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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Farm Machinery To Be Rented?

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I RAN INTO many interesting stories early this week when I toured the central and western end of the province with the South African mission that was here to examine our seed potato potential.

One story indicates that a Russian delegation that will be here next month will introduce the idea of renting expensive farm equipment instead of purchasing it.

The equipment will be Russian made.

Many people – salesmen in particular – rent automobiles now instead of purchasing them. They have regular possession of the car, but the payment is on a rental basis, instead of outright purchase.

Horace Willis who told me the story said the men will be here in September. He does not know the details of rental costs, but he and other agriculturists who were travelling in our car agreed it is ruinous for a farmer to purchase tremendously expensive items of equipment which he'll probably not use more than a couple of days a year.

If proposed rental rates are reasonable it could mean a real break-through in rapidly mounting farm costs.

Flashbacks Are Interesting

AN INTERESTING flash back to conditions of perhaps 80 years ago was provided by Mrs. Ella Martin of Kinross whose essay in a provincial Centennial competition in 1964 had some most interesting information.

Mrs. Martin – her daughter Mrs. Harold MacKie is a neighbor – has died since then, but I came across some of her information in my files over the weekend.

Dresses cost \$5.00 in the 1880's, Mrs. Martin wrote. But wages were low. Girls who worked as maids got \$4.00 a month. Many of them quit and went to Boston, where they received \$4.00 a week.

Rents were low and well-built houses of six to seven rooms were available for \$5.00 to \$6.00 a month. City sidewalks were made of plank – at least some were. Other sidewalks were made of gravel, which really was stone that had been broken up by jail prisoners. The people called it "jailstone", Mrs. Martin said.

STREET LIGHTS were fueled by gas; there were jets on street corner posts. Rainwater used for washing was channeled from the eaves into barrels.

Pumps were hand operated. One she remembered was encased in a box several feet high and it was locked with a padlock. The reason, I imagine, was to stop people from getting the water free. The water was sold at one to two cents a bucket depending on the size of the pail, I imagine.

A John Williams hauled water from Spring Park and sold it for two cents a bucket, Mrs. Martin said.

Smallpox Epidemic In 1895

A SMALLPOX epidemic hit Charlottetown in 1895. The disease was believed to have started from a dance held aboard an English warship in the harbor, to which some Charlottetown people had been invited, or possibly some sailor had brought it ashore.

A YELLOW flag, symbol of the disease, was seen in the city. Those who could left for the country, in an effort to escape the disease which was greatly feared. The streets were virtually deserted. Anyone entering a store would be sprayed with a disinfectant.

Schools and colleges were closed. The quarantine lasted three months, Mrs. Martin recalled. Sailors who took the disease were placed in the Marine Hospital in the Keppoch area. They were cared for by the Grey Nuns who eventually brought the disease under control, Mrs. Martin wrote.

Joe Curran told me this summer that the smallpox victims, at least the civilians, who were hospitalized were treated in an old government building down on Brighton Shore. Formerly it had been an insane asylum, before that institute was moved to Falconwood.

Lem Musick Was Nurse

MANY PEOPLE died, there is no record, apparently, of how many fell victim to this dreaded disease. Lem Musick lived on Douglas Street and had recovered from an attack of Smallpox some years previously, thus he was immune and was able to act as a nurse for those stricken by the disease.

This man was the father of Jimmy Musick, a famous hockey player of whom I heard a great deal when I was writing sport some 30 years ago.

The building was part wood and part brick. The wooden part was burned and the brick was dismantled and the bricks were buried. Nobody would take a chance on a recurrence of the smallpox epidemic.

Small Supplement Paid Board

MRS. MARTIN taught school in North Wiltshire in 1892-1894 and got \$180 per year. That was second-class pay and first class teachers couldn't draw first-class pay unless they taught in a grade school, she said.

But the \$60 supplement she received paid her board for the 10 months she taught. Think how far that amount would go for board now. Another lady wrote of a \$40 supplement that also paid the teacher's board.

Every rural community was virtually self-contained and independent. There was a general store, a dressmaker, tailor, cobbler, blacksmith, a harness-maker, carpenter, a tanner, etc. within easy travelling distance.

Farmers grew their own wheat, took it to be ground and the bread was made from the flour – this is still done, to some extent at least, in a few Island districts. Housewives had their own hop-vines for making yeast.

Butter was made at home; farmers killed their own animals for beef and pork. The diet was pieced out with herring and codfish. Most farms had a flock of sheep and the wool was carded and knit or woven into various types of garments, including the clothes many wore to church and wherever else they dressed up to go.

Another note said that a mixture of kerosene and butter was used to combat black flies.