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ACROSS THE ISLAND

New Zealand Resident Seeks Family History

By NEIL A. MATHESON

THE MAIL is unusually interesting this week. One letter comes all the way from Whangarie, New Zealand from a lady who tells me she was sent from California three of my columns, and that's definitely the farthest any of my columns have gone, so far as I know.

I have heard of them going to Pakistan and India, and of course to Germany where Islanders were serving with the Canadian service units that were stationed there.

The New Zealand lady signs herself "Jessie Messervy Richmond" and adds in brackets "Lady Richmond".

Lady Richmond says in part "My grandfather, Captain Alexander Campbell, was born on P.E.I. in 1833 and married Marcela Messervy, an aunt of John A. Messervy who was a member of parliament for Queens in 1926." Lady Richmond adds "I have a copy of his budget debate speech delivered in the House of Commons, Canada on April 20, 1926."

Meighen Administration

MR. MESSERVY was a member during the Arthur Meighen administration which actually lasted only a few months. Meighen was sworn in and formed a temporary cabinet on June 28, 1926 and was defeated in the House of Commons four days later on July 2nd. After suffering defeat at a general election he resigned as premier on September 25 of that same year.

Mr. Messervy, however, was elected an MP in 1925 and served until the general election of the following year.

Getting back to Lady Richmond and her story, Captain Campbell sailed as master of the Brig Pakeha for New Zealand in 1863, taking his wife with him but leaving behind their young daughter Annie Wilson Campbell, with her uncles and aunts as the long journey was considered to be too dangerous for a very young child.

On arrival in New Zealand the Pakeha was sold and Captain Campbell and his good wife stayed in that country. The child was sent for several times but never made the trip until later after she had been widowed. Lady Richmond tells that part of the story like this:

"I learned about one of the times she was sent for when I was in Edmonton in 1965. It was an occasion when the weather was beautiful in New Zealand but in the Atlantic ice had begun to form between P.E.I. and the mainland. The uncles and aunts felt it was much too dangerous for the child to set out even with an uncle, in the bitterly cold wind and the dangers of hauling the ice boats over the ice and across the Northumberland Strait."

One of the columns sent to Lady Richmond was my account of the story of a Roman Catholic priest told of the grim journey from Amherst by horse and sleigh to Tormentine,

and across the Strait by ice boats, by horse and sleigh again to what we now call Emerald, and the rest of the way by train to Charlottetown.

“Awful Hazards” Are Realized

“AFTER READING your articles”, the New Zealand lady writes, “I can really understand the awful hazards of that distance from the mainland, plus six months on a sailing ship to reach New Zealand.”

“Annie grew up to marry Walter Haszard in P.E.I. . . . she finally visited her parents in New Zealand after she was a widow.”

Lady Richmond explains, “I am trying to make out a Campbell family tree and am anxious to get in touch with any of the descendents of John McIver Campbell who arrived in Belfast, P.E.I. in 1803 and died at Pinette. Of his children, I am reasonably informed about Alexander (father of Alexander Campbell, my grandfather) but I am without information regarding his brothers’ and sisters’ descendants. The brothers were Roderick who married Ann Morrison, John and Norman; the sister was Christie who married Gillis.

“I am also without details of the family of Donald Campbell, born 1882, son, who firstly married Flora Gillis.”

That is the reference to a most interesting letter from this lady with Island forebears. I hope some readers can help her out on the Campbell side of the family. Incidentally the John A. Messervy, M.P. she refers to was the father of Harold Messervy, Charlottetown.

Boy In Suit Case

A VISIT to West Prince Monday – I was attending the potato meeting in O’Leary – brought a story that was nearly a sad one. I stopped for a few minutes at the Gordon Barbours in Alma, and heard this story about a neighbour’s boy. The little chap – he was four, I believe – crawled inside a suit case which he found in a closet and squatted down as low as he could. A younger brother slapped the lid down and the thing locked. When the boy’s father found his son, luckily he was in time, the little lad was in bad shape in the virtually airtight enclosure.

Fruit Cheap In Florida

IT WAS late in January when I received a friendly note from Milton Stewart, city who was born in Bradenton, Florida – I was in hospital. What I think you’ll find interesting was his reference.

“Bought a bushel of grapefruit for one dollar yesterday; oranges are one dollar a bushel.”