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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

Recalls Early Tourist Effort

By NEIL A. MATHESON

MY FRIEND, Vaughan Groom, who developed the Garden of the Gulf Court and Motel at Summerside, tells me that the Island Park Hotel at Summerside was the first attempt at serving the tourist trade effectively in this province.

I talked to Vaughan about this several years ago, but Lauchie Chisholm, manager of the Guardian-Patriot Bureau in Summerside sent me this week several stories that Vaughan got together, so I got the idea of doing this column.

The Island Park Hotel was built in 1872 and it was destroyed by fire in 1904, for a 32-year life span.

The hotel was built on Indian Island – it's known now as Holman Island – in Bedeque Bay, some three-quarters of a mile from Summerside.

### Many Legal Transactions

AS THE STORY puts it, the Island was leased by John Thompson and Mederiere G. Thompson to William Henry and James C. Pope on April 12, 1862 for one thousand years. Under date of August 18, 1871, the Island, containing 130 acres, was leased by James C. Pope to James L. Holman of Summerside for 999 years at a rental of one shilling, six pence per year, and on November 9, 1879 William H. Pope gave a release of interest or assignment of Indian Island to James C. Pope.

There were a number of transactions relating to Indian Island, as it was known then. Normally I avoid details to maintain keener reader interest, but somehow I find these interesting, so I'll continue them.

The next transfer on November 11, 1870 saw the government of P.E.I. give a deed to Hon. J.C. Pope of 268 acres, Lot 26 and Indian Island, Lot 26 for \$543.20.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1878 Hon. J.C. Pope gave a mortgage of lands in Lot 26, including Indian Island, for \$5,000. The liquidators of the Bank of Prince Edward Island on March 24, 1886 granted a release of deed under power of sale, of Indian Island to David Rogers of Summerside for \$245. And on April 12, 1886 the said David Rogers granted a deed of Conveyance of Indian Island to Mr. Holman of Summerside for \$450.

### Father Of Tourism

THE SUMMERSIDE item terms Holman the father of tourism in Prince Edward Island, and another item suggests he may have been the father of tourism in Canada.

J.L. Holman was the brother of R.T. Holman who founded the Holman's business which Islanders know so well.

Indeed Holman's catalogue was regular winter reading across the countryside when I was a boy and I have tried unsuccessfully in the past to learn just when the last Holman's catalogue was put out. I think the catalogue was printed until, perhaps, the very early 1930's, though, of that I am far from sure.

If anyone connected with the Holman family, or the business, can give me correct information I shall be most appreciative.

There is not much description on the Holman Hotel, but here is some of it.

Mr. Holman's Hotel was a flourishing venture back in the days of the horse and buggy. The little Island in Summerside harbor was reached from the mainland by water only. A small steamer plied on a regular schedule across the mile of water to a wharf in the town.

Sail boats cruised around the Island. Bridal paths and a carriage track around the Island provided amusement for the guests in the 125-room Island Park Hotel.

The hotel was four storeys in height, according to the photograph Mr. Groom has furnished. The cost is given as \$80,000, which would be a large sum of money almost 100 years ago.

Long before conventions became recognized as big business the Holman Hotel played host, for example, to a national organization of newspapermen.

In 1877 the Canadian Press Association held their annual meeting in the hotel.

### Had Every Service

THE SUMMERSIDE manuscript says the hotel had every service that is to be found in a modern counterpart, including a special card advertising its advantages as a resort to visit.

It was following Mr. Holman's death in 1877 that the hotel began to suffer from lack of attention, the manuscript says. And it was finally closed and in 1904 burned to the ground.

This part of the story is a bit indefinite as one manuscript suggests that fire started "from a defective flue, or an over-heated stove in the caretaker's quarters in the old ell".

Apparently the caretaker was still living in the building at the time.

This story may be known to Summerside veterans but I never did hear it before. The manuscript says that on a chilly spring day a man, who had just arrived from the cold winds of the North Shore, said "Why, you have the summer side here".

And that's how Summerside was named. I read it in the manuscript about Holman's Island and the Island Park Hotel.