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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Strawberry Plants Under Refrigeration

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THE GROUND was frozen and the snow was falling merrily this week when I visited the farm of Parker Jewell, York to see him preparing strawberry plants for shipping next spring to growers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

If you wonder am I trying to be funny? the answer is "no". Mr. Jewell had 100,000 of the plants pulled when I called on him Tuesday afternoon. He was going to pull at least another 100,000, possibly more, if the weather doesn't close down on him for the winter. He has space for 300,000 plants in all.

The plants are taken from the ground with a special mechanical arrangement that is hauled by a tractor. They are shaken apart, piled into a truck and taken to a building where a group of people give each plant individual attention and pull off extra leaves; then the plants are grouped in bundles of 25, placed in a plastic bag and put into refrigerated storage for the winter. They are kept in a walk-in cooler at 28 to 30 degrees above freezing.

MR. JEWELL has been doing this for several years now, he told me, though this is the first time I have heard about it. He's the only Islander who is handling the plants in this way.

Plants like these have more vitality when they are planted next spring. Normally plants taken from the ground in the spring, have started to grow leaves, etc. and it is a shock, a set-back to them when they are pulled and transplanted.

The Jewell plants are dormant when they are pulled. They remain dormant in the cool storage and have all of their vitality when they are planted next year. That's the principle, I am told and it does make sense to those who know plants.

The plants have to be left in the ground in the fall until they are dormant. That means at least two frosts that go down to about 25 degrees, Parker tells me.

"We are the co-operating nursery for the Experimental Farm," Mr. Jewell told me. The strawberry plants are grown on "The Farm" for one year. Then they are grown on the Jewell farm for one year – "we propagate them", he explains. Then they are sold to farmers who grow them commercially.

They grow five varieties at York. The Sparkle and Redcoat are the most popular. There are also the Cavalier, Catskill and Acadia varieties – the latter is a new variety.

It is not a large strawberry farm as berries go. There are some three and one-half acres of the berries in all. (See picture page 5).

Display By Handicrafts Council

TREMENDOUS PROGRESS has been made in the development of handicrafts in this province and this weekend – it's on Friday and Saturday to be exact – the members

of the handicrafts council is staging a two-day display here of some of the best and most interesting examples of their skill.

The exhibit – I'm not sure what they call it – will feature the work of skillful Island people from Evelyn O'Brien's work with Island stone settings in Alberton, for example, to East Baltic and Mrs. Walter Dixon who is one of the talented members of the Kingscraft group of Eastern Kings, also Mrs. Roy White and Mrs. Edward Kassner of Souris. I do not have the names of the other ladies.

In Bunbury, just across the river from Charlottetown, Don Stewart and his wife, Margaret, are active participants. Don is in woodcraft and Mrs. Stewart in copper work, etc., is the chairman of the two-day fair committee, I believe. My friend Blanche England (Mrs. Vernon) at Alberton has copper enameling work with some interesting variations. In quality weaving, tweeds and other material, there are Mary Burnett (Mrs. W.R.) Charlottetown and Helen Ramsay (Mrs. George) of Montrose.

There are 15 craftsmen or ladies participating, I am told. And there are groups like the Acadian Guild in the Abraham's Village area; the Arethusa Crafts in the Tyne Valley area and the Ken-Isle group in the Kensington area.

It's unfair to mention names when I have only some of them, but those and the others will be here to show what they have been accomplishing. This is really a commercial operation, I believe, but it's new and interesting. That's how it comes to be in this column. If it's good for the Island, I like to talk about it. The site, I am told, is the Confederation Centre. This building complex has quickly taken over an important part in our community life. Its usefulness is increasing.

And that reminds me that the last trip I made to Western Prince I saw some attractively made book ends that "are different". They are so attractive that we took along a pair for the Matheson home in Southport.

They are made by Carl Profitt who runs a service station on the Western Road just west of Alma. It is at a cross roads and the reason I'm plugging this man's product is that he is pluckily trying to add to the income he gets from his service station. I'm told the site is usually referred to as Profitt's corner.

Mr. Profitt was horribly injured sometime ago when he was crushed by the end of a building that fell on him. His spine was injured badly, I believe. And the unfortunate accident left him with a circulation problem that has robbed him of the use of his legs, and feet, for one thing. The result is recurring outbreaks of sores which must be discouraging.

Guns To Protect Against U.S.A.

CHARLES MACDONALD, 99 – he lives now in Lower Montague - told me a story of how a visiting American General noted on a visit many years ago the guns at Victoria Park. When he asked "What are these guns for?" the quick-witted James MacDonald, father of Charles, replied with a twinkle in his eye "to protect us from the United States of America."

The Yank general laughed heartily and insisted that Mr. MacDonald accompany him for the rest of the day's tour of points of interest in Charlottetown.

Voice Heard-Mother Far Away

HAROLD L. SMITH, Rochford Street told me an unusual story. Probably more than 60 years ago Mr. Smith was sitting at the table reading the Bible with two older brothers and a sister in their home at North Rustico. Their mother and father were some two to three miles away at the time, but they distinctly heard their mother's voice say the word "children" as though in a mildly reproving tone.

I have often heard similar stories that proved to be forerunners of a death, or some other event. But the unusual part of this story is that nothing happened later to indicate anything of this character. And, Mr. Smith told me, his mother lived to be 90 years of age or more.

The children went to the door at the time and looked outside, so real was the sound of their mother's voice.

The parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Laird Smith, were visiting at the time at the home of W. Chester S. McLure's people. Chester will be remembered as a Member of Parliament for Queens in his later years, previously he had been a member of the Provincial Legislature. His home here in Charlottetown was on the site of the present Birchwood High School.

James Laird Smith operated a retail business at North Rustico. Mr. Smith died while he was still young, and the business was carried on by Wesley Paynter who married Mrs. Smith.