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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Road Is Macadamized Near S'side In 1890

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Provincial-Farm editor

MANY OLD newspapers are sent to me and brought to me by people who believe they may have something useful for this column. Recently I was looking at an August issue of the P.E.I. Agriculturist of 1890 when I came across this item:

"Some 10 chains of Macadamized road has lately been completed on the main road approaching Summerside from the East, just outside of the town limits. B. S. Mills is the supervisor. The piece of road, the Agriculturist said, was almost impassable in wet weather and the road will be greatly appreciated this fall by people hauling produce to Summerside, by those who had previously dreaded that portion of the highway."

I blinked my eyes at first, then read it a second time. I was under the impression that "Macadamized road" meant a paved road, but I find that is not correct, though I've often heard the term used in that connection.

OUR ENCYCLOPAEDIA says John Loudon McAdam was a Scottish inventor who gave his name to a process for road building. He was born in 1756 and died in 1836.

He went to America as a young lad, made his fortune, returned to Scotland where he purchased an estate at Sauhrie, Ayrshire. The roads of the country were in bad state at the time, and McAdam, a road trustee, began to consider how to effect reforms. He began a series of experiments at his own expense, despite much sneering opposition.

In 1798 he moved to Falmouth, continued his experiments, and concluded that roads should be constructed of broken stone.

His country's government was so deeply impressed with his theory that he was made general surveyor of roads, and so was able to put his theory into practice.

Small Round Stones Were Used

If anyone wants to follow this farther I suggest he look under "roads and streets" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. In general the idea was to use small stones as nearly round as possible, and not less than two inches in diameter and not more than two and one-half inches. These formed the top of the road surface and it was sort of rounded on top.

The Britannica says in part of McAdam, whom it terms "a great engineer", that he made the subsoil of his roads very firm and shaped to the finished camber (rounded slope). Side ditches were used to drain the roadbed. His road then consisted of a layer one foot thick of small broken stones, as cubical as possible...each able to pass through a ring two and one-half inches in diameter, but not through a two-inch ring. No large stones, loose earth or binding material was allowed."

I found it surprising to learn that this type of road building was used in this province so long ago. It is probable that the idea was brought here by a Scot who had seen it in operation in the old land.

Wooden Pumps Recalled In Story

IT WAS Alex Compton, Southport – he lived in Belle River when I knew him first – who told me about the “wooden pumps” people used in former years. My friend couldn’t believe that I had never seen one, but I hadn’t.

The “pipe” as we know it today would be made of wood, and an augur was used, apparently, to drill a hole or channel through a junk of stick, or would you call it a log? The wooden sticks were fastened together for the “pipes” or what we know today as pipes.

We have a jet pump at our home now, but it’s only a few years since we used the regular type pump, and many’s the time I have taken one of those pumps up, or helped to, when one would temporarily stop functioning.

There was a brass cylinder in the old wooden pump. Alex told me. And the spear rod would be iron. And that reminds me that one morning I was pumping water for the cattle we had at that time, and the spear rod came loose so it wouldn’t lift the cylinder. There wasn’t nearly enough water pumped for the cattle, and I was due in Charlottetown for work in a short time. So I lifted the spear rod, centered it as best I could and the miracle happened! It hit the spot dead centre. So I turned it in without any trouble. Remember that the cylinder was close to 40 feet down. It might not happen that way again in a score of years.

The pump head was also wooden, Alex recalled for me, and the old wooden pump was fairly heavy to work.

The pump was in the well from which Alex’s grandmother, Mrs. William Ross, once took a child of hers, but that’s another interesting story.

Anne Of Green Gables Reaction

I’ve had several interesting reactions from my reference last week to Lucy Maud Montgomery, whose book, “Anne of Green Gables” has been such a success here this summer in the stage play adaptation by Don Harron.

Lorne Callbeck spoke particularly of the old story that the writer had only received \$500 for the book. Mr. Callbeck who wrote “The Cradle of Confederation” which was published last year by the Brunswick Press, referred me to “The Green Gables Letters” by Wilfred Egglestone. In a letter dated September 10, 1907, Miss Montgomery had said in part “a fortnight ago after two months of suspense I got a letter from them (The L.C. Page Company of Boston, apparently) accepting my book and offering to publish it on a 10 percent royalty basis”. The \$500 to which my friend Jim Campbell of Park Corner referred, must have been an initial payment, rather than the complete payment which he had understood it to be.

Miss Montgomery had observed later in one of her letters that the novel had appeared on the booksellers’ shelves in 1908 and was an immediate success. In one of her letters she said:

Royalty Cheque For \$1,730

“ANNE SEEMS to have hit the public taste. She has gone through four editions in three months” and in a later letter she said “I got my first royalty cheque for the amount due me to the close of the year. It was for \$1,730. Not bad for the first six months of a new book by an unknown author, I think.”

Mr. Callbeck’s book is copyrighted but the above direct quotations are with his special permission.

To my friend Jim Campbell, if I misunderstood you, or misquoted you on that \$500 reference, please accept my regrets.

The Green Gables book is still selling. One of our booksellers in Charlottetown told me a few days ago he sold three hundred copies of the book this year, and had to order additional copies. And that’s close to 60 years after the book was first published.

Another comment came from Mrs. Marie (Mutch) MacNeill whose mother, Mrs. R. E. Mutch, had been a lifelong friend of Lucy Maud. Marie recalled that Lucy Maud had told her mother “I read the manuscript again, stayed up through the night to do it, and I thought that if it was good enough to keep me, the author, up all night, it should be good enough to be published”. And this was after the manuscript had been turned down by five publishers, as Jim Campbell reported.

Incidentally I recall interviewing Lucy Maud Montgomery MacDonald – she had married Rev. Ewan MacDonald by then – at the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Mutch on Euston Street, when I was a young newspaperman.

Promissory Note Found In B.C.

A VICTORIA, B.C. man writes to say he has found an old promissory note (cancelled) dated June 2, 1879 made out to Carvell Brothers and signed by Alex Robertson, Bonshaw.

On the reverse side was printed “Pay to the order of Union Bank of Prince Edward Island!” The old 3-cent stamp bears the likeness of Queen Victoria.

If any relative of Mr. Robertson is interested, the old note is available by writing to Robert John Warmington, No.1, 37 Menzies Avenue, Victoria B.C.