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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Salem Visit Recalls Witch-Hunt Episode

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A VISIT last week with Francis MacRae (Mrs. Jack) to Salem, Massachusetts brought me in touch with what must have been one of the most shameful witch-hunting stories of all time.

Back in 1692 no less than 19 women were hanged after being accused and found guilty of witchcraft.

Bridget Bishop was hanged on June 10 of that year and May Parker of Salem was the last of eight women that were hanged for the same cause on the fateful Thursday, September 22.

A visit to the chamber of commerce brought me a booklet published by the Pilgrim Motel.

The wholesale slaughter of so many victims – presumably they were innocent – is an example of what can happen in a centre where people become over enthusiastic in their pursuit of any belief.

On the day of the last hangings, a clergyman, Rev. Mr. Noyes, looked at the eight bodies swinging in the air and exclaimed in self-righteous scorn “What a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there.”

But that was the last time this clergyman, or anyone else for that matter, ever saw a woman hanged for the alleged crime of witchcraft in Salem.

Opinion Reversal Is Sharp, Final

THE ACCUSERS overreached themselves as they became drunk with success. Suddenly the populace got wise. The reign of terror, as it was aptly called, had lasted for more than six months, the jails were full; hundreds had been committed and were awaiting trial.

After the sudden change it was said “There is no instance in history of so sudden, so rapid, and so complete a revulsion of feeling”. The special court that had been set up to try the cases was abolished. “The storm had spent itself.”

Jack and Frances MacRae are former Cherry Valley residents. They live now in Manchester by the sea, Massachusetts.

Eating Places Are Interesting

I HAVE often enjoyed a meal of lobster but there was something different in the one I was served in “The Fellsmoor” restaurant at Yarmouth, Maine. The lobster was sitting up on the plate when it was served, and a small slice of lemon was placed on the head to look like a hat.

The attractive waitress, Mrs. Alice Puiia, tied a plastic “Lobster eating apron” on me that added to the unique part of the service. The service was excellent, and the lobster was served tastefully.

Perhaps the most unusual and the most attractive feature of the eating place is the fact that it is completely surrounded by pine trees, that grow in close to the building. At the back, for example, is an open verandah but it is filled in with reaching branches of the beautiful pines. Talk about a place for romancing your lady love, it seems made to order.

Unfortunately my lady love was back in the hospital in Charlottetown. So we’ll have to leave that to a future occasion.

Grandma’s Rolls Are Tasty

SOME OF the tastiest rolls I’ve ever eaten were baked by Grandma Vera Clark, the 84-year old lady who keeps these and several other delicacies supplied for her son-in-law and daughter Neal and Ginny Ward at Pine Grove Inn in Damariscotta, Maine.

I sent several telegrams (night letters) to Mrs. Matheson from there and addressed them to the “Second Floor Medical Desk” at the hospital here. Imagine my horror when I found on my return home that one of them had arrived addressed to the “Second class medical desk”, instead of the way I wrote it.

One of the most homey spots we found for a meal is the Rainbow Diner, just on the other side of Lancaster. I’ve mislaid my note on this one but it is run by Mr. and Mrs. Gorm, and the lady is a Watts girl who came from the Tracadie area, if my memory is correct.

Drop in on this friendly pair, tell them you’re from the Island, and you are sure of a real welcome.

I went to the United States for a badly-needed rest. I wasn’t even going to think of stories; but I came home with a note book two-thirds full of stories to develop.

I even got a few ghost stories, which I’ll be telling you later – they’re Island ghost yarns at that.

This Ghost Story Is Unusual

I LIKE the one Florence MacPhail Peck told me about her grandfather George Jenkins seeing a funeral procession in front of him after he had turned the Cherry Valley corner, on his way to his home in Millview.

Perhaps 80 to 90 years ago Mr. Jenkins was coming from town on a dark night when he suddenly saw a funeral procession in front of him. The procession stayed in front of him all the way home, and when Mr. Jenkins turned in his gate, the funeral procession turned in too.

The man must have been doing some tall wondering as to what this would be an omen for his family. When he reached the barnyard, his son came to meet him with a lantern. Holding the lantern high to see his father’s face clearly, the son reached up and took a wisp of hay from the father’s cap.

It was the head of the piece of hay that the man had seen in front of his eyes, that looked like “the funeral procession” Mr. Jenkins had been seeing in his imagination.

Which reminds us that many of the colorful tales of the past might have had similar explanations, had the real truth been known.

The George Jenkins about whom Florence told me is the grandfather of the present George Jenkins, and that reminds me that I promised her I'd call him and convey her warmest regards.

Modest Ladies In Bygone Days

FLORENCE AND her brother, Jack MacPhail, told me about a pair of young ladies in the olden days when ladies wore skirts that swept the ground, and waists with collars that came almost to their ears.

This pair of sisters were so modest, Florence and Jack assured me, that they wouldn't even walk across a potato field when the spuds were being dug. The reason?? Potatoes have eyes and the girls feared the eyes might be looking up under their skirts.

This pair of story tellers assure me this story is really true. The ladies were connected in some way with their family in those days of yesteryear. I'm not going to identify them further.

I forgot to finish the story about the funeral procession and the wisp of hay. A man had been hauling a big load of hay along the Millview road that day, and some of it had brushed off on the trees that lined the road. It was one of those wisps of hay that got caught in Mr. Jenkin's cap.

AND HERE'S a closing note. Betty Carol and I went as far as Nobleboro, Maine the first day. Next morning Jack MacPhail asked me "where is your rear license plate?"

"On the back of the car, of course", I replied. But it wasn't there. Somebody had removed the plate, and the screws that held it to the car. I wonder what anyone would want with a P.E.I. license plate of this year.

Jack fixed me up with a cardboard license plate which I carried in my rear window through the rest of Maine, a part of New Hampshire and Massachusetts. But nobody stopped me to ask any questions about it.