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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Family Celebrating 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

By Neil A. Matheson

THE RAMSAY family will be observing this year the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their immigrating to Canada, I am told by Fred Ramsay, Montrose.

The Ramsays left Argyleshire in Scotland in 1770 on the ship Annabelle. There were 60 people on board including the MacIntosh, Murphy and Montgomery families.

The Ramsays on board included the original John and Mary, six sons and two nephews, Fred told me recently when I visited him at his home in Western Prince County.

The ship was heading for Quebec but she ran on to a reef off Malpeque in a snowstorm on October 15, 1770. Fred added that the first intention was to repair the ship and try to get her off – I believe that some provisions were brought ashore – but later the ship broke up in a storm and the people stayed in this province. The storm that broke up their ship also meant the loss of the supplies, including the food which they had for the winter.

There was only about 150 people on the Island at the time, Fred told me.

### Kindness Of French

IT WAS DUE to the kindness of the French people who lived in the area that the immigrants were able to survive the winter, Mr. Ramsay said.

The French helped them build log structures in which they lived. And they used to go up to Sea Cow Pond, kill the sea cows, take the flippers off – these were considered very choice food – and they would pickle them to keep over the winter.

“The French gave our people enough of these to help them through the first winter,” the Montrose man stated.

“I got the information from records I have read. Indeed much was published in the Presbyterian Record many years ago,” he told me.

“If it had not been for the kindness of those French people,” Mr. Ramsay observed, “our people would not have survived that first winter, and we would not be here today. Our people have often felt that”, he added.

On that ship was John Murphy; a descendant, Jim Murphy, is principal of the Kensington Regional High School.

From the Montgomery family, Stewart Montgomery, Port Hill is a descendant, for example, Mr. Ramsay added.

### First Donaldston School

I WAS talking with Cecil Ellis, Donaldson recently and learned with interest that the Ellis house contained the first school in that area. The part of the house that housed the school was torn down in 1955, when the Ellis home was remodeled.

The old part that did contain the school “would be built perhaps around 1780”, Mr. Ellis told me. Definite figures are not available.

The school was on the second floor of the old house and it served the young people of that area for many years. The school on its present Donaldson location, was built in 1853, Mr. Ellis told me.

The Ellis people came to this country in 1848, Cecil told me. Other people owned the place prior to that. The MacDonnells owned the house at the time the school was built into it, Mr. Ellis told me.

Cecil is a brother of the Ellis Brothers who own the large store in Sherwood. Their father, Theodore Ellis, knew the history of the place as few others did. I had often promised myself I would visit him and get some stories. I just never did get around to it.

Charles Ellis was the first of the family to come to Donaldston, he would be Cecil's great-grandfather.

### 'Forerunner' Stories Told

I HAD BEEN told that Theodore could give me some ghost stories, or forerunner tales.

Cecil recalled a couple of the letters when I visited him earlier this month.

“Donald MacDougall, a neighbor, could see ‘forerunners’” Cecil told me. MacDougall lived about two miles away, and he worked here at my grandfather's place.”

“One day as he was coming to the gate, he met a funeral procession going out of the lane.

“That was in the evening. When he came to the house, he said “one of the old folks is going to die”. He had, of course, recognized sight of the funeral procession as forecasting a death in the family.

But it was not one of the old folk who died. It was a young one who took ill and died suddenly, Mr. Ellis told me.

“The other forerunner story concerned my father's uncle,” Cecil told me. “Jim Ellis lived across from Blooming Point. He was out in the Bay, his boat upset. He swam ashore but he dropped dead from the exertion after he had reached shore.

“It was cold, the first part of May. A man who was out the night before had seen them making a coffin in a neighbor's woodshed; that was Bradley's woodshed.

“The next night, after Jim Ellis had died, they made a coffin in the same place as the man had seen the coffin being made the night before,” Cecil told me.

### Father Heard Dog Howling

Some other forerunners of death concerned hearing dogs barking; they would be howling fully. One time somebody in Millcove died – this is a nearby district. And all the dogs in the area had been howling the night before his death.

“MY FATHER would tell those stories” Cecil recalled, as he told me one time father was very sick here and a dog under his window howling.

“Folk at the time thought it was a forerunner of father's death. Father was not that bad, actually, but he knew, or thought that it was a forerunner of death. One of the neighbors went out, grabbed the dog and took it away from the vicinity.

“Even at that father knew all about it, and said “That may be a forerunner but I am not giving up on it.”

Mr. Ellis had been desperately ill at the time, but it was many long years before his death.

Theodore Ellis died in January of this year.