

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., Jan. 18, 1963

ACROSS THE ISLAND

West Pt. Ferry, Manse Murder

By NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial-Farm Editor

WEST POINT Ferry committee people told me this week their proposed service that would link Western Prince to a New Brunswick point, probably Buctouche or Point du Chene, would play a big part in solving the kind of transportation problem Graham Rogers said this week may develop next year when this province observes its version of the Confederation Centennial.

Pointing to "a phenomenal increase" of more than 56,000 passengers and nearly 21,000 motor vehicles on the Borden-Tormentine route, he asked "How are we going to handle another increase in 1964 with the facilities we now have?" Mr. Rogers suggested the need of "another Abegweit", but the West Prince people feel the service they have been trying to promote for some 16 years could furnish a large part of the answer.

The proposed ferry service could not be ready for next year - neither could another Abegweit - but it could be ready to handle traffic increases that are sure to come in the future, such as 1967 when the actual Confederation Centennial celebrations are held across the country, the ferry spokesman told me.

MAKE NO mistake about it, these people are most emphatically in earnest about their proposal, and they feel they have a lot of solid backing now in places where they met strong opposition in their first attempt. The Canadian Maritime Commission turned down the bid in 1948, but this time the Commission people have at least asked for further information, which indicates they must be interested. Part of the information will come from the feasibility survey that will get underway in a few weeks time, President Peter MacCaull, Ellerslie, tells me, if plans now underway materialize.

The service would fill a long-felt want in the Western part of the province, which is far removed from the ferries at Borden and Wood Islands which serve other parts of P.E. I so conveniently.

They need strong spokesmen for their cause, and the proposal backers are trying to fill that need. They also have strong backing this time in New Brunswick. More powers to those gallant warriors who assured me late last year that they are going to do everything possible to make their dream become a reality. "If the ferry doesn't come to this area, it won't be our fault", they emphasized.

"Murder In The Manse"

HERE IS one of the most unusual stories I have picked up in the search for unusual things "Across the Island".

One September evening a good many years ago, while prayer meeting was being held in the vestry of the Presbyterian Church at Alberton, and while heads were bowed solemnly in prayer, a series of terrified shrieks were heard.

Several men near the door had just stepped out to seek the cause, when the cries again pierced the still night air. There were shouts for help, which were instantly silenced by two revolver shots.

THE COMMOTION came from the Manse, about 50 yards from the church, which was vacant at the time awaiting a new occupant.

The men who went to investigate found the door was securely locked, but they were horrified as they peered through an open window with the aid of a lamp taken from the church, to see a large pool of blood on the floor and evidence of a fierce struggle, as blood was liberally spattered on the wall.

In a short time several more arrived with lanterns and, armed with stout sticks, went in to find the trouble. It was evident that some object had been dragged up the stairs, as shown by a trail of blood. On the landing the stains were more pronounced, as though a body had lain there.

The sinister stains continued up the attic stairs, and the prayer meeting leader on arrival at the top, looked around at other onlookers with the admonition "Stand around men, there's a dead man here."

Body Hidden Under Attic Floor

A WIDE board in the attic floor had been raised and a "body" shoved under - evidently the "murderer" did not have time to hide it completely, as the feet and legs were sticking out.

In a short time hundreds of people had crowded into the attic for a first-hand look at the scene of the dastardly crime. They included the magistrate and the coroner, for the event had reached serious proportions by this time. All of them were awaiting the doctor, who was away on a sick call. It was about 1:30 a.m. when he arrived and taking over the task everyone else had avoided, he grabbed the feet and gave them a solid tug, only to have the boots come off in his hands, leaving two sticks covered by the legs of a pair of pants that had been pulled on over them.

AS MY informant said, "we'll draw a veil over the remarks, threats of vengeance and curses that followed." The boots and trousers were identified as belonging to a respectable farmer who was above suspicion.

So ends the story of the most unusual practical joke I ever heard or even read about. The responsible parties never were found, so far as available record show. But I talked this week to the man who planned, staged and played most of the parts in this horror-story production.

One thing intrigued me, "Where did you get the blood to spatter the wall, and cover the stairs and floor?" I asked. "A few old hens looked after that part of it" replied the man who has long since been regarded as one of the province's most respectable citizens. I can't give you the name, for he asked me not to, but I can assure you the almost unbelievable story is true.

Mail Contract Held Since 1919

I TALKED recently with Charles Proud, Milton who has held the mail contract continuously on his route since 1919 and received the Queens Coronation medal in June 1953 for being the oldest mail courier in the province on the basis of continuous service. One other man had been a courier for more years at the time, but his service had not been continuous, Mr. Proud told me. Mrs. Proud showed me an attractive brooch which she also received in 1953.

It often required the entire day to travel the 18-mile route when horses were used, and nobody had ever heard of plows to clear the highways. He often stopped along the way to feed his horse and rest him. He travelled in all sorts of weather, but was never "storm-stayed" over night.

"A MAIL courier was docked then" Mr. Proud told me, "if he missed a trip - he only got \$520 a year at first - and people expected you even though nothing else moved." I told Mr. Proud that I can recall Fred Wotton who drove the mail between Bradalbane and Victoria in my school days. Many times we saw "Wotton" pass the school when we could scarcely see him through the drifting snow, though the road would be only 50 feet away.

Mr. Proud's sons have taken turns driving the mail. They include, if my notes are correct, Harold, Elmer, Lloyd, Stanley and Dale.

MANY PEOPLE will recall the old winter roads that went through fields to avoid the deep snow on the roads, and sometimes wandered so far away from the summer route that a stranger would become completely lost, and probably end up on somebody's wood road, unless he had someone to show him the way.

Ghost Story Column Coming Soon

I HAVE a "Ghost Story" column almost ready to go, and for those who have been asking for it, I hope to run it in the near future. I had intended to run it this week, but I yielded instead to a suggestion I boost the West Point Ferry proposal. It's considered so important by so many people to whom I have talked in West Prince that I just couldn't turn it down.