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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Centenarian Recalls Strong Men, Woman

By NEIL A. MATHESON

TWO UNUSUAL stories of physical prowess in the days that are gone came to me recently from Charles S. MacDonald whom I visited where he lives with Mrs. MacDonald, at Mrs. Nellie Campbell's, Montague.

Mr. MacDonald was born in Stanchel in July of 1866 – he'll be 101 July 23 – and both stories come from that area.

John Stewart lived in Stanchel, perhaps less than one-half mile from Mr. MacDonald's birthplace. Mr. MacDonald told me "I saw him get under a mare of his that weighed 1,000 pounds and lift her from the ground. Mr. Stewart got under the mare, got his back braced against her body, placed his hands on his knees and lifted the animal from the ground."

This all but unbelievable feat was witnessed by Mr. MacDonald, he assured me.

The other story is that John MacPhee, Springton claimed to have cut and piled seven cords of wood in one day. Mr. MacDonald questioned Mr. MacPhee about it, he told me last week. He suggested that perhaps Mr. MacPhee might have been making a mistake.

"No, I know what I'm talking about", Mr. MacPhee had replied vigorously.

"When I talked with his neighbors who knew his physical prowess, they told me they believed the MacPhee claim to have cut and piled the seven cords of wood," Mr. MacDonald told me.

When I questioned Mr. MacDonald as to the strength of John Stewart, he assured me the man had been tremendously strong. "I was working with him in the woods once," he told me and, "I was only in his way. There were huge birch logs and he'd chuck them on the sleigh as though they were canes, or something like that," Mr. MacDonald emphasized.

Strangely enough I had never heard previously about John Stewart's tremendous strength, though I was born and grew to manhood in Rose Valley, about two miles away.

Sister Lifted Barrel OF Flour

AS I related in this column several years ago, I had heard about the unusual strength of John's sister, Mary Stewart. The story was that she was buying a barrel of flour in a Breadalbane store and asked the merchant what was the price.

"I'll give you the barrel if you can lift it into your truck wagon," the merchant told her. So she grabbed the barrel, and lifted it into the wagon. There were plenty of reliable witnesses who assured the neighbors that she had indeed performed that task.

Tremendous Contribution

EVERYONE WHO is interested in gathering and compiling historic items concerning this province will agree that the death of George A. Leard, Souris was a tremendous loss.

Only last fall Mr. Leard was appointed a member of the first Provincial Archives Board. Now his work will become a part of the archives here.

His studies of Island history were many and worthwhile. He was working on a history of Souris and had hoped to have it completed in two years time. Back in 1959 he wrote a story "Souris, home of the Dragger Fleet and Old Time Fishing Port".

A "History of Tryon United Church" 1792-1942 was published in this paper some 25 years ago. The pen name used was "E.S.D.,"

There was a history of the United Church of Union Road, Lot 33. He wrote "Souris Harbor" for the booklet "Historic Highlights" and "Rum 'n Ribbons" for Historic Sidelights. "Historic Bedeque" told about the work and worship of the Loyalists in this province. He also wrote a history of Bedeque United Church. This story also ran in the Guardian in the early months of 1942.

"Summerside Saints and Sinners" was the whimsical title he gave to a history of the Trinity United Church at Summerside. The year was 1958.

Mr. Leard's efforts were many. From the talks I had with him, I know that his interest in his native province was tremendously keen. My talks with him were always helpful. He was ever willing to help me with any research job I discussed with him. The province owes a great deal to men of this type.

Island Dance Band Ambitious

SIX AMBITIOUS young men I met a few days ago determined to become the best dance band that ever developed in this province.

Keith Coffin, Charlottetown – he's the son of Mr. and Mrs. Willard Coffin – calls himself band "spokesman", though "leader" is the name more usually applied.

Readers will recall that the "Outcasts" ran into a serious highway accident in Ontario early last December. Keith lost his leg as a result and one band member, Gordon Frederick of Halifax was killed.

The band was just rightly getting underway in the Toronto area. They arrived on a Wednesday, were booked into a coffee club on a Saturday and were playing twice a week when the accident disrupted their plans.

Now they're working hard on their numbers – they have 40 songs in their repertoire and are polishing 20 more – so they'll get back to the Toronto area and really make it bag this time.

Late July or early August they expect to go to Toronto and cut four records. Their return to play regularly will depend on how soon the records get circulating, but they have in mind a late September date.

Other band members are Tony Argent and Barry Harrison, Charlottetown; Ron Dilman from Halifax County, N.S.; Doug MacLean is from Liverpool, N.S. and "Jay" MacLeod is from Oakville, Ontario, though he was born in Truro, N.S.

They have about a dozen songs they have written themselves. They play mostly "Rhythm and Blues" which is "coming in" now. They also play "Rock and Roll" which is slowly on the way out, and some "Folk Rock".

They play some of the old waltz music, but not much of it. The dreamy waltzes of my dancing days, apparently are not that popular now.

Two of the songs they'll record in Toronto are "The Right Time" and "Love's A Guarantee".

The boys practice regularly as they polish their performances. And they've excellent equipment. Their instruments, amplifiers, etc., cost \$12,000, they told me. Some of the amplifiers cost up to \$700.

An interesting piece of equipment is the organ which folds into a suitcase shape measuring four feet, by two and one-half feet. Set up for action, the organ stands about the size of a small organ, or a piano. The cost is \$1500.

An interesting part of the group is their financial arrangement. Everything they earn goes into a common fund. All expenses are paid from it. Nobody has any money of his own. The financing is on a communal basis.

It will be interesting to watch the progress of this band, as they seek to really hit some of the spots in Canada's largest centres.

John Hamilton Grey

A PICTURE of the headstone to the grave of John Hamilton Grey appears elsewhere in this edition. A reader telephoned suggesting that the stones, or monuments to the Island Fathers of Confederation should be cleaned up in this Centennial year. The suggestion is worthwhile. There is (line missing on copy) been cleaned, but there is need of cleaning other parts of the stone to this man who chaired the Charlottetown conference, September 1, 1864. The same would go for other stones to "Fathers" where such action is needed.