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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Early Car Stories, Fox Hunt Recalled

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Provincial - Farm Editor

I HAVE found that stories about the early days of cars are always well received and I have two of them this week.

"My name is MacDonald and I knew both your grandfather and your father", a voice on the telephone told me Monday, and I found it almost impossible to reconcile the statement with the voice that sounded so young, because my father died in 1909 and my grandfather sometime before the turn of the century and that was before I was born.

But I knew Dan MacDonald immediately when the former Springton man walked into my office a few minutes later. Mr. MacDonald - he's more often referred to as D. M. MacDonald I think - recalled that he had been buying cattle with Matt Wood, Cross Woods in the Victoria area one day when six o'clock in the evening came before they realized it.

THE HOUR was important because at that time roads were closed to cars on the Island on market days, except for one limited access route to Charlottetown from that area, which involved driving to Rocky Point and coming across on the old ferry boat, and the last ferry from Rocky Point left at six o'clock.

Mr. Wood insisted they were going to motor to Charlottetown by the main road, and that's where this particular story comes in.

They were approaching Bonshaw when they were met by a large group of people - Mr. Wood had sounded the horn as they were approaching the village - but they drove through the assembled people with nothing worse than some angry comments hurled at them. If you read some of my previous columns on the early days of the automobile here, you will recall that the feeling ran terribly strong against cars in those days, and all manner of things were done to stop them.

### Horse And Wagon Block Road

A LITTLE farther on they met a couple of men in a horse and wagon. The horse was not frightened though many were in those days, but the driver stubbornly refused to pull over to the side so they could pass.

Mr. Wood was driving the automobile, so "Old smoothy" MacDonald - the term is meant kindly - got out to talk to the men in the wagon.

"Can you tell me how far it is to the nearest city?" he asked with an air of bewildered innocence, as he left the impression he was not an Islander.

"Don't you know the road is closed to cars?" retorted one of them.

"What road, and what's this about roads being closed to cars?" my old Strathalbyn compatriot retorted.

After being assured that this “visitor to the Island” had urgent need of getting to Charlottetown, the men pulled their horse and rig to one side, and let the automobile proceed.

A LITTLE farther on they saw two men making towards the road with axes in their hands, but they broke the speed limit of 20 miles per hour, and escaped that threatened encounter.

Several days later the inevitable court action followed - there were a dozen complaints sent in, Mr. MacDonald recalled - and Magistrate D. Edgar Shaw assessed the minimum fine of \$10 and costs which came to \$12.95.

### First Car In Cape Traverse

THE OTHER old car story came in the course of a chat with Ed MacWilliams, Cape Traverse who was the first man in that area to own a car.

He bought a Ford Model T and it was back in the days when only the odd road was open for traffic. “We had to go via Kelly’s Cross and out past the old Dalton Sanitarium - it was in Emyvale - to get to Charlottetown,” he recalled.

“Roy Holman sold me the car and Jim Crockett took it down to me - I had told them I would buy a car as soon as the roads were opened”, Mr. MacWilliams recalled for me.

The registration number was 114 and gasoline cost 50 cents at Herb Lord’s store, I was told. The gasoline was measured in gallon cans - there were no gasoline pumps then, and service stations came much later.

HE TOOK Phillip Rooney once to his home in Cherry Valley and met up with an unusual experience “on the other side of Pownal”. They met a man in a horse and wagon, and the horse became frightened, reared up, turned slightly sideways and came down across a wire fence and broke both shafts. There were no banks on the side of the road, and the wire fence was strung close to the travelling surface.

“What’s the damage?” asked Mr. MacWilliams who was surprised to be told “Nothing”.

“But both of your shafts are broken”, Mr. MacWilliams persisted.

“It’s my own fault. I should have been watching my horse instead of looking at you in your automobile”, the good natured man replied as he refused financial remuneration.

Ed kept the Ford several months - he paid \$495 for it - then turned it in for a MacLaughlin Buick and paid Harry Holman \$1200 to boot. The MacLaughlin carriage company built the car and it used the Buick engine, I was told. The MacLaughlin people built the strongest and most durable carriages available, I recall, when I was a boy and the reputation they had thus established must have helped to foster early automobile sales, although the name MacLaughlin disappeared from the automobile world many years ago.

THE NEW car’s best speed was 45 miles per hour recalled the man who estimated the Model T could probably do 30 m.p.h. although it had no speedometer on it.

The Model T tires were smooth, with no tread, and chains had to be worn if the road was at all slippy, Mr. MacWilliams said.

### Fox Hunt With Unusual Ending

MR. MacDONALD told me a story of old fox hunting days that I found intriguing. A black fox was reported to have been spotted on the loose in the Priest Pond area, not far from East Point. It was in 1917 or thereabouts when black foxes were really valuable, and Mr. MacDonald offered \$2,000 if the animal was caught uninjured.

Bill Chappell, New London, had a good fox hound and he was sent for. The hunt lasted through two days without raising a scent, but on the afternoon of the third day the hound suddenly started to bay furiously.

The animal was unleashed and he took off straight as an arrow for a nearby farm house, went through a bedroom window, carrying the sash with him, and then continued through an open door as he maintained his pursuit of a cat. Racing for its life, the cat had scrambled through the slightly open window, but the hound was too big for the narrow opening so he took the window with him.

That ended the fox hunt, except for the settling of damages with the understandably irate farmer, whose window had been demolished, but Mr. MacDonald was not present for that part of the development.

Mr. MacDonald is 80 now though his young looking face and his still athletic looking figure makes it easy to recall the time when he was one of the best sprinters in the province, and I believe he also did some weight throwing.

If you will permit a personal reference, it was this man's spike shoes that I used in my first attempt at track and field competition on a provincial scale. They had been left with his brother Mack who loaned them to me for the event at Borden.

Bayfield Ellis tells me he does not recall the occurrence but I recall that he was sprinting at the same meet and wearing a big gold "D" for Dalhousie University, on his track jersey, and that looked terribly important to a green country lad at that time.

### Visit To "Big Jim" Is Interesting

I HAD an interesting half hour this week with "Big Jim" Pendergast who is making a splendid recuperation from an operation in the Charlottetown Hospital. We roamed over a half century in our talk, and the former Kensington man recalled many interesting experiences for me. They ranged from prospecting in the Yukon, boxing and throwing the 56-pound weight to a new world record in Boston, to a fox-buying trip he made to the northern part of British Columbia in 1913 and his experience in running the race track at New Annan from 1912-1935.

I saw my first and only automobile race at New Annan and that would be somewhere around 1919 or 1920 - my cousin William Matheson, Rose Valley was with me. And I recall Jim had Boyce Bowen doing trick shooting with a rifle that attracted keen attention. Bowen came from Wheatly River, my old friend told me.

The late Lee Essory of Charlottetown drove a model T Ford and the winning car was a Chevrolet roadster driven by Reg (?) Parkman, if my memory is right.

I have always been interested in this man, for, as I told him during our visit, I was virtually brought up on a conversational diet of Jim Pendergast. A cousin, Dan Matheson, told me many stories about the big fellow and all of them were good. Special trains were run to most big provincial events in those days before cars, and the stories

often told about Jim stopping a fight on a crowded train or about him bringing peace and order to a knot of pugilistically inclined spectators, or some other activity where he used his unusual size and great physique in a beneficial manner.