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ACROSS THE ISLAND

'Hottest Day' Date Hotly Challenged

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I HAVE a most interesting and friendly letter from Hugh N. MacDonald, a former Heatherdale, P.E.I. man who lives now in Edmonton, Alberta.

Much of the letter is personal – it's complimentary – but the main point at issue is that 'Hottest Day' in Island recorded history when the thermometer hit 98 degrees on August 18, 1935.

Mr. MacDonald read that "Across The Island" item and has his own ideas about when the hottest day came and also about the degree of heat which the mercury hit.

"I was stooking grain for a farmer not far from Southport. I think his name was Mr. Wood . . . I'm sure that 'Hottest Day' was in September 1935, and further I remember the temperature to be 99 $\frac{3}{4}$ degrees." That would be just one-quarter of a degree from the 100 mark, and that surely would be hot.

For Nearly 36 Years

I LIKE Hugh's closing paragraph. Here it is:

"Neil, I have for 36 years – nearly – believed the hottest day on P.E.I. to have been in September 1935, and the temperature on that day to be 99 $\frac{3}{4}$ degrees. Don't tell me this isn't so."

Hugh, I think you believed when you read that column that I was telling from personal memory of the "hottest day".

That was not so. I got my information from Hector Arsenault, weather observer at the Research Station now – we used to call it the Experimental Farm – and he had hunted through pages of records going back to 1910, the earliest records they have there.

Those records said August 18, 1935.

But listen, Hugh, if you still want to believe that the "Hottest Day" was in September and the temperature was 99 $\frac{3}{4}$ degrees, instead of 98 as is officially recorded, how about you and me making a private pact between us to that effect.

'Your' Hottest Day

AFTER ALL Hugh, you worked at farm work and toiled mightily under the broiling sun, while you worked to earn something to help put yourself through College. You earned the right to think you could recognize the hottest day that year.

I knew very well your cousins, Neil and Lauchie MacDonald of Kilmuir and their brother John K. of Kilmuir is one of my valued friends. I agree with you that John K's a man "of considerable Caledonia Club fame" as you put it.

I had the pleasure of competing against this brow highlander on a number of occasions. We tried our darndest to beat each other, but the friendly good humor never wavered.

John K. had tremendous spring in his legs, particularly was this noticeable in the Hop, Skip and Jump, as we called it then. And I have often told him so. Now, Hugh, as you probably know, they call it the "Triple Jump"

Many thanks for writing. Your letter was most welcome. My very best wishes go with this item to you and yours.

And don't forget what I said about the "Hottest Day"

Ice-breakers Of The Past

NORMALLY PEOPLE in reference to ice-breakers of the past, refer to the Northern Light, the Minto, Stanley, Earl Grey, the Prince Edward Island, the first real ice-breaker, and the first to carry railway cars, as well as automobiles.

The rest of the car ferries are well known at least to middle-aged citizens. They were the Charlottetown that entered the service in 1931 and was sunk in 1941, the Abegweit and others in recent years.

But an old reference indicates there were a number of others. This reference lists the S.S. Albert "described by contemporary critics as 'a wooden hulk, light-powered, and entirely unsuited for such work'". It came in 1874.

In 1875 came the Northern Light of 393 tons and called in this old item "Canada's first ice-breaker". Once again the Island's hopes for winter service with the mainland were doomed, the item observes.

It was in 1886-87 that the S.S. Neptune went on the route. She was a Newfoundland sealer, chartered by Ottawa to assist the Northern Light. "Forced to withdraw owing to ice conditions" was the terse comment.

Found Unsuitable Quickly

IN 1887 the S.S. Landsdowne, owned by the Dominion Government, was engaged for a short period but was found unsuitable.

In 1887-88 the Northern Light was taken off and replaced by the S.S. Stanley built in Scotland from plans for a Swedish boat to run between Norway and Sweden.

In 1896 the S.S. Petrel was sent to test the Summerside – Tormentine route. She made two trips and was found unfit.

In 1899 the Minto was built at Dundee, Scotland to cut through 11 inches of ice, the old news item stated.

In 1900 the S.S. Stanley ran in conjunction with the Minto using various routes – Georgetown – Pictou; Charlottetown – Pictou; Summerside – Tormentine – usually encountering trouble.

In 1909 the Earl Grey came into service, and about her there is no comment, but I have always heard it said that she was the best thing in the Strait ice until the Prince Edward Island went on the Borden – Tormentine service in 1917.

Summer Season Is Ahead

OTHER ICE-BREAKERS include the Charlottetown in 1931 and the Abegweit in 1947. Present day readers know, of course, of the newer ships that have been serving on that route.

There is more, much more in the old scrap book, about the Winter Service, but this is May and we're all looking toward summer, so I'll leave this talk of winter and ice until a more seasonable time.

But I thought for now it was worthy of note that the Ottawa government tried so many ships – most of them almost completely useless, before service between the Island and the mainland of Canada was maintained, as pledged in the pact of Confederation.

10 Cent School Taxes

A RECENT column spoke of teachers' supplements which were small in earlier years, and of other such things. Mrs. Harvey Jenkins, Brackley called to tell me of an old school minute book which belonged to her grandfather Edward Wood of the Mt. Mellick school district.

One man had a lot of land valued at \$1.50 and he paid ten cents in school taxes. Her grandfather had 190 acres and his taxes were \$2.39.

The minutes were for the year 1898 and the teacher's supplement was \$20.

I HAVE been unable thus far to locate the story of the second Canadian hockey final ladies played in this province. I shall carry the item when it is available.

The Name Was 'Blythe' Hurst

BLYTHE HURST is the name of the man to whom I referred recently as the "Agricola" of former years who wrote such a widely read and appreciated column in the Guardian.

His granddaughter, Margaret Hurry (Mrs. Eric) told me first, and of course I remembered that that was his name when she called my attention to it. My thanks also to B. Frank Tinney, North River Road for his friendly note.

I did not have the benefit of knowing Mr. Hurst. I was not then connected with the Guardian – but I have heard Islanders refer back to his column, when I was travelling in search of material for my own column.