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ACROSS THE ISLAND

For Last 70 Years Clan Has Gathered

BY NEIL A. MATHESON

I'VE BEEN aware for some years of the Leard clan's annual picnic but I had no idea that the clan meetings have been held for at least 70 years until I talked with Mayor Ray Leard of Souris this week.

The earliest record available of a Laird gathering appeared in the Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1898 edition of the Guardian.

The item said "The Laird picnic is to be held on the grounds of Mrs. A.M. Roblee, Tryon on Saturday afternoon next. All Leard connections invited." It appears that the clan picnic must have been held prior to that date.

Even more historic is the fact that the Leard gathering this year will mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing of the Leards at Tryon. As far as it can be established, it was in the year 1768 that Samuel Leard and his wife, Margaret Rogers, left the parish of Kilmunney, near the market town of Carrackfergus in Ireland and came to settle in Tryon, on the "Bito" (Aboiteau) hill, on property leased to them by Samuel Holland, the surveyor general of British America.

This information came to me from one of the Leard clan, a modest gentleman who asked me not to use his name.

The clan picnic this year will be held Saturday afternoon, July 20 on the grounds of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wood, Mt. Tryon.

SOME TIME ago I wrote a column in which a Roman Catholic priest described in some detail the difficult journey from Amherst to Tormentine, then the journey across the strait by ice boat.

The priest noted in critical fashion that the keeper of the inn at Tormentine left much to be desired in his treatment of guests and his general deportment. The priest's criticism was penned in controlled language, but a recent document that has come to my desk is different.

Heath Macquarrie, MP, mailed me a photostatic copy from a book he had been reading, and this time the critic was not so genteel.

'Vile Den' Is Description

SPEAKING OF "the Cape Tormentine Hotel" as he called it, he observed "the landlord of this vile den" had lost all his toes and a few of his fingers in the ice and spent his time in "dignified" repose. Rum and tobacco seemed to be his only sustenance.

"His mother-in-law happened to be on a visit to him . . . and this lady . . . was the cause of a fracas which served to enliven my sojourn at Cape Tormentine."

It seems she had her daughter lock up the rum . . . Our worthy landlord naturally resented this interference, and became grossly abusive; whereupon the old lady, assisted by her daughter and a servant girl, very properly proceeded to thrash him.

The woman belabored the drunken ruffian with the tongs, while the younger women skirmished with plates, dishes and fire brands.

## Everything Breakable Broken

“EVERYTHING BREAKABLE in the house was broken. It was late when peace had been restored, and supperless, I retired to rest amid the ruin wrapped in my blanket.” The following day the man reached Tormentine (the Island?) after what he described as “eight hours as hard labor as I ever had, for passengers must work their way”.

Whatever the man knew about hotels and the people who ran them, he evidently knew nothing at all about the ice in the Straits.

After praising the iceboat crews as “clever navigators and very cautious men” he suggests in his abundance of ignorance of the conditions:

“I cannot help thinking that, with a little enterprise, the navigation to the Island might be kept open all the year around; at most there are but three or four weeks each year in which properly rigged steamships could not ply.”

The man, and I do not have his name, wrote that in February of 1872, apparently, and many a sturdy and knowledgeable sea captain spent many years of great difficulty with the succession of ships they were given by Canada, in futile efforts to keep a passage open.

## Earl Grey First Efficient One

HISTORY HAS indicated that the Earl Grey was the first to be really suitable for the job, and the Prince Edward Island, still in operation at times, was the first real answer to the awesome task of battling the ice fields between Tormentine and Prince Edward.

## Lady Richmond's Address

THERE HAS been a fairly good response to the item last week about Lady Richmond and her quest for her Campbell ancestors. Angus McGowan, Kilmuir wrote a letter that has considerable detail. Mr. McGowan, I am going to send your letter to the New Zealand lady.

The day the column appeared Mrs. Reg Kemp – she was formerly Jessie Lawson – told me “you were talking today about my grandmother”. She was referring to the lady, Annie Campbell, who married Walter Haszard. She was looking further into the Campbell story. My friend, Mrs. Mary Brehaut, Charlottetown, also wrote me.

I neglected to give Lady Richmond's address and here it is: Pinette, Rural Delivery 4, Whangarie, New Zealand.