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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Dr. Blanchard Award Is Certainly Merited

By NEIL A. MATHESON

THE AWARD of the Champlain prize to Dr. J. Henri Blanchard, 114 Upper Prince Street certainly is merited by this unusual student of Acadian history.

The citation indicates the award is made annually to "the best North American French author outside of Quebec", and this is an opinion with which I heartily agree.

The organization making the award is The Council of French Heritage – the English translation – and it is fitting that Dr. Blanchard should be recognized for the part he has played in recording the history of his people and keeping their memory alive.

I met Dr. Blanchard first when I went to Prince of Wales College a long time ago. Since then I have had many opportunities to get to know him even better, and to appreciate his worth.

It is indeed a pleasure to have this opportunity of offering my most sincere congratulations.

Island Boer War Veteran Visits

DANIEL MACRAE, a spry young man of 85 years walked into this office this week and told me smilingly some of the Prince Edward Island soldiers who served in the Boer War are still alive.

"I am one of them," added the Waterside man who served in that war in South Africa at the turn of the century and then stayed four additional years in the Transvaal where he served in the Constabulary.

His next move was to Saskatchewan where he homesteaded and spent about 20 years. Then it was to Vancouver where he resides. But the call of the Island is still strong, and he plans to come back here to live as soon as he gets his affairs straightened out.

Daniel had two brothers serve in the Boer War. The oldest brother is remembered as Major F. B. MacRae, who was in the first contingent. Robert was with the Canadian Mounted Rifles.

Mr. MacRae kidded me about a recent column in which I said all of the Island Boer War veterans were dead. I've been told that several times, but I'm happy now to correct the false impression. "I know of at least one other Island veteran who is alive," Mr. MacRae told me. That is Sylvan McCabe, Vancouver whose half-brother, Ernest, lives in Alexandra, and another half-brother, Stanley, also resides here, he explained.

Mr. MacRae recalls that it took 25 days from Halifax to Cape Town. One of his brothers travelled on a steamer loaded with horses and the trip took 35 days.

The mortality among the horses was unusually heavy. It ran as high as 95 percent in some instances, Mr. MacRae said. The bite of the tsetse fly caused a sickness to which the animals succumbed in large numbers.

Many of the details are hazy after 60 years, but Mr. MacRae recalls that he bought a ticket from London to Halifax, on the return journey, for about \$48., and that would be about 1905.

Mr. MacRae has ESP – extra sensory perception – the older people used to call it second sight – and he has seen some unusual omens, or forerunners.

A sister died in Coldsprings, Maine and he foresaw her death the night before she died.

A brother died in the Fiji Islands, and Daniel foresaw the event the previous evening.

Col. Arthur Mellish was with the first Canadian Contingent to South Africa and the former Waterside man recalls that Mellish once jerked his hand from his rifle, and a split second later a bullet hit the spot where Mellish's hand had been.

The Canadian soldiers received extra pay in the Boer War, 1899-1901, Mr. MacRae tells me – the ordinary pay for a private soldier was one shilling, three pence. Kitchener threatened to promote every Canadian to the rank of sergeant, Mr. MacRae told me, unless the scale of pay was raised.

Museum Urged Here In 1882

FROM THE late Benjamin Bremner who wrote several interesting books on Island history, comes a story through his neice, Mrs. W. E. Massey, that recalls once more earlier efforts to get a museum established in this province. This item was prepared for The Examiner of August 4, 1882. The museum has not yet been realized, and I see no reason to hope for such a desirable development, not in the foreseeable future at least.

If I may explain, the word "Conversazione" is of Italian usage and it has reference to an evening gathering for the purpose of conversation and recreation. Here is the item as Mr. Bremner prepared it almost 85 years ago:

"THE CONVERSAZIONE at the Drill Shed last evening was a very brilliant affair, the shed being prettily decorated and its barrenness broken by the tasteful arrangement of tables containing curiosities and flowers. The table of curiosities was quite an interesting one, and we felt strongly urged to move for a committee of the lenders, to take into consideration the formation of a Provincial museum. The following comprise the principal objects in the collection:

"An Indian Brave's suit and Calumet or Pipe of Peace, shown by Hon. David Laird; a petrified Porter Bottle with coral foam on it, by B. H. Higgs, Esq.; a Doomsday Book by H. J. Cundall; a Box made of stones and petrified wood of Colorado, by Malcolm MacLeod; a Punch Ladle used in Queen Anne's reign, also rare China, by Professor Caven; a great-great-grandmother's wedding dress, by one of our Charlottetown belles; a brocade dress 200 years old by Mrs. Beaton; a rare Dresden China and glass goblet, more than 100 years old, used in the American Revolution, by Major Beers, shown by Mr. John Quirk;

"A COLLECTION of petrified ferns from Malta, rare coins, etc by Rev. W. Tippet; specimens of fine Carving, by M. Butcher; a China Tea Cozey, with teapot inside, by Mrs. Edward Palmer; an old Punch Bowl Tortoise Shell Watch, etc. by James Reddin; a rare China and antique Egg Cup in villor pattern, Lustre Goblets, Indian ware, etc. by Miss Morris; a mammoth Turtle and rare curiosities, by H. Mutch; a fine collection of

East Indian curiosities in sandal wood, China pearl, etc., also Madras water goblet, by Col. Grey; four Chinese Idols, over 200 years old, by Ambrose Brown;

A Living Alligator

“INDIAN SCIMITAR and other articles, by Henry Hall; skeleton of a cat and a collection of Island butterflies and manqué coral, by Mr. May; a number of Chinese spoons and teapot, by Mrs. Henderson; an Aquarium and case of hair work 30 years old, by W. Kennedy; a living alligator, by Thos. Reddin; numerous coins of Edward I reign, by Rev. Dr. Fitzgerald; a Cloisonne Manual, 700 years old, Australian Boomerang and Wraddy, by J. S. Carvell; a Chinese fan, China inkstand, over 100 years old, Ladies Ring of Elephant's hair, by B. DesBrisay, Esq., a vase over 200 years old, petrifications, etc., by Mrs. James D. Haszard;

“West Indian snakes, and elephant's teeth, by Prof. S.N. Earle; a Sea serpent, and a jewel made of gum from New Zealand soil; a bunch of olive loaves, taken from Mount Olive, stones from Cape Breton, and a beautiful collection of rare stones, old coins, etc., by Mrs. George Beer; Large bean world, by Miss Mutch; specimens of cotton in the pod from Trinidad and growing plant, called Wonder of the chain, 100 years old, by Mrs. C. Palmer; a selection of ancient books and newspapers, by H. A. Harvie; carved wood picture frames, etc, Mrs. Cameron; a table painted by Mrs. Bayfield, also one by a Miss Mason.”

Readers will note the wide variety of interesting items that were on display some 85 years ago. I doubt if many of them are now available, and we shall continue to lose many worthwhile items so long as our historically minded people are unable to get backing for the type of museum for which they have been asking now for close to a century.