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ACROSS THE ISLAND

First Sedan Crossed At Borden In 1924

By NEIL A. MATHESON

IT WAS back in 1924 that Charles E. Bustin, a Saint John, N.B. businessman crossed on the "Prince Edward Island" carferry with a McLaughlin-Buick sedan – see picture on page 5. People handling cars on the carferry told me it was the first sedan-type car that had crossed on the ferry.

The car made several trips to this province before Mr. Bustin died in 1927. Then the car was bought here, having been purchased by E.J. Vessey, and his son Wendell Vessey who now resides at 204 Euston Street.

The car had a top speed of 80 miles per hour, so far as capacity was concerned. But there were no roads here at the time that were built for that kind of speed.

Wendell tells me that he recalls perhaps 35 to 40 would be the top speed achieved on roads as they were then.

15 Miles Per Gallon

THE CAR would burn a gallon of gasoline in 15 miles or less. The Vesseys had it about four years. It had a manifold heater.

Mr. Vessey recalled for me this week a Willis-Knight sedan that a former Covehead man, W. Pat McGrath brought home from California back in the 1920s. One unusual thing about it was that it had three doors. There was just the one door on the driver's side, but the other side had two doors.

Wendell drove both the McLaughlin-Buick and the Willis-Knight. He preferred the latter, it ran more smoothly. "You couldn't hear the engine run, it was so quiet" he recalled.

And here's something you wouldn't expect away back in 1927. The Willis-Knight had balloon tires.

Grass Between Wheels

MR. VESSEY recalled that the roads were anything but fit for cars in those early days. Indeed the side roads often had grass growing between the wheel tracks. There would be a beaten path in the middle made by the horses that hauled the road wagons, or buggies as some people had.

Incidentally, my wife and I saw at Ed Nelson's service station, Cherry Valley just a few days ago, a type of road wagon neither of us had ever seen before. He also had a buggy there, and a normal road wagon.

Back to the sedan car type for a minute, Mrs. Vessey recalled that sedan cars were not always popular when they appeared here first, even though they were comfortable and would shield driver and passengers from the weather.

The objection Mrs. Vessey recalls is that some people said the sedan car – all cars were black then – looked too much like a hearse. And that is an unusual recollection from nearly a half century ago.

1831 Unusual Year

AN ITEM from Haszard's Gazette indicates that 1831 was an unusual year so far as weather is concerned.

January 1, for example, was described as "a soft day" and farmers were ploughing. It was "freezing very hard" by January 13 and 14. The ice on the Hillsborough River was crossed by people on foot on January 16. Four days later horses were crossing the ice.

A very heavy snowstorm was reported on January 22. The horses crossed the Hillsborough River for the last time that winter on March 14 and the last people crossed on foot on March 11 (This looks like a mistake).

The ferry boat crossed the Hillsborough River on March 17 and the river was "quite clear of ice" on April 5.

Two Brigs arrived in the harbor at Charlottetown on April 18. One came from the West Indies and the other from Plymouth. The old item says that was "the earliest arrival".

Ploughing April 29

PLOUGHING WAS commenced on April 19. It was very cold, with a little snow April 21 and 22.

Wheat was sown on May 9, harvest was commenced on August 16 and the first potato digging started on October 26. This apparently late date for starting potato harvesting completes the Gazette reference to a really unusual year.