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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Father, Young Son Saved In Raging Sea

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Provincial-Farm Editor

JAMES H. MacDONALD, 86, Melrose weighed 200 pounds when he and a companion rescued Patrick McCormack and his 11-year-old son, Gus, from drowning in a raging storm at Launching on October 5, 1898. The sturdily built man who is six foot-plus, weighs 198 today, almost 67 years afterwards and he was working in the woods with his son, John the day I visited him recently.

It was my friend Dan MacLean, DeGros Marsh who told me about the rescue that Mr. MacDonald and Murdock Bouchard effected after several others had tried without success to reach the father-son combination that were clinging to the spar of their sunken boat, hoping that somebody would get to them before the storm beat the life out of them.

"McCormack was running with a fair wind, had two barrels of flour and one bag of bran in his craft, when he jibed her for the beach at the west end of Boughton Island; she sank in 22 feet of water." Mr. MacDonald recalled.

THE SEA washed the father and son on to the canvass of the sails and the father clung to the spar, while the boy clung to his dad. The youngster had put his hand inside of his father's reefer coat and had grasped one of his dad's braces.

Mr. McCormack, senior told the rescuers that his son was dead when they reached him. But MacDonald tossed the boy over his shoulder as he started to carry him ashore, and the water ran out of the boy's lungs, and he revived quickly, Mr. MacDonald told me.

"I was working at Eliza McCormacks and had gone to a field just about dusk, to cut corn. When I stopped down below the level of the corn, I could hear the cries for help." He met Murdock Bouchard and they got a 'Lunenburg Dory' as they went out to effect the rescue. This type of dory was the only thing that would live in a storm like that. "A dory of that type would live where a schooner would drown," observed Mr. MacDonald who had been an experienced seaman and a fisherman at 19. The dory belonged to Danny McCormack.

Flour In Sea – Still Usable

NEXT DAY the two barrels of flour had gone ashore on the opposite bank. Both were still usable after their spell in the rough sea, Mr. MacDonald told me. Water does not seep in more than one-quarter inch in a barrel of flour and that becomes pasty so it will stop further wetting, he explained. The bran bag was torn apart by the storm.

A silver cased Waltham watch was presented to Mr. MacDonald at the time by the Government of Canada "in recognition of humane exertion in saving life". The old watch is still keeping good time, 67 years later.

Mr. MacDonald has seen many changes in the intervening years. One of them that contrasts sharply with the past is illustrated by the story of the roofing that is needed on the 70-foot MacDonald main barn. It will cost almost as much to put new roofing on the barn now, as it did to build the entire structure in 1927", Mr. MacDonald told me.

Forerunner Story Heard At Dundas

JACK MURCHISON, Glen William told me an interesting forerunner story when we met at the Dundas Plowing Match. It was about 30 years ago and, said Jack "I took my mother one night to a Women's Institute meeting at Angus Matheson's. My father, Charlie Murchison, was home that night – he wasn't feeling very good. And about 10 o'clock he heard the horse – the one that Jack had over at Mathesons – jump over a snow bank in front of the house."

Going to the door he shouted "Is that you, Jack?" But there was no answer, for Jack and the horse were still at Angus Matheson's place. Mr. Murchison had put on his warm clothes and had gone to the barn, in case the horse had come back alone. But there was no horse, neither were there any tracks of a horse and sleigh in the snow.

But Sunday morning Jack told me "I had a request from Ev Harris in Murray River. His father-in-law had died and he wanted me to go down with the horse and get the rough board box at Murray River. The grave was to be dug at Caledonia.

"That's The Noise I Heard"

"I TOOK this mischievous horse to Murray River and when he came to turn in our lane – I had the rough-board box on the sleigh – he jumped and carried on, and he jumped over the snow bank in front of the house.

"My father who was sitting in the house said "That's the noise I heard Friday night."

Alan Nicholson was in from Wood Islands and my mother was there as I drove into the yard with Angus MacInnis's rough-board box", Jack told me.

When Jack was a youngster of eight, he recalls that he and the children were in the house of a Mrs. Bowles in Murray River. She was at prayer meeting at the time, and the children at home heard a big racket in the pantry. It was in the bread box – it was made of tin.

"I HEARD an awful racket", Jack recalls but when he told his mother she told him "oh, it's just a rat or something."

But three months after that the old lady died, and they laid her out in the pantry, the place where the boy of eight years had heard the "awful noise", some 90 days previously.

"My mother carried the bread box out into the porch and the cover fell into the tin box and made a loud racket", I was told by Mr. Murchison who said it was the same noise he had heard, in the same pantry which he had described to his mother three months previously.

Polly Information Available

I HAVE the information the lady asked for on the "Polly". Please call me and I shall get it to you. My present difficulty is that I do not know your address.