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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Early Mink Raising; Scottish Tartan Story

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I EXPECT that I'll be talking about early mink ranching days in this province in next week's farm column. The reason I mention it today in this column is that Mrs. Nina Ross told me a week ago that her father, W.N. Waldron, Tyne Valley ranched mink some 50 years ago or more. He sold his ranch – he had a few foxes by then I think – in the very early 1930's.

Mrs. Ross told me that her father was not the first man to ranch mink here, though she thought he may have been the second. I talked this week with a well known Island businessman who may have been the first mink rancher here, if not he was among the first. The time, I believe, was back around 1912 or 1913, or maybe a year or so earlier.

We hope to have another talk soon and I'll likely be writing about it in a future farm column. By the way J. Walter Jones's book "Fur Farming in Canada" was written in 1913 and it told of mink ranching operations in Canada at that time.

CHES COOPER, a long time friend, on his Saturday evening CBC farm show was interviewing Wallace Mullen, one of the brothers who have earned world-wide acclaim and fortune with their Jet Black mink, which they have sold to many countries of the world.

I believe I heard Mr. Mullen suggest that mink ranching was virtually unknown when he started back in 1931 – he had one male and one female. If I heard the Nova Scotia man correctly, his information is at fault, though it would be difficult to question the efficiency and the success of his ranching methods. The Mullens sold a million dollars worth of breeding mink of the Jet Black variety at their ranch in New Tusket, Nova Scotia last year. This year, he said, they are asking \$5,000 each for their males. I referred to the Mullens, I believe, in my farm column of May 31, just before the P.E.I. Fur Breeders Association met in annual session.

Tartans – P.E.I. Caledonia Society

BUT ENOUGH of mink for now, I want to pass on something of what Mrs. Ross told me about another interesting subject.

The former Tyne Valley lady, who is now on the Island researching the story of early Scottish settlers, has a most interesting item for me on Scottish Tartans and the P.E.I. Caledonian Society back in 1835.

The Tartans were ordered by one of the Macdonalds of this Island, who is well known in the historic references that are available.

The item – it comes from the Weekly Scotsman – says that Ronald Charles Macdonald, paymaster of the 30th regiment of foot, a considerable landowner in the colony and a founder of the society, wrote to his friend James Logan describing the objects of the society as cherishing "early recollections and social intercourse, by

wearing their national dress and practicing their fondly remembered customs". Logan agreed to design them a tartan.

MACDONALD WAS delighted with the tartan, The Scotsman's story recalls, and he ordered a quantity of it to be woven into silk. Another order was for 2,000 yards of "tick, strong woolen tartan" and 500 Highland bonnets, the latter to be wider at the top for our broad-shouldered American Highlanders".

Before I go any further I should say that the Macdonald who was paymaster, and Donald Macdonald, were sons of Capt. John Macdonald, proprietor of the Grand Tracadie estate in Lot 35, or Macdonald of Glenaladale as he is known to Island historians, Mrs. Ross tells me.

CAPTAIN JOHN Macdonald had been instrumental in Scottish immigrants and formed the settlement around Scotchfort.

P.E.I. Benevolent Society

CAPTAIN JOHN Macdonald had been instrumental in founding the P.E.I. Caledonia Society, Mrs. Ross explains. And his sons, Lieutenant Roderick, and Donald, took a leading part in founding the P.E.I. Benevolent Society. All native Islanders and people residing in the country for not less than 14 years could become members, Mrs. Ross adds. They did not have to be Scots.

Indeed Lieutenant Roderick C. Macdonald had in mind a special project, she tells me, of forming all Scottish settlers on this Island into an association for the purpose of furthering their education through the introduction of a more uniform system of teaching, and the use by all teachers of approved school books. His attempt to obtain teachers from Scotland was part of the plan.

Mrs. Ross – she is actually from Kamloops, B.C. – would be happy to learn if among the Caledonia Society's papers here there may be any reference to this early tartan to which The Weekly Scotsman's item refers.

When Lt. Roderick Macdonald had placed the order for the 2,000 yards of tartan cloth he visited London and was about to embark for this Island when he wrote a reassuring note to the people who would manufacture the tartans in Scotland. He wrote:

Note Of Reassurance

"SHOULD I be drowned on the passage and the tartan arrive safely, you will be pleased to apply to Donald Macdonald, Esquire, Dr. Mackieson and Mr. Dalrymple, speaker of the House of Assembly for payment."

OLD LETTERS to which The Scotsman refers contained a reference to the attempt to get Scottish school teachers to travel to this Island. The offering salary was from 35 to 45 pounds per year.

The tartan manufacturers, incidentally, were Messrs. William Wilson of Bannockburn and they replied to the effect they did not know of any Scottish teachers prepared to emigrate at the time.

Mrs. Ross has been studying old Scottish families for 15 years. For the last two or three years she has been a member of the Scottish Genealogical Society. She married Sine Ross from Rosshire, Scotland.

Her father, W.N. Waldron, shipped mink to many parts of the world, she recalls.

MRS. ROSS is working here at present on the job of tracing the names of Scots who came to this Island from the old land many years ago. Her objective is to trace the names and the home districts in Scotland from the earliest days of emigration down to the year 1850.

The Scots started the trek to this country shortly after the battle of Culloden Moor – that was in 1745. The movement may have started in the early 1760's, Mrs. Ross suggests.

The Genealogical Society is working on a dictionary that will give all the names of the emigrants, and the districts from which they emigrated. At least that is their objective. `