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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Linen Made On Island Had Quality, Quantity

By NEIL A. MATHESON  
Provincial - Farm Editor

THE POSSIBILITY that the flax industry will be developed here, as suggested in a story I wrote for Wednesday's Guardian, stirs up some interesting possibilities. I'm withholding further comment on the economic possibilities it involves, until the development gets under way, if it does. But the suggested revival of the flax industry sends my mind flashing back into other years when some skillful work was done with linen manufacture right here in our midst.

After talking to Melis Visser of Holland and Zeger Salome, Bedeque about modern methods of handling the flax - I'm talking now about the "breaker" that breaks the "shives" - the outer back or shell of the stem, and the "scutcher" that separates the shives from the fibre or linen threads, I understand how the work is done by machines.

But back in the olden days, that work was done by hand and it was done in quantity large enough to weave large amounts, apparently, of the linen cloth. And I wonder just how people of those days managed to do all that tedious work and do enough of it to produce linen in the large volumes they apparently achieved.

STAFFORD GORDON, Montague, for example, could tell you how the first Gordons at Brudenell cut down a giant pine that was dug out and fashioned into a great canoe that was propelled by the wind beating against huge sails of linen, manufactured on their own property from flax grown on their farm.

That proves that the linen was produced in quantity. Here is evidence that it was manufactured in a top quality bracket:

James Thompson, Tryon in 1840 presented an eight-yard tablecloth to Government House here, to be used on the long table that was needed to seat the members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly; and the entire operation from the sowing of the seed to the finished product of the fine linen was done on the Thompson farm, the story reports.

VERE BECK, Guardian news editor, recalls hearing his father talk of using linen bags for wheat. That must have been before jute became available. Other older folk talked of linen in ticks or mattresses that were filled with straw, or chaff. Apparently this would be an inferior or coarser quality of linen. But the linen yarn was spun and the cloth woven in many homes across the country, I gather.

I don't know how long it has been since the growing of flax in quantity was discontinued, but Dane Crosby tells me his mother this week on a drive to Summerside - she lives in Saint John - recalled that she used to see fields of flax growing in this province in the days before the First Great War which would be prior to 1914. I imagine it was grown for the use of the seed then, not for linen manufacture. Flax was grown as a cover crop in more recent years but there was no attempt to use the fibres.

If any readers can tell me something about linen production here in the past I would appreciate hearing from them.

### Oyster Hatchery Is Promising

I HAD a most interesting chat a few days ago with Roy Drinnan, officer in charge of the Fisheries Research Board laboratory at Bideford, about the commercial possibilities of the large-scale production of oyster larvae the new hatchery facilities will make possible. Larvae production will be so tremendously large it is almost beyond comprehension. Mr. Drinnan talks, for example, of hatching up to 40 million in a season. He can hatch five to 10 million at one time.

The hope is, and I gather that Mr. Drinnan is enthusiastic about the possibility, that a large percentage of these myriads of larvae can be raised to seed oyster size, and from there they will grow to market size. The hope is entertained because conditions can pretty well be controlled in the hatchery during the early part of the life cycle.

BUT THE research scientist emphasizes that nobody knows, for the mortality in the natural state runs to 90 percent or more, and nobody has ever learned what causes the mortality. However the experiment should prove most interesting, the hope is that it will also be highly successful.

If the laboratory experiment proves successful, the next step will be to adapt it to commercial production - a pilot commercial hatchery is considered.

### Great Improvement Seen Probable

IF LARVAE mortality can be controlled, vast improvements seem probable. The spat will be "settled" perhaps two months earlier in the year - the normal time is August - and Mr. Drinnan talks of developing strains of oysters that will reproduce more rapidly, that will mature faster and will be more disease resistant

Much will be known about the mortality problem by late next summer, I should imagine. This is one project I am going to follow as closely as possible. If it succeeds the experiment should mean a great deal to the lucrative oyster industry. Demand now is so far ahead of supply that there is no comparison.

Much has been done on larvae food, finely ground Chinese cabbage has been used, but spinach or even broccoli might be good. There is much to be learned, Mr. Drinnan emphasizes.

### Two Organists Have Played 125 Yrs.

THIS MAY not be a record but it must be most unusual. Rev. David MacDonald told me at Tignish United Church, Sunday that he has two organists in his congregation who have played a total of 125 years. Annie Leard, Hills River who started playing in the Alberton Methodist church in 1903, played for two special numbers Sunday at Tignish. The other lady, Mrs. Artemas Cameron, Cascumpec has been playing for the service of worship since 1898. What a wonderful record of faithful service these ladies have given to their churches and communities.

## Stories Gathered In West Prince

I WORKED for three and one-half days in Prince County last week gathering old stories of many kinds for this column. Most of them were intensely interesting and I shall be using them from time to time. But the most intriguing, perhaps, was the one I found at Kildare, just outside of Alberton where Carl Getson discovered an enclosure which is boxed in with field stones, and has no idea, apparently what is down there.

Mr. Getson was digging a post hole in one corner of his roadside field, when he came on the fieldstones. But he quickly filled in the hole and dug nearby for his posthole. There were so many ghost stories told at the time, he told me, that he had no desire to excavate and find what is buried there.

I was directed to Mr. Getson's place by a story that there is an old coffin buried there, and the Lady's Slipper Drive, which goes past his farm, will cover the coffin when the road is widened. There might be an old coffin buried there, though I doubt it. What is intriguing to me is the fact that something evidently is there so close to the highway, and so close to the surface, and nobody has excavated to find just what it is.

BEFORE I end this column I want to express my deep appreciation to the scores of people who stopped in a busy season - the weather was perfect - to talk with me, answer my questions and in many cases to come with me, and travel many miles in some cases, so I could see at first hand some of the more interesting things about which they were telling me. I am particularly happy over the number and variety of ghost stories I picked up, and some of them are real howlers.

And that reminds me that I failed to thank the many people across the Island who have sent me and keep on sending me tips for column stories, when I thanked Chief Justice Thane A. Campbell and his local committee for nominating this column for an award last June. Now that the international award has been made, I want to say that it is only by the kind co-operation of all of you - I have talked to hundreds of people, perhaps thousands - that the stories appearing in this column each week have been made possible.