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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Nature Study Lack Noted In Schools

By NEIL A. MATHESON

LESTER B. SELICK, Halifax has some interesting observations on the lack of nature study in our schools in modern times.

Himself a teacher in former years he remembers taking a whole class to a farm orchard where they learned first hand about the grafting of branches from one apple tree to another and other interesting things from nature being done right before their eyes. They saw nature's work being helped by the hand of man, he observes.

"Not so fortunate", he contrasts, "were the city students of even a small place like Charlottetown. I remember a big boy being upbraided by his teacher for having listed as three breeds of horses, Clydesdale, mare and foal." A female student got round the nasty question of naming three varieties of potatoes as "red, white and seed potatoes". Not to be outdone in putting down her knowledge of varieties of wheat, another co-ed resorted to: "cream of wheat, shredded wheat and buckwheat". Another city student visiting the farm reasoned that if he could obtain water from a pump by moving the pump-handle up and down, he could most certainly secure milk from a cow by pumping the cow's tail.

Cranky Bull 'Fed Sour Milk'

A LADY FROM the metropolis was intrigued by the physical differences between two cows on a large dairy farm. One of the cows appeared mild and gentle while the other was shaggy and vicious and had a ring in its nose. She was determined to learn the reason for the startling difference between the two animals. One of the hired hands came to her rescue: "Ya see, ma'am, one was fed on sweet milk; the other on sour."

The hired hand was kidding the City lady, but that reminds me of a dictionary being offered for free trial by an international magazine of good standing. When my daughters asked my advice I suggested they send for it, just to see what it was like.

It so happened that the first word I happened to look up in the dictionary was "bull". When I read the definition, I quickly closed the book and did not look any farther. It said a bull is the "uncastrated male of the ox family". The book was sent back by return mail.

Lester is the man who recently had a book "Tell Me Wanderer" published on his great Uncle "Phillip Sellick" who must have been one of the greatest naturalists of his time. I had a column reference to him several months ago.

To the many people who asked me where the book can be purchased, the answer is at "Holman's of P.E.I."

Storm Stories From Rocky Point

HERE'S A STORY I learned from the "Community History of Fairview, P.E.I." The book was loaned to me by Mrs. Chesley MacDougall, Nine Mile Creek who directed the compilation.

One late Friday afternoon on February 1805 Archie Currie and his wife were coming from Charlottetown. They had crossed the ice at Rocky Point and were coming up the Shore Road when a bad storm came up. It was so hard to see that they stopped, because they were scared the horse would go over the bank.

Mr. Currie unhitched the horse from the sleigh and the two of them, with the horse, kept walking around to keep from freezing. They kept this up for hours until they felt they could scarcely walk another step, when suddenly the storm lifted for a few minutes and over the high snow drifts they saw a chimney close by. They went as quickly as they could and came to the house. For hours they had been walking in the severe storm and all the time they had been so close to shelter.

From that day on the horse was stone deaf, relates the history which was written in 1966.

THIS STORY is of a storm which took the lives of three persons. It happened on February 10, 1882 and the people were returning from Charlottetown. They were James Campbell of Rice Point and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Catherine MacLean and her little brother. Their bodies were found in the vicinity of Black Creek.

Ghost Story – ‘Open Grave Sounds’

THIS GHOST story is told by Glen MacFayden, who is described as the bus driver: “About 10 years ago a grave was being dug in Canoe Cove. The group left the grave – it was open – to finish in the morning, because the evening had grown so dark, and so cold. The time was late November.

“When Mr. MacFayden was nearly home he was sent back to get the shovel which had been forgotten in the cemetery. As he neared the cemetery gate he heard a noise like someone crying. As he drew near to the open grave the noise became much louder. The man turned and ran home, then returned a few minutes later with his companions.

They found the noise was coming from a calf which had fallen into the open grave.

THAT REMINDS me of a story Charles Sharkie – he’s my neighbour who came a year or two ago from Paisley, Scotland – told me on a recent visit to our home.

A chap, who wanted to play a trick on a friend, climbed down into an open grave – he knew the friend would have to pass that way that night on the way to his destination.

As the friend came close to the open grave, the prankster who was dressed in a white sheet and lying in the bottom of the grave, started to protest “I’m cold, I’m Cold, I’m COLD[”] in as ghostly and eerie a tone as he could voice.

But the friend was a man of iron nerves, apparently. Instead of fleeing the spot, he walked up to the grave, saw the figure of a man in the rough box, covered with a white material. And what do you thing the man did? ? ?

The way Mr. Sharkie tells it, the man grabbed a shovel and started to shovel the clay into the grave, remarking as he did so, “Oh, poor fellow, they forgot to fill you in.”

Material for this community history was supplied by Edmond Handrahan. It was written by Mrs. C. MacDougall who kindly made it available to me.

Rare Honor To Edmond Handrahan

AN INTERESTING item concerns Mr. Handrahan who was presented with an illuminated parchment scroll at a ceremony in St. Martin's Church on the South Shore on December 6, 1958. The scroll contained the apostolic blessing of Pope John 23.

The rare honor was conferred on Mr. Handrahan, a clipping from the Guardian explains, "in recognition of his being a member of St. Martin's Choir for more than 45 years."

It was fitting that Mr. Handrahan should be honored by the head of his church. Not only did he render unusual service to his church over a long period of years, but the church was built with stone taken from the farm he occupied at that time, he said in a special contribution to the Fairview history.