

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Thurs., May 11, 1967

## ACROSS THE ISLAND

Lady From Bunbury Had Ice Boat First

By NEIL A. MATHESON

HISTORICAL RESEARCH usually demands a great deal of concentrated effort. Sometimes, though, the answers to obvious questions come easily.

B.B. Jones, Bunbury, was one of the many Holstein breeders I met at the annual meeting of their association last week. He told me his maternal grandmother, Mrs. Franklin Bovyer of Bunbury had been the first lady to cross on the old ice boats which were making regular crossings between Cape Traverse and Cape Tormentine.

The lady, Miss Theresa Baker, who became Mrs. Bovyer, was a buyer for the Summerside business firm which later became Sinclair and Stewart, Mr. Jones tells me, and her trip via ice boats apparently was necessary as she was a buyer for the firm. I believe the business at that time was known as Bakers Store. Later it was Sinclair and Stewart's.

A TRIP last week to Western Prince brought me the information on the first passenger carried on the car ferry Prince Edward Island.

Sophie Barbour, Alma told me that she crossed on the Prince Edward Island from Borden to Tormentine on the Thursday after the Halifax explosion in December of 1917. That, I find, was Thursday, December 13 – the explosion was on Thursday December 6 of that year.

Miss Barbour tells me that she believes the steamer running between Summerside and Point De Chene had made her last crossing on the previous day. Sophie had come home from Boston to see her brother, Keith, who was going overseas, in the First Great War, 1914-1918.

### Trains Blocked In Mid-December

INTERESTING ALSO is the fact the train took from seven o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night to go from Alma to Summerside. A December snowstorm blocked the track and they were stuck for several hours at Northam, or close to it, she recalls.

Also on the same crossing was a lady who had been a Miss Bowness from Summerside. Sophie tells me the lady's name then was Mrs. Schyler of New York. I may have the name spelled incorrectly – it probably is – but that is a phonetic spelling.

The trip to Boston was made on Wednesday, the two ladies slept in the waiting room or lounge of the car ferry Wednesday night. They crossed on the Prince Edward Island on Thursday and arrived in Boston on Saturday morning.

The car ferry was not ready for passenger traffic at the time and there were no meals served. "We had to walk to the dock from the station at Borden", Sophie tells me. She had some sandwiches with her to eat on the train, but I understand

they were eaten on the car ferry instead. It was not until their arrival in Boston that the ladies had their first good meal since leaving home.

### Photo Collection Tremendous

THE CAMERA CLUB'S collection of pictures in the Confederation Centre's art gallery must be the most comprehensive collection of historical data in the history of the province.

The show is open on Thursday nights from six to eight o'clock, as well as on days, excepting Monday, and it should be a must for anyone who is even remotely interested in Island history. I saw only a small corner of the display during my visit, but I would like to go back again, and again.

The automobile section interested me for I had done considerable research on it. The first gasoline auto on P.E.I. is pictured and it was a "Model A Ford" of 1903. It was brought to Summerside in 1904 by T.B. Grady and Frank MacMillan of Summerside. Later it was sold to George Auld and J.A.S. Bayer of Charlottetown. The note says 1903 was Ford's first production year and the models were numbered alphabetically until the Model T. The Model A which most of us know now, started production in 1928.

### Steam Model Automobile

A STEAM MODEL car of 1902 is pictured and it was the first actual automobile to run in the province. The note gives Father Belcourt of Rustico credit for bringing the first one here, but the Belcourt machine was a failure as a road vehicle, though it was the first self-powered vehicle to come to P.E.I.

Rev. L. Abbe A. Belcourt was parish priest at Rustico 1859 to 1869. The steam-powered carriage, a one-seater was brought to the province in 1866 and demonstrated at a Rustico church picnic on June 24, 1866.

It was brought here by boat, and hauled from the wharf to Rustico by teams of horses, the old stories state. One of the old stories said Father Belcourt built the machine. Another said it was the world's first automobile, or self-propelled road vehicle. Both of the stories were incorrect.

The 1903 steam car was owned by a syndicate of Charlottetown business men. The steam exhaust pipe ran up through the top of the flat, canopy-type roof; the car was steered by a tiller-type apparatus.

### MackKay Automobile Recalled

THE MackKAY car was built by MacKay Brothers who built cars at Kentville, N.S. They were born at Stanley Bridge, built carriages at Dundas, later at Souris and moved to Kentville, the picture caption says in 1908 when cars were banned on P.E.I. The MacKay automobile pictured is a 30-horsepower Torpedo Roadster, with self-starter. It sold for \$1,450. Two of the first three cars to come here in 1913 when the ban on cars was partially lifted were MacKay cars, the note states.

Frank Tuplin, Summerside had the largest car in the Maritimes, it is stated. His Pierce Arrow was carrying seven passengers as pictured. There were three rows of seats, one row probably were jump seats.

An interesting note says the government in 1913 granted a petition from 500 petitioners to allow cars to run in Summerside. They were running in Charlottetown.

When Mr. Tuplin wanted to come to Charlottetown he would load his car on a flat car on the early morning train, drive it around Charlottetown that day, then load it on the evening train for return to his home.

### Famous Tug-Of-War Team

I've often heard of the famous 104th Battalion tug-of-war teams that went to the finals against the London East Ham police back in the days of the First Great War. The team is pictured in the display. It was trained by Lieutenant A.S. Robertson, Mermaid, who also was a member of the team, according to the notation.

Other team members were Sgt. J.C. Arsenault, Summerside; Sgt. Norman MacDonald, Rice Point; Pte. J. Jenkins, Cherry Valley; Pte. J.B. MacPherson, Wood Islands; Pte. E. Phelan, Charlottetown; Lance Corporals J.D. Leiper and J.T. Smith, both New Brunswick men; LC A.E. (Allison) MacMillan, Rocky Point and Pte. J.W. Martin, Kinross.

There's a note that H.H. Acorn, a one-time MLA here, opened the Klondike Lumber Mill in Souris back in the early days of the century and manufactured what could now be compared with modern plywood – it was used for cheese boxes for many years. The building is now being used by the Eastpack Fisheries people and is located on the Souris wharf.

John Hamilton Grey was the first Commandant of Military District No. 12, with the rank of Colonel. The last commandant was Col. F.S. Moore, also of Charlottetown. It comprised P.E.I. which later went in with Nova Scotia as M.D. No.6 and was later changed to the Atlantic Command with Col. D.J. McCormack as militia advisor from this province. This officer began his military career as a gunner in the Artillery at the outbreak of World War Two.

The Camera Club display covers virtually every phase of Island history. It's a tremendous job. I hope that as many Island people will see it as possibly can.

### Veteran Historian Is Ill

I AM SORRY to learn that George Leard of Souris is ill from a heart attack. This man who is now in the Souris Hospital ranks in the top echelon of Island historians whom I met. My very best wishes to you George, and I know the same wishes go for a great many more who are privileged to know you.