

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Thurs., Nov. 25, 1965

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Effort Here Recalls Handicraft Of 1840

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I MET an old Prince of Wales classmate last week when I dropped in for a look at some of the handicrafts people from across this province had on display in the Foyer of the Confederation Centre.

Dan Mullen, Mt. Stewart had developed a high degree of skill in wood carving, and I was happy to have him tell me that he received enough orders for his work to keep him busy for the coming year. I talked with some of the others, including Eileen Oulton (Mrs. Bill) from Alberton – she does “Silk Screening” – and some others I talked about last week. Unfortunately my visit was brief and I only talked to about one-half the people there. But I was told that all of them had received an encouraging number of orders for their work, and I hope that is right.

As I was getting this column together I came upon an item I wrote several years ago when the late Gus Flynn was our managing editor, for his name is on it.. The subject is timely and here it is:

An eight-yard, finely made tablecloth was presented to Government House for use when the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly had their annual banquet there. It was given by James Thompson, Tryon and the entire cloth was the product of his farm where it was grown, prepared and completed.

The date was 1840 which makes us realize, I think, that when we talk of developing handicrafts and other works of art now, we are merely trying to regain something we have lost in the last century, or perhaps in the last 40 or 50 years.

Old Wooden Pump Is Pictured

A FRIEND who prefers that I do not reveal his name, told me about an old wooden pump that was used once in a meat packing establishment on Kent Street.

The location is where the Necchi Sewing Centre is now and I have to thank Jerry Doucette – he’s co-owner with David Young – for showing me around.

The pumps – there were two of them – were located in the basement of the building. Naturally they were to supply water, as that would be before the days of piped water, I would imagine, though I have no idea what time it was. I have made enquiries without result. If anyone has any information I would be pleased to receive it.

A picture of one of the old pumps – it is a bit deteriorated – is shown on page 11 of this edition.

‘Bossy Gillis Was Colorful’

AN ASSOCIATED Press story said Andrew J. (Bossy) Gillis, a six-time mayor of Newburyport, Massachusetts, was born in Prince Edward Island, but the Daily News of

that city agrees with what Rev. Urban Gillis of Vernon River told me – that Bossy was born in Newburyport, though his father was an Islander.

The colorful political figure, who died at 69, was a son of Andrew Gillis of Grand River West, Father Gillis tells me. The man lost a bid for a seventh term as Mayor in an election that was held the day preceding his death on Nov. 4.

The town's "Daily News" was honest in its failure to admire Bossy Gillis, but it said editorially "Without question the death of Andrew J. Gillis removes from the scene the most influential Newburyport personality since Lord Timothy Dexter." Who Dexter was does not concern us.

But Gillis "surpassed Dexter in stature in many ways, partially because of his mercurial nature . . . partially because of the pleasure he received from deflating his enemies . . . His enemies were legion . . . he was a master needler with a passion for thrusting home wherever it could hurt."

He ran several newspapers, including those with colorful names like "The Asbestos" and "The Liberator". There were "column after column of invective probing like a scalpel, or slashing like a meataxe at his target," said the News, the day following the death of Mr. Gillis.

As I have said, 'The News' didn't like him. Many others shared that view, but Andrew J. "Bossy" Gillis had enough people like him to get himself elected as mayor more times than anyone else in Newburyport history.

PERHAPS IT was the shock of his silence that failed to win him that seventh term. The silence – the silence was comparative – was caused no doubt, because of his rapidly failing health, though none knew it except himself.

He first ran for office when the City wouldn't cut down a tree that blocked the driveway to his service station.

Gillis was a "determined foe of phonies . . . he was the hero of persons who objected to the town's social structure . . . he was the city's most dominant political force for nearly 40 years." These are a few of the comments in the News.

He served several jail terms. Once it was for libeling a Newburyport judge. Another time he had punched the City's mayor "right in the nose".

Once the school committee refused to give him a key to the new Newburyport high school. But that didn't stop Bossy. He climbed through a second-story window, the News reported.

Once when he was in jail, Frank MacArthur of Charlottetown tells me, Gillis ran the jail laundry and invited the people to come down and see him at work. He conducted a campaign for election as mayor from a jail cell back in 1941. He lost on that attempt.

'Large' Pork Shipment in 1910

I WAS looking through Jean MacFayden's scrap book for information on Mary Allison Doull when I came across a note that said Michael Delaney of Albany had shipped the largest shipment of dressed pork ever shipped from Albany station. It consisted of "upwards of two carloads". The time was Jan. 19, 1910. Jean lives in Summerside.

Fox Film Saturday Evening

A film made on the Island's fox industry will be seen on the CBC farm show, Countrytime, which is aired each week on Saturday evening at 6:30. Ches Cooper, an Island man who is now with the CBC, played a large part in filming the show. It should be an interesting show. The early days of the fox industry – it's back on a paying basis again – were really fabulous.

Welcome Home Charlie

I have room, I believe, to welcome a former Islander, and a long-time friend, back to the Island. Charlie Moffatt is coming home to be secretary-manager of the Charlottetown Board of Trade. Your welcome is warm Charlie.

He succeeds Eric Kipping, an Islander by adoption, but Eric thought so much of this province that he gave up a really promising career with the federal department of national resources and Northern affairs to stay with us. Even native Islanders like Charlie and myself couldn't be any more loyal Islanders than that, Eric.

Mr. Kipping is with the Island Development Company now.