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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Winter In 1917 Said Similar To This One

By NEIL A. MATHESON

A PERTINENT observation on our unusual winter, and the story of finding bar clams in a most unexpected, and somewhat unexplainable location, feature what I want to write about this week.

It was several weeks ago that I talked with Wilfred Furness, Vernon who recalled that we had a winter similar to this back in 1917, and that's a long time ago.

I talked with Mr. Furness at the annual meeting of the Prince Edward Island Soil and Crop Improvement Association and naturally we got around to the unusual climate, and particularly the lack of snow.

Mr. Furness recalls a winter like this back in 1917. Wagons were running all winter – there were no cars at that time – and the first snow storm came the first week in March, he told me.

The bad part of that story is that we had a real big snowstorm late in May. There was snow to the wagon axles, and the wagon wheels of that day were high.

R.A. (RUBE) HORNSTEIN told us a few days ago that Charlottetown has had 72 inches of snowfall since December and that's "the exact average of snowfall" at Charlottetown since records have been kept.

I'll not dispute official records but I'll emphasize that if this winter's snowfall is average, give us some more of the same kind of "average" snowfall.

I live on one-half mile of dirt road and the thing has been bare now for weeks. Indeed there was enough loose mud on top to muddy up my car, just as soon as I get it cleaned. I got a really top job done last Friday morning, but you'd never know it by Saturday night.

More Snow In Prince

TALKING OF snow reminds me that in certain sections of Western Prince County they have much more snow than we have in this area.

Cuttings of several feet in depth are common and the fields have a very good cover. In some places the snow in the fields appears to be fairly deep, but I didn't get out of the car to test the real depth. I was as far west as Alma, after sitting in on Eric Phillips' Soil and Crop Improvement Association's meeting at O'Leary. Eric is the president. Alma is about six miles east of Tignish.

Bar Clams In Strange Location

STANLEY NICHOLSON, Mt. Buchanan, tells me the unusual story about finding bar clams in a field far from the place where one would normally expect to find them.

Mr. Nicholson's story goes like this:

“While harvesting potatoes last fall in a field one-half mile or more from the nearest water, or beach, bar clams started appearing on the sorting table – they were about the same size as the potatoes.

“The clams were very much alive and healthy. I would estimate that when we had completed the 15-acre field we must have had a basket of them.

“One day soon afterwards I had the opportunity of talking to one of the community’s most experienced fishermen, clam digger, a smelt fisherman and lobster harvester, he said it was hard to believe as there weren’t any clams within at least a mile, so far as the shore was concerned. The field is well drained and has fairly heavy soil.”

Anybody got any idea of an explanation?

My column on Fred J. Nash said that typewriters did not exist in his time – he died in 1929. What I meant to say was that newspapermen did not use typewriters at that time, not at least in this part of the world.

There was no typed news copy when I started in newspapering and that was a little more than 36 years ago.

The First Lady Typist

I FIND that the first woman typist was a Mrs. M.A. Saunders who started her career in 1875. Apparently she worked with a Remington machine for that company presented her with a “beautiful gold watch” – that was a highly prized gift at the time – the inscription: “To the pioneer typewriter operator. From the pioneer manufacturer”

You may be interested in the request for this woman, and the advice she received on how to handle the machine.

The advertisement said:

“A bright, educated woman wanted to take a remunerative and pleasant position. Musician preferred.”

The only instruction she received was “Strike the keys just like piano keys”. Apparently the Remington people had the idea that a lady who was a musician, could type with a rhythm similar to that of music.

Because I know nothing about playing a musical instrument, I’m going to leave it at that, before someone who is a musician really tells me off.

Stenography Is Older

I FOUND this item in the February 1905 edition of the C.B.C. Recorder, and CBC stands for Charlottetown Business College.

But shorthand, or stenography as it was called then goes back many years. The same C.B.C. Recorder says in part:

“It has been generally accepted that the oldest records of stenography dates from the year 164. But a parchment has been discovered, written in Greek, which shows that in the year 155 after Christ stenography was practiced.

“There were even schools of stenography”, the item said.

Avon Spuds Bring Big Price

THE MOTTO of this story seems to be “Grow what the other fellow doesn’t have”, or something to that effect.

J.P. Hendricken, Peakes told me a few days ago that Avon potatoes sold this winter for as high as \$3.75 per 75-pound bag. The NFU of which J.P. is Kings County local president, has an order for some of these spuds, but they didn’t get any because they were sold to high bidders.

There are slightly more than 50 acres of Avon potatoes grown here, I gather. The variety was new to me, but J.E. Campbell, district seed potato officer, tells me the variety has been around for some time.

But imagine getting that much money per bag in this year when potato prices are so depressed.