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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Rare Old Mill Is Seen, Pioneer Stories Told

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MANY OF the stories for this column are the result of a great deal of hunting and of research. But a few come easily, without any effort on my part. That's what happened when I drove into Albert Acorn's farm at Primrose recently and had him show me a four-horse treadmill that had been used by a neighbour to thresh grain. It's on the farm of Nelson Acorn, Albert's cousin, and we looked at it, though Nelson was away at the time.

The tread mill - they were known as "horse-power machines", in the old days - is built the same width as the old two-horse mill, but it is 18 feet, 5 inches long. One pair of horses stood side by side, at the front. There was a breeching pole, or rod, behind them and the second pair stood behind them, far enough away so they couldn't bite at the ones ahead.

The mill was built on the Acorn farm. John S. Cantelo was in charge of the wood work, and the name of the man who did the iron work was not available.

THE OLD rawhide leather belt is still in existence. It was tanned, at Hume's tannery at Brooklyn. He also had a tannery at Georgetown. Yellow birch bark was used for tanning at one time, Leslie Hunter told me, though Hemlock was used later.

The date of the old mill was uncertain, but Albert Acorn suggested it was probably 80 years old. Apparently there were few of them made. He said one other that he knew of had been built on the Island. I've talked to hundreds of veteran Islanders and none of them had ever mentioned such a mill, until my visit to Primrose.

I went to Albert Acorn's home to meet with himself and Leslie Hunter, Strathcona, to get the history of the revival of modern plowing competition. I was asked some time ago to do a story on plowing match history for the booklet that will be published for the Canadian Championship match at Brudenell and that's why I talked to Mr. Hunter and Mr. Acorn. Leslie has been the head of the association sponsoring the plowing competition at Dundas since 1941, and Mr. Acorn has been the secretary for some 15 years, but that's for a later story.

SO FAR as Albert knows, only two of the machines were built, and both were in the Kings County area. The four-horse machine must have provided the most power that was available here for threshing, or other chores in those long gone days. It was a real job for one man to handle the straw behind the thresher with that power driving it, he recalled. An old Hall thresher and an old-fashioned fanners, still in good condition, are stored inside of the old tread mill which is a real link with the Island's past.

I have been unable to trace the horse-power mills back to their origin but a souvenir catalogue Mr. Acorn showed me indicates that they were in existence in 1853, though they may date back even further.

## Sweep Horsepower Machines

ALBERT HAS a "Case 1872 catalogue Album of Historical Steam Tractor Engines and Threshing Equipment" which shows horse power machines built for two and three horses standing abreast.

The old catalogue also pictures the "sweep horse-power machines" of which C. W. Judson, 102, told me at Churchill some time ago. Long arms, like the one on the old capstan stumping machine, radiated out from a central, large drum with cogs that transferred the power by a series of interlocking cogs to a central rod which looks much like a modern "power take off" and transferred the horse-generated power to the machine it was to operate.

Mr. Judson told me of a four-horse power machine operated in this fashion, but this book pictures 12 horses, six two-horse teams pulling on the end of a half-dozen radial arms. The teams went around in a circle and a man stood on the central drum affair with a long whip, to keep the horses alive to their pulling responsibility.

## Lady Shears 400 Sheep, 5c Each

MRS. ROBERT MacDonald, 95, recalls the time she took the wool from the back of a sheep and processed it until it was worn proudly on the back of members of her family. She told me about it recently at her home in Little Pond.

The former Mary Ellen Blackett of nearby Grand River took the wool from many sheep. She sheared 400 of them one spring and received all of five cents for each of them. If that sounds like earning money the hard way, let's agree that it was. But money was worth much more in those years, the \$20.00 was not so bad as it seems.

She sheared up to 32 sheep in a single day and that was with the old-fashioned shears, not with today's modern electric clipping equipment.

Mrs. MacDonald recalls shearing sheep at one farm where she had an encounter with a ram, and those animals were almost invariably bad tempered, treacherous, dangerous rascals.

THE RAM was tied with a rope but he became increasingly hostile as he watched her catch and shear one sheep after another. Finally the ram broke clear as Mrs. MacDonald was catching a sheep. He came at the woman with evil intent, but she dropped the sheep she had caught, turned her attention to the ram and surprised a neighbour who rushed to her rescue.

When the would be rescuer arrived, the ram was down on the ground, and the lady was lying triumphantly on top of him. Yes, she sheared the rascal too, whether he liked it or not. She also milked seven cows every morning, when she was 15 years old.

## Times Were Better In Those Days

IF YOU are inclined to pity the woman of those days who sheared sheep and did many other heavy chores, forget it. Mrs. MacDonald insists that times were much better in the olden days. "Everything's so dear now", she told me, "it's past living."

It was Frank MacDonald, manager Robinson's Supplies, Charlottetown who told me about the Little Pond woman - that's where Frank came from - and she did recall the days when people were clothed from top to toe in garments made from sheep's wool. Often the wool was carded at home, though there were carding mills that did the job. And the finished cloth was often dyed or colored at a mill established for that purpose. The carding mill for that area was at Morrison's mills. It's known as Whitlocks now.

A paragraph I found in a Centennial essay emphasizes the part woolen apparel played in the earlier days. Mrs. Nellie Fraser, Montague said "for school in winter we wore thick woolen dresses, woolen underwear, hand knitted long woolen stockings, and boots laced or buttoned. Over the boots we wore long knitted woolen overstockings and rubbers. We had woolen hoods, or caps. Warm coats and big scarves and mittens."

And this is in keeping with Mrs. MacDonald's statement that every farm had its little flock of sheep when she was young.

#### Cheese Made At Home At Time

MRS. MACDONALD recalls when cheese was manufactured at home - she would be 14 when the first cheese factory was established in this province - and rennet to curdle the milk, was made from a calf's stomach. The piece from the stomach would be filled with new milk, then it would dry, and pieces would be sliced from it to use when cheese was to be made.

The Pioneer cheese factory in Canada was opened 100 years ago, a story this week from the Canadian Dairy Foods Service Bureau indicates. It adds that the first factory in this province opened in 1882, was the first in the Maritime Provinces.

The fine old lady lives with her son, Stillman MacDonald and his wife, the former Mabel Gourley of Stewiacke, N. S., who recalls that they always made maple sugar for their family at home. A small grove also supplied seven to eight gallons of tasty maple syrup which was used mostly on desserts, and sometimes on buckwheat pancakes, a food really fit for the gods.

#### Chaisson Name Was Intended

I AM sorry that I used the name Cheverie instead of "Chaisson" when I referred last week to the popular family of Bear River violinists whom I saw perform at a provincial fiddling contest at the Forum some years ago. The Cheverie name came naturally because I recall being told of Neil Cheverie who performed with unusual skill in days gone by and once was a winner, I was told, at an international competition at Boston's Colonial Hall. He lived in Elmira.

The Chaissons I was talking about, from Bear River put six competitors into the old fiddling contest to which I referred. They were Peter Simon Chaisson, who died in March 1961: and his sons, Peter, Joseph, Emmett, Bill and Roddie. Peter won the Island title that time and Emmett and Bill were provincial champs on other occasions. Ken Chaisson won the junior competition last Saturday.