

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., Mar. 6, 1970

## ACROSS THE ISLAND

Story Is Recalled Following Sinking

By NEIL A. MATHESON

CHEDABUCTO BAY and Cerberus Rock came into the news spotlight recently when the Liberian oil tanker started spilling messy, polluting fuel all over the place.

It brought back to the mind of a Charlottetown friend of mine a story he heard many years ago.

Two ships left Prince Edward Island – it could be 70 to 90 years ago, that part is not clear – and neither was ever heard of again. The ships and their crews simply vanished from the face of the earth, so far as any news of them or of the men who manned them was concerned. And this despite the story that the craft were in charge of experienced captains.

But the interesting part of the story, keeping the Cerberus Rock and Chedabucto Bay in mind, is that divers went down many years later and found the bones of two ships lying on either side of the rock. Both ships had been facing east – they had been bound for overseas ports.

A veteran seaman, having heard of the divers' discovery, said "the mystery of the lost ships is solved". He believed the "bones" located by the divers were those of the ships that had left the Island only to disappear completely.

One of the lost ships was skippered by a Capt. MacDonald from Georgetown, I was told. I do not have the skipper's first name, but I am told he was a brother of James Allan MacDonald, a Georgetown man who later lived in Montague.

### Turret Belle Yarn Completed

THANKS TO a number of people including Walter O'Brien, Charlottetown, I have the story of the refloating of the steamer, Turret Belle, as the late Freeman Leslie of St. Peters told me not long before his death.

The letter from Roy McLaine, St. Peters recalls that a Halifax, N.S. company, "Halifax Drydock Company" tried to refloat the Turret Belle by blasting a channel to deep water from the position she occupied after a fierce storm and huge waves had carried her far inland.

The steamer went aground in the tremendous storm of November 1906, the Halifax company tried unsuccessfully to refloat her in 1907. The manager was S.M. Brookfield, Mr. McLaine reports.

It was the Reid Wrecking Company of Sarnia, Ontario that got the steamer re-floated in the summer of 1908. They did the job by lifting her by huge hydraulic jacks, then pulling her towards the sea, thus upsetting the jacks in the direction of the water, and thus achieving their objective of finally refloating the steamer.

Details of the story, and of the size of the steamer, were carried in an earlier column, and will not be repeated here.

Mr. McLaine says they had a powerful tug to do the pulling and this tug finally dragged the Turret Belle into deep water.

## Other Mild Winters

THERE'S NOTHING new under the sun, not even the unusually snow-free winter we are now enjoying. I thought it was unprecedented, so did many others to whom I have talked. But I've heard differently in the past few days.

Beecher Court told me Sunday – the Courts were visiting us in Mt. Stewart – he recalls one winter – perhaps 65 to 70 years ago – he can't pinpoint it – when there was virtually no snow and the horse and wagon was being used on the roads until the first of March. But there was plenty of snow and cold weather after that, he recalls.

And now a clipping that comes from Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bagnall, Hunter River – Mr. O'Brien passes it on – has an old newspaper clipping referring to the winter of 1881-82.

The old newspaper item says in part:

From the files of this newspaper we learn that the latter part of 1881 and the January following were more like April than mid-winter, balmy air from the south, green fields and entire absence of snow.

“On a mild day about Christmas 1881, a man going along the railway track between St. Eleanor's and Miscouche came upon six snakes taking a sun bath. One of them was 30 inches long.

“A few yards farther he saw a Robin twittering cheerfully in the scrub.”

But here's the other side of the tale:

## Severe Weather Later

“BUT SEVERE weather came later on, for all through April wild storms, traffic suspended, ice 33 inches thick on the bay was the record.”

The issue of April 26<sup>th</sup> reported the weather cold and cheerless, snow gradually melting along the front streets, but five to six feet deep at the back of town.

The issue of May 10 spoke of country lanes having a depth of three to four feet of snow while an occasional farmer had started the plow – he must have had fields that were high and free from snow.

On May 15 snow fell to a depth of five to six inches, inducing sleighs again to come out.

The issue of June 7 spoke of vegetation being much later, the forest trees at that date giving no indication of greenness.

The old clipping concludes:

“So there have been other later springs besides that of 1907.” And that late spring may be recalled by another reader, or another old clipping that may now be in somebody's scrap book.

## Appreciation Expressed

MY OWN THANKS and appreciation to the many people, doctors, nurses, technicians and all the rest of the hospital team that made my recent visit to that institution so profitable healthwise, and also so pleasant.