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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Transport Volume Greatly Increased

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I HAVE often thought of the difference in the speed and volume of transport of the present day, compared to what it was when I was a young lad in Rose Valley where I was born and grew up.

The copy of a talk Paul Jenkins gave recently to the Charlottetown Rotary Club has some pertinent information.

Great tractor-trailers roam our streets and highways and we get the impression some of the largest can handle as much volume as an ordinary freight car. The comparison is used loosely so no arguments are desired either from a trucker or a railwayman.

As Mr. Jenkins puts it, one of these huge rigs can carry almost all of the worldly belongings of several families across the continent within a few days.

The comparison, of course, is with what was possible back in the days when horses and drays did the moving. A person moving household belongings in Toronto would hire a couple of big draught horses, two husky men and an 800-cubic foot van for \$1.50 an hour.

Horses' Top Speed Was Low

HORSES WOULD hit a top speed of perhaps four miles per hour, a large wagon would hold a ton of furniture, and on some of the longer hills around the city, you might have to hitch on an extra pair of horses to get over the hill.

Winter conditions were glossed over, save the chilling cold, but spring brought mud, deep and sticky. Often a mover had "to put the load on his back and stagger knee deep through the wet clay", to the nearest place he could get his dray.

For all this "a man might be paid \$12.00 a week".

After the First Great War, many movers replaced their teams with Army trucks. With their solid rubber tires and a canvas roof, they would carry just about the same load as the old horse-drawn dray, but they "could hit speeds of 15, or even 20 miles per hour."

In early trucking days, the gear ratio was low, because powerful engines were not yet developed. "It was in the early 1920's that my father (Ralph Jenkins) started to use his first motor-driven vehicle. We now operate more than 30 pieces of equipment through Canada, in freight and furniture service", Paul reports.

Faster Trucks Went Farther

AS TRUCKS became faster, movers lengthened their hauls, became more associated with long-distance moves.

"In the early Thirties, Toronto movers allowed their drivers 18 hours for the trip to Montreal. The old 'Number Two' highway was scarcely wide enough for two trucks to pass. If you ran into a heavy snowstorm you could easily be stuck for three or four days, as our trucks have been, not too many years ago, in Newfoundland."

Another of the early problems in long-distance moving was that after you delivered a load, three or four hundred miles away from home, you had to come back all the way empty, Mr. Jenkins noted.

THERE WAS no pay load on the way back and that made long-distance moving expensive. A system that would ensure two-way loads was needed. It took some time, but Allied Van Lines developed into such an efficient organization that it became possible to haul a load from Charlottetown to Toronto or Montreal, with a reasonable assurance that you would not be travelling thousands of miles home without a pay load.

Piggy Back transport operations have been in the news recently in railway advertisements, but Mr. Jenkins says "our firm now sends loaded vans by railroad Piggy Back as far as Vancouver, working in co-operation with our fellow members (of Allied Van Lines) across the country."

Livestock Moving Changes

THIS WEEK I came across a note I made several years ago after a chat with Danie Gass who lived at Cornwall, and was one of the best informed men on beef cattle trends, price fluctuations, etc., I have ever met.

"Yesterday \$40,000 to \$60,000 of cattle moving equipment went by my door in the space of less than an hour. One large tractor and trailer would cost \$30,000 alone.

Rapidly increasing costs of just about everything would mean that big rig would cost considerably more today.

Reminiscing Mr. Gass noted that one can load cattle on a big truck now and be in Halifax within several hours. Contrasting that with the old days, he recalled "from Webster's Corner to New Haven was a two day trip" when he was a boy.

That was at the time when cattle, and other livestock were driven by foot on the roads.

I RECALL attending the 50th wedding anniversary several years ago of Mr. and Mrs. Allan Clark, Alma. Mr. Clark had moved with the farm livestock from the Malpeque area to Alma before the days of motor vehicle traffic. The livestock were driven all the way and the trip took several days.

Alex Hamilton, New Perth – his friends call him "Sam" – recalled for me when hundreds of sheep were moved along the highway in autumn. "The roads would be full of them", he recalled.