by fire before the first World War."

A handwritten note on the brochure says:

"This hotel was owned and operated by John Newson, Merchant of Charlottetown in 1876. The Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise visited the hotel in August 1879. The hotel was destroyed by fire about 1905."

Mr. Court tells me, though, that he thinks the hotel fire was in the year 1906.

A leaflet with the brochure is interesting in its reference to prices. It says in part:

Prices Charged At Sea Side Hotel

"A FASHIONABLE spot for holidays in Prince Edward Island during the 1870's and the 1880's was the Sea Side Hotel at Rustico Beach. The long, clean beaches, the red earth and brilliant greenery of Canada's Garden Province were a lure for vacationists in that day, as in this."

And listen to this:

"Perhaps the rates were a bit steep; an advertisement in the Charlottetown Examiner of July 1878 says "Sea Side Hotel – Terms: \$2 to \$2.50 a day, including meals."

But for those who might be puzzled by those prices, observes the old leaflet, the advertisement hastens to explain that special arrangements will be made for permanent guests and their families."

When the newly appointed Governor-General, the Marquis of Lorne and H.R.H. Princess Louise made their first vice-regal visit to Prince Edward Island, it was natural that the Sea Side Hotel would be included in the itinerary. A special train came down from Charlottetown August 18, 1879 (?) in charge was Conductor Kelly who was termed "one of the most esteemed conductors on the line."

The vice-regal luncheon was served at the Sea Side in a pavilion erected in the grove in front of the hotel. There were a great crowd of Bishops, A.D.C.'s, Admirals, Generals, Cabinet Ministers, counsels and assorted dignitaries sat down with the leading social lights of the Island to enjoy this lunch and here is the menu:

BILL OF FARE

Boiled Turkey * Roast Turkey * Ducks * Wild Ducks
Tongue and Chicken * Ham * Roast Beef
Corned Beef * Cold Lamb

Salad

Chicken * Lobster

Sweets

Colored Blanc Mange * Topsy Cake * Charlotte Russe
Jelly-Meringues * Trifle * Luncheon Cake

Fruit

Pineapples * Oranges * Apples * Pears * Peaches
Figs * Raisins and Nuts

Wines

Champagne * Port * Sherry * Claret

And, comments the footnote to the menu, "After this 19th century version of a light summer repast, sitting on the sunlit lawn of the old hotel, it was a hard-bitten dignitary indeed who did not feel a deep sense of Island peace. Perhaps a few of the visitors even snatched a few moments rest under the (?) evergreens of the Sea Side."

The Sea Side Hotel was built by a Norwegian who ran a fishing business, Mr. Court tells me. Later John Newson purchased it and he was a Charlottetown businessman who dealt in furniture.

Bowling Alley, Bathing Houses

THERE WAS a large bowling alley in connection with the summer hotel and there were bathing houses built on the sand dunes, he told me.

Mr. Court who will soon be 83 years of age, was only a kid when he saw the establishment, he told me.

I had a word last week about the Rankin House. Mrs. Mary Cosh, Charlottetown tells me that her great grandmother, Annie Romans, married Neil Rankin, a one-time mayor of Charlottetown and she believes the lady who built the Rankin House was his sister.

Unfortunately we do not have the location of this hotel which was widely known and praised for the excellence of its service and cuisine.

P.E.I. Sports Hall Of Fame

NOMINATIONS ARE requested for consideration for election to the P.E.I. Sports Hall of Fame. They should be sent to me at Charlottetown RR 1, or to John McNeill, 262 Arcona Street, Summerside who is secretary of the Sports Hall of Fame selection committee.

Unfortunately letters of nomination must be in Mr. McNeill's hands or in my own, no later than Saturday noon next. This situation has arisen because of the delay of appointing, or reappointing names to the Sports Hall of Fame directors.

Canadian Curling Champions

AS I SAID in this column several weeks ago, one nomination that should be sent in is that of the P.E.I. curling rink skipped by Dr. Wen MacDonald, earlier this year, to the Canadian Seniors Curling Championship. But the rink must be nominated by you the readers, as the Sports Hall of Fame directors are able to vote only on the names of athletes that are sent in or nominated.

Johnny 'Snag' Squarebriggs was Mate on that Canadian championship rink, Daniel O'Rourke was second stone and Doug George was lead.

The P.E.I. Sports Hall of Fame Board of Directors named three men to the Hall of Fame in 1969 and three again in 1970. Phil MacDonald, George Callbeck and John Whacky MacEachern were chosen in 1969.

1970 Selections

LAST YEAR Mary Lea, Crapaud, the late Charlie Cahill of Summerside and the late Bill Halfpenny, former Charlottetown man were named. Mrs. Lea was the first Canadian lady to shoot on Canada's Bisley (?) team; Mr. Cahill was the first Island man to make the National Hockey League – he played with the Boston Bruins. Bill Halfpenny was the most outstanding track and field athlete this province ever produced.

Phil MacDonald, now residing in Toronto, was a Charlottetown native who made the Canadian Olympic team in 1924 as a 400-yard hurdler. Whacky MacEachern was centre on the famous Abegweit hockey team of the early 1930's (?).

Before the present Sports Hall of Fame directors were named by Education Minister Gordon Bennett, a group of people who then were past presidents of the Summerside Lobster Carnival got together in 1968 and named Vern Handrahan, Charlottetown, Alfred Groom, Norman MacDonald, Davis Lidstone, a Dr. MacMurdo who had been Mr. Baseball in Summerside in his time, Joe O'Brien the great harness racing driver, and one or two others whose names I got from my friend John MacNeill, Summerside a few days ago. Unfortunately I do not have at hand the notes I made while talking to John, who is the secretary of the Sports Hall of Fame selection committee.

Please send your nominations into John MacNeill or myself and be sure to tell in your letter all you can about the person you are nominating.