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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Georgetown Faded As Carferries Came

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MOST PEOPLE have forgotten, apparently, but the town of Borden that grew with the advent of the Borden-Tormentine ferry services grew as one man told me this week, "on the ashes of Georgetown". That's a colorful, though inaccurate way of stating the case. But Georgetown did start to die, as the Prince Edward Island ice-breaking carferry started to carry cargo and passengers across the Northumberland Strait.

And the Eastern town did die. Few now living remember the busy, thriving centre that Georgetown was when all of the Island's winter commerce and passenger traffic passed through that gateway to Canada.

It was Waldron Lavers, Guardian correspondent at Georgetown, who told me something this week of the activity of that era.

These were the days of the Earl Grey, the Stanley, the Minto and the Northern Light, to name a few of the ships that pushed their way through ice fields in that era, and sometimes became hopelessly stuck when the conditions became too severe.

They provided the lifeline to the outside world. The lifeline was thin at times but it survived. It overcame the emergencies that so often developed. It provided the only cargo link with the outside world, and virtually the only passenger link as well.

### Capes' Ice Boats Not Forgotten

I'M NOT forgetting the ice boats at "the Capes" as the route from Cape Traverse to Cape Tormentine was known. But they carried mails, they also provided some passenger transportation. But it was necessarily limited, and the male passengers had to take their turn on the ropes pulling the boats across the spots where there was solid ice.

The boats would be stuck in the ice for days, sometimes, and that meant that the Georgetown hotels would be full of paying customers, who were awaiting transportation to the mainland.

People came from all over the province, to await the arrival of the boats that would take them on their journey. There were also people from elsewhere who were awaiting return passage back home.

At times the waits would be much longer, as the ice sometimes imprisoned the ships for weeks. One old story tells of a delay of one month in the ice of the Strait.

There was work for the people hauling the cargoes from the ships to the storage sheds. And the loading of cargo reversed that process. The cargo was loaded on to trains to be hauled to its final Island destinations.

### Ships Sometimes Stuck Offshore

AT TIMES, back in those difficult days, the boats didn't make all the way to the Georgetown wharf. Sometimes they were stuck a mile or more off shore. Then the folk around Georgetown hitched their horses to sleighs, hauled the cargo to shore, hauled new cargo from Georgetown to the boats. They also hauled coal from Georgetown for the steamers' fires. They hauled fresh water for its passengers and also for the boilers and other needs.

No insult to Georgetown is intended when I say that the town really did die. It didn't even have its own telephone exchange. One had to go through the central at Cardigan, some five miles away, to get a phone call through.

But Georgetown is on the way back. The big Gulf Garden Foods Ltd. Plant coming to the town was the first spark to show the way back. The Bathurst Marine Limited – it's building draggers now – brings additional life and activity. And they'll probably bring other industries in their wake. Georgetown has its own telephone exchange now. It returned to the directory only this year.

The future looks bright for this Eastern town, and it's not before time. It's been a long lean spell for the area. Here's wishing its people plenty of good fortune in the years that lay ahead.

### Transportation Problems Solved

I COULDN'T find the file this week, when I wanted it, but I recall reading the Guardian that told the story of the inauguration of the Borden-Tormentine ferry service, and the issue exuberantly suggested that at last the Island's transportation problems had been solved.

If that sounds off the beam now, remember that the "Prince Edward Island" carferry and its ability to carry trains, and automobiles, across the Strait 48 years ago did represent a tremendous improvement over the ice-boats that carried mail and a few passengers – men walked and pulled the boats when it was needed – and the winter boats at Georgetown. So the Guardian's exuberance – actually it was reporting leading men of the time – is understandable.

And Graham Rogers told me this week that it cost \$10 to ferry an automobile across the Strait at that time – that, apparently, was for a return trip. I can recall when the fee for an automobile was seven dollars.

But there were so few people, comparatively, who had automobiles in 1917 that it probably made little difference to the average Islander. A man with a car was looked upon as something unusual anyway. If he could afford a car, he should be able to pay the price was probably the general reaction.

### Automobiles Loaded On Flat Cars

BUT HERE'S something else, which many people who lived through those years can affirm. The motorist drove his car up a ramp and on to a railway flat freight car. Then the flat car was shunted on to the carferry, along with the other railway cars. It was indescribably slow service, compared with today when you drive on and drive off. But nobody seemed to mind at the time, not at the start anyway. Simply getting across with a car was a novelty that was most acceptable.

I'm not going to discuss Borden's future at this time. A story in Monday's Guardian carried comments and observations from Mulgrave and Port Hawkesbury people, 10 years after they had lost the Canso railway ferries. But I forgot to add one pertinent opinion in that story. A lady who operates a business in Mulgrave, with her son, told me "My advice to the people of Borden is to get after the politicians for something right away. Don't leave it until after the causeway is completed. Those fellows – and she was referring to the politicians – have a habit of forgetting," she said.

My friend Charles R. McQuaid, QC, has some interesting old currency that is closely linked with the Confederation conference here, and the events that transpired as a result of that historic meeting.

There's a cheque written by Governor George Dundas to Hon. George Coles and, of course, endorsed in Mr. Coles's own handwriting. It's dated August 25, 1859. There's a cheque which George Coles wrote himself on July 5, 1863. John Hamilton Gray, who chaired the Confederation conference here in 1864, wrote a cheque dated May 12, 1857 which Charlie has in his collection. There's one written by Heath Haviland who was later a lieutenant-governor of the province. It was dated June 6, 1874. One of Edward Whelan was dated October 22, 1860. There's another by W. H. Pope, dated June 1, 1864.

The cheques were all written in English currency and they ranged in value from 10 shillings to 25 pounds and that, presumably, would be Halifax currency which would make the value approximately \$3.20 when reckoned in dollars and cents.

Mr. McQuaid has an interesting collection of this type of currency bearing the signatures of so many of the Fathers of this country from this province.

### Cattle Entries Needed For Fair

Breeders of registered cattle are slow this year to enter their animals in the Provincial Exhibition classes, and those who believe that the biggest prizes in history should have brought a record entry list, are wondering why.

The nature of the Harry Hayes formula which is being used at the exhibition limits the number of entries per breeder to one to each class, or section, with the exception of two sections in which two animals may be shown.

It means that a large breeder with a lot of good stuff can't swamp the smaller breeder with a few good cattle. The prizes that start at \$70 for first for dairy animals, and go all the way down to \$10 for tenth placing are unprecedented. Prizes in beef classes range from \$50 for first down to six dollars for tenth.

The way things look now, everyone in the show should be assured of a substantial share of the prize money. With 10 prizes available in every section, and a small entry list the way it looks now, everyone should take home the largest share of prize money ever.