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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Special Train Carried Important Fox Cargo

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I TALKED THIS WEEK with A.B. (Andy) Bagnall, one of the two living railwaymen who were staffing the special train that was dubbed the "Million dollar Black Fox special train" by the Island Patriot back in September, 1913.

Hauling the special was Engine No.20; it had two coaches, including the superintendent's private car, two baggage cars and two freight cars.

The Patriot said it brought 52 foxes, black beauties, from the old Dalton ranch at Tignish to the railway crossing at Southport – it is not there now, but was there at the time.

From there the foxes were taken in horse-drawn vehicles to the site of the new ranch, not far from the ranch Raoul Raymond established and managed for some years. The Raymond ranch was on the farm now owned by Athol Roberts, Southport. The Dalton foxes were ranched on the property actually known in more recent years as the Gay property. I am told it is now owned by Malcolm Reeves. It is close to the Southport Building Supplies.

Conductor of that special train was Edward Martin. The engineer was Patrick Dorsey, the fireman was Peter Flynn. Mr. Bagnall was the baggage master and M.G. (Mike) Mooney was the brakeman.

This part of the story, taken from the old Patriot, was confirmed by Mr. Bagnall who had been talking about it to Mr. Mooney prior to his talk with me.

Under Heavy Guard

THE SPECIAL TRAIN from Charlottetown reached Tignish at 11:30 on Friday night, Mr. Bagnall tells me. The foxes had been caught the previous day, placed in boxes or crates, and taken to the freight shed.

"All night the valuable animals had been guarded by two men armed with revolvers."

The train left Tignish at nine in the morning. On board were Charles Dalton, a Dr. Lundie and W.B. Prowse who was the secretary-treasurer of the company making the purchase. A.B. Warburton of Charlottetown was a director.

The Patriot story said the ranch "will be connected with the city by telephone, it will have electric lights".

"For protection against fire", The Patriot story added, "a pressure water system will be installed."

Recalling that The Patriot termed it a "Million-dollar Train" and a million dollars was an awful lot of money in those days, the story suggested the foxes were worth \$750,000 and the train and equipment would bring the total close to the million dollar mark.

But Mr. Dalton's estimate was considerably more moderate, as reported by Lt.-Col. D.A. MacKinnon in his fox column, in this paper many years ago.

Dalton said he sold the ranch to the Charlottetown based company in 1912 – it was a year later that the special train took the animals to their new ranch.

Dividend Was 40 Percent

DALTON SAID the new company was capitalized at \$650,000.

“I was paid \$400,000 in cash and given \$100,000 in shares of the company” which would make it a half-million dollar deal.

The first year was good, apparently, for the company paid its shareholders a dividend of 40 percent.

More than 40 pups were produced and sold for more than \$12,000 a pair in 1913, Dalton told MacKinnon.

But the Tignish man added, the move to Southport, a strange caretaker and other factors (not described) “made the breeding season of 1914 a most disappointing one.”

Well, I started to tell of the Million Dollar Train and tell you my friend Andy Bagnall “will never forget” the event, though it happened more than one-half a century ago. Now I want some space to talk about the election of Monday and a couple of others in the past.

Monday’s results surprised me, not in the Liberals winning; I had a feeling in the closing stages of the campaign, but I never did expect such a sweep.

I had talked to scores of people in the past few weeks and got uncertainty from men and women whose normal political views I knew were strong. I got many really strong Liberal predictions of a victory, but none were so optimistic as Alex Campbell’s triumph showed.

One I recall is Will Cameron of Stanchel. A one-time neighbor of Rose Valley, Will told me several weeks ago “Jean Canfield is elected right now. She is 200 votes over Frank Myers.”

Knowing Will’s strong Liberal leanings, I naturally thought he was stretching it a bit. But his only mistake was that he underestimated.

Mr. Cameron thought Knud Jorgensen and Ralph Johnston would have a terrific battle, but Ralph won as well.

Not Premier Then

ONE OF THE CHAPS on the local television show election night referred to the time Alex Campbell’s father, Thane A. Campbell – he is now Chief Justice – “as premier” led his party to the 30-0 victory over the Conservatives.

The year was 1935 and it was Thane Campbell who led the party in the campaign. But he wasn’t the premier then.

Indeed Dr. W.J.P. MacMillan, PC, was the premier at the time.

Walter M. Lea, Victoria was the Liberal leader, but he was a very sick man at the time the campaign was being run in July – election day was July 23.

Mr. Lea took over as premier. He attended one conference at Ottawa, but he died in January 1936 and it was then that Thane Campbell became Premier Campbell.

I didn’t realize that the Liberals were all but wiped out in a provincial election almost 60 years ago. It was on January 3, 1912 that the Conservatives elected 27 of their own men, one independent Conservative was elected and only two Liberals.

The development prompted a joyous Conservative from Bellevue to shout next morning, "There are not enough dogs left on the Liberal side to bark."

This story came to me from Daniel MacDonald, city – a man long known more familiarly as "Taxi Dan".

Outdoes His Father

NOW THAT Alex Campbell has led his party to such a tremendous victory, I would have to say that his feat even outdoes that of his illustrious father back in 1935.

At that time the Conservatives were under the shadow of the great depression. Richard Bennett had been Canadian premier since 1930 and the Tories had been in power here since 1931.

The temper of the people was bad, for times were indescribably bad; the province was ripe for action against the Tories.

This time, though, it was different. Alex Campbell had been premier for four years, he based his appeal on the plan which he negotiated for the future, and the opposing Tories started from a position of strength – after all they had elected 15 men in the last legislature.

His performance was really tremendous. It must have surprised many people. I know it most certainly surprised me.