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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Early RC Clergy Recalled In Drive

By NEIL A. MATHESON

IT MUST have been two or three years ago that Alex MacKenzie and I took a drive close to the area where he had farmed most of his life – it's not far from Mt. Stewart – to the old French cemetery at Scotchfort and to a number of other places.

This week I reviewed my notes with Alex and have several interesting things to tell you.

In the old cemetery we found some monuments that have an important part in the early Roman Catholic history of this province. For example:

Rev. James MacDonald, born in Scotland in 1736, was ordained in Rome in 1765 and came to P.E.I. in 1772. Alex tells me that this man was the first priest in this province.

Another stone had this inscription:

“Sacred to the memory of Rev. Augustine MacDonald, a Catholic missionary from the Highlands of Scotland who came to the Island in advance life, also of Donald MacDonald, Esquire, who came to the Island in 1770 and was subsequently killed in naval action with the French in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, both of whom were brothers of the late Capt. MacDonald, Glenaladale.

And here, apparently, is Glenaladale himself. The inscription is:

“Capt. John MacDonald, captain of the 84th Regiment of Foot, who emigrated with his family to this province in 1777, bringing with him a number of clansmen and Margaret his wife, and Flora Anna Maria, his daughter, Captain Allan's sister Margaret.

“Alexander MacDonald, a lieutenant in the late Glengarry Fencibles of Upper Canada, came to the Island in 1821, died in 1854.

First Charlottetown Bishop

RT. REV. Angus MacEachern was the first Bishop of Charlottetown. The inscription says he was born in Scotland in 1759, ordained in Spain in 1787, came to P.E.I. “after the conquest”, was made Bishop of Charlottetown in 1829 and died at Savage Harbour in 1835. His remains lie under the sanctuary of St. Andrew's church, but the church was burned.

Another interesting historic statement is:

“This cross marks the site of the first Catholic church erected in Prince Edward Island after the conquest. It is set up by the descendants of the Scottish Catholic pioneers to perpetuate the memory of their arrival in this country, and symbolize the faith for the sake of which they left their homes in Scotland and became voluntary exiles amid the wilds of P.E.I. This stone was erected in 1922.”

Mr. MacKenzie told me this week that this cross was formerly erected a considerable distance away, down near the woods, across the railroad tracks.

Leaving the old cemetery we visited Wilfred MacDonald of Mt. Stewart – he has since died. And he showed me a gallon glass jug of water which had been in his house

for about three years then. Yet the water was still fresh. It had been taken from a spring at Douglas Station. It is mineral water – that's why it does not spoil – and was believed by many to have magic powers.

Magic Healing Powers

ONE MAN told me of a granddaughter of a Mt. Stewart man – she was then living in New Brunswick – who had a bad skin ailment all over her body. When her parents got some of the believed magic water and washed the girl, the skin disease disappeared. Later another man, a relative, told me that the girl had not been completely cured. Her legs were still affected, he said.

Another man told me of a Morell girl who later married in Savage Harbour. She had a sore on her eye that threatened her sight. One man said she had been going blind. She washed her face in the spring, after taking a drink of the water, and the sore disappeared, I was told.

The spring, I was told, takes the physical form of a cross. That, of course, could be just a freak of nature, but to the devout people who believed the spring had magic healing powers of course the cross-shaped part of it had deep religious significance.

I talked about the spring to Rudolph MacEachern, Canavoy and he suggested the government should build a road to the spring. One time, I was told, there was a foot-bridge built to the spring over a swampy piece of ground. Hundreds of people used to visit the magic spring, I was told.

Alex and I started with the idea of visiting the spring. I wanted to taste the water, for example. But people who knew the score told us the mosquitoes would eat us. We planned on visiting the area when the cold weather came, and the mosquitoes had gone. But we did not make it. Now Mr. MacKenzie and I are planning on visiting the area this coming autumn.

Varius McAdam had an hotel at West St. Peters. He sold the property to Henry MacEwen. Fulton MacLean owned it at the time of the visit to which I am referring.

Would Cure Headaches

TALKING OF magic healing powers in springs, I recall that Patrick Hughes, Shamrock, on the County Line road between Prince and Queens Counties told me once that there was a spring in their back field which the old Irish and Scotch folk used to believe would cure headaches.

His son Aeneas was a young man at the time and I was working at the hay with him. Now Paddy, as we used to call him and Aeneas are both gone, and I do not know the name of Aeneas's son who is living close by.