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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Old Building Can Be Had Free

By NEIL A. MATHESON

AN HISTORIC OLD building is about to be torn down, but the owner will give it to anyone who will preserve it for the future. Of course the building will have to be moved.

The building stands on Euston Street, alongside the W.G. Barbour premises. It stood originally, I am told by Mrs. Mary Brehaut, on the old market square, close to the area where the scales were housed in the days before everything was cleared off to make way for the present Confederation Center.

I am told it was the first Court House prior to 1845. Mrs. Brehaut tells me at one time the post office was housed there – this followed the destruction by fire of the building that had been housing the post office.

The top floor of the building, Mrs. Brehaut relates, was used as a market place for the ladies who sold butter, eggs, poultry and the like on market day – I'm not sure that they had the two days a week then, though they did have the two market days later.

First Public Auditorium

WHEN MARKET DAY was over, the top floor space was cleared out and cleaned, wooden chairs were put into it and the building became the only public auditorium they had in Charlottetown. Indeed it served that purpose, I was told this week, until the Kindergarten building was erected. The building also housed the first police station, and the first police court, I am told by Inspector Dowling of the City Police Force.

It was my friend Gus who told me about the most recent development, though Mary Brehaut had told me about the old building some years ago.

One of the things I was told is that the general design for the Public Administration Building – the new P.E.I. Government office building – was taken from this old building.

This I have been told, along with the other things I have written about here. I have no direct personal knowledge.

But this historic building is up for free, if some responsible party or some responsible organization will take it and look after it. Mr. Barbour wants the space for other purposes. The idea is to retain it as an historic site.

Recalls Mt. Pleasant

LAST WEEK I talked with the man who flew the first plane into what was then the RCAF station at Mount Pleasant. He is Bruce Trenholm, Grand Pre, Nova Scotia and that is right in the fabled Evangeline country of old Acadia.

I visited the nearby shrine several years ago after attending the interesting Hants County Exhibition they hold at Windsor, Nova Scotia.

There were four men in the warplane young Bruce Trenholm flew into the station at Mount Pleasant. A lot of years have come and gone since then but Bruce Trenholm still

has a warm spot in his heart for Prince Edward Island. His friends tell me that, and Bruce does not deny it.

Mr. Trenholm was here in his capacity as president of the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada. He was called "one of the most knowledgeable presidents we have had" by a national office representative who was present.

I found it interesting to talk with this man who represents a little bit of Island history. He is a Nova Scotian by birth and residence.

Cuba Trip Story Told

MR. TRENHOLM told me something about a trip he had to Cuba, recently, along with other Canadian agriculturists. At the head table he sat not 10 feet away from Cuba's Fidel Castro.

Asked about the hospitality, Bruce said it was tremendous. Then he added "Really it was too much. We couldn't pay for anything there, not even for a post card, or a stamp." They were guests of the country, and they really were guests.

Slides Bruce showed at the annual dinner meeting here showed what Cuba is trying to do to build up agriculture. The slides featured cattle for the most part, but there were references to other phases of farming as well.

One thing I noted was that more than a few people carried revolvers on their hips. Castro did, himself, and so did a man who acted as interpreter for the Canadian group, for example.

Island Lady Is 108

A LETTER FROM Sudbury, Massachusetts refers to the recent column on Mrs. Donald Graham.

After noting his interest in Mrs. Graham, who died in the Alma area of this province at 111, Mr. Smith notes the 108th birthday anniversary of a former Island lady who has been living in East Boston.

A clipping from the Boston Pilot says Mrs. Margaret McGrath has been residing in the Columbus Nursing Home, East Boston since 1963. She is described as a native of Prince Edward Island who came to live in Massachusetts as a youngster.

"It seems incredible," observes the Pilot, "that in February of 1862, the month and year of her birth, the reigning Pontiff was Pope Pius IX, President Lincoln was still in his first term of office and the Civil War was far from over; and that her former sovereign, Queen Victoria, was then a 43-year-old widow in but the first year of mourning for her consort, Prince Albert."

Mrs. McGrath's son, Lawrence, and her several grandchildren are now residents of Puerto Rico, the Boston Pilot reference concludes.

If any reader has any information on this remarkable lady I would appreciate hearing about it.

This Mr. Smith is the same man I wrote about in my last column. Readers will recall a paragraph in his letter that revealed the early construction of the old building in what we now know as the Riverside Hospital complex.

I have one more reference to Mr. Smith's letter – actually it is about an enclosure – and that will come in a future column.