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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Senate Appointment Recalls Old Incident

THE APPOINTMENT of Nelson Rattenbury of Saint John to the Senate late last week recalls one of the most unusual stories I have ever heard of political developments, and I've heard a good many of them.

I knew Nelson as a youngster around Charlottetown and I met him several times during a four-year period at Ottawa; the last time I recall talking to him was at the 75th birthday anniversary dinner to the then Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent, in the Chateau Frontenac hotel in Quebec City some seven years ago.

But the unusual yarn Nelson's appointment recalled to me was that 38 years ago the grandfather, also named Nelson Rattenbury, received a telegram informing him of his awaited appointment to the Senate of Canada. The unusual part - and I wonder if there ever was a similar one - is that less than nine hours later, Mr. Rattenbury received a second telegram saying the first had been a mistake, that his appointment was to a directorate on the Canadian National Railways which, I believe, was of three years duration.

THE SENATE appointment at that time went to Creelman MacArthur of Summerside who had been a member of the P.E.I. Legislature since 1919. The date of the appointment was September 5, 1925.

I didn't believe the story at first when I heard it more than 30 years ago, but later I had an opportunity to confirm it. The telegram of appointment which was revoked a few hours later, was kept in the Rattenbury family through the years. I wouldn't be surprised if it is still in existence and it may even now be in possession of the man who took his seat in the Senate for the first time when Parliament opened on Tuesday of this week.

Storm Of February 1930 Recalled

THE WEEKEND storm was one of the worst of this winter in some ways, but it is not so impressive to people who remember the destructive storm that preceded it by exactly 34 years.

Bill Ledwell, Patriot news editor, recalls that it blew down six barns on the Souris Line Road, and more spectacularly still, it blew two railway box cars off the track and onto their sides at Midgell.

Tom Ledwell, veteran railwayman from St. Peters who was a section foreman for many years, still regards that storm as the daddy of them all, Bill tells me.

There was a light fall of snow on Saturday night - it was dead calm at the time - but the wind developed to gale force suddenly on Sunday afternoon. I believe that was the storm Dr. A.A. (Gus) MacDonald of Souris was recalling when he said that an estimated 100 barns were blown down in one night. The wind was so strong that he and his companion had to crawl to make any progress as they sought shelter, he recalled for me.

This Ghost Story Was Different

OF ALL the ghost stories I've heard, I like best the ones that have a simple and logical explanation. A Summerside lady, Mrs. George H. Harris, told me a story some time ago that explodes at least two ghostly versions I have heard about the same locality earlier.

A sister of the late Hon. G. Shelton Sharpe, she was brought up at East Bideford, and this is the story of the Grant's Brook ghost. "It was a lovely old brook when I was young and one of the few so made that you could drive down and water your horse - I well remember those days - and how the horse would quicken his pace to get into the cool brook. The animal would drink from the clear, fresh water, grab a mouthful of wild forget-me-nots or mint on the way out, and the rattle of the steel-tired wagon wheels on the hard clay, sometimes rocky, road would ring with a crisper echo as the journey by the horse-drawn vehicle continued.

"Little Edward Ellis ran the tavern or inn - meals were served at all hours - just where the road turns into Ellerslie and where England's house now stands. People walking home at dusk, I suppose from Richard's shipyard, nearby, used to see a person sitting on a stone near the road, or pacing back and forth.

"IT LOOKED like a woman clad in a shawl, but one never could be sure as she never spoke and always kept her distance. People passing that way began to be scared and gradually they became afraid to travel that way by night.

"Capt. James Ellis had a brother, Totten Ellis, who ran a shipyard on our side of Bideford River. He had occasion to ride around the river on business after dark, and the men around the yard insisted he would strap on his pistols as he mounted his big saddle horse he had imported from England. The horse was a beautiful bay, with four white feet that reached almost to his knees, and the horse was appropriately named "white stockings". When they reached the brook and the horse started to snort, Totten drew his pistols and challenged, as he saw the figure moving into the trees: "If you are human speak, or I'll shoot."

"IT WAS then that the spectre of the Grant's Brook ghost was suddenly exploded as a meek and frightened voice said 'It's only me, I'm waiting for Alfred'. It was a Mrs. Horne who lived about three miles north on the Barlow road in a comfortable cabin. Her husband worked at John Yeo's shipyard 10 to 15 miles away, and walked home every Wednesday and Saturday evening, carrying his groceries on his back. After their seven children - they were all boys - were in bed, Mrs. Horne pinned on her shawl and walked to the brook to meet him."

So that ended the ghost story, Mrs. Richards assures me, and it was an interesting yarn of which I had heard at least two different versions previously.

Advertising Copy 80 Years Ago

I SOMETIMES wonder at the claims made by modern advertisers, but a few hours I spent during the stormy weekend searching through an old file containing almost six

years 1883-88 of the former Weekly Examiner and Argus indicates that the advertisers of that day were not bashful either in proclaiming their goods.

L. E. Prowse, for example, said in a front-page advertisement "We do not advertise to sell goods at cost but we guarantee to sell from 10 to 25 per cent below those who do advertise to sell at cost."

And how about this one "We will sell you a nice coffee pot worth 36 cents and a pound of 24-cent coffee, with a printed recipe for making nice coffee, all for 36 cents." That one in July 1886, came from the firm of Beer and Goff, who must also have been in the furniture business, for we have a "High Boy dresser" in our bedroom with their name stamped on the back of it. The dresser, incidentally, is in perfect condition.

The old Examiner-Argus file was loaned to me by Mrs. Ivan Mitchell of Fortune on a recent trip to that locality. I have found many interesting items already though I have only had time to search through a few of the old issues.

One of the most interesting articles Mrs. Mitchell pointed out to me goes like this:

Archbishop Predicts Tunnel Crossing

"THE SUBWAY between Cape Tormentine and P.E.I. will probably be a success. In conversation with His Grace Archbishop O'Brien, we learned that he predicted some 15 years since its completion during the present century. Now His Grace believes that five years will see the work completed and bases his beliefs on the facts that (1) the headway being made is really good; (2) there is a company ready to build for a subsidy equal to the loss on the P.E.I. railway, and cost of mail transport; and (3) Prince Edward Island must have justice.

"His Grace", the old story continued, "hopes to be one of the passengers and will take the trip in 1890."

And now we're talking of an artificial crossing that will combine a causeway, perhaps a couple of bridges, and they're also talking of making part of the crossing a tunnel.

But you and I will be no better off than His Grace Archbishop O'Brien unless the engineers, politicians and others associated with the proposal stop talking and theorizing and really do something to get the actual construction underway.

No Entry Forms Are Needed

NO ENTRY forms are needed for those who participate in the Centennial Essay Competition. One is on the subject "Rural Life in P.E.I. in 1864" and the other which is for grandparents at least 70 years of age is on the subject "When I Was Very Young". They are to be mailed to the Centennial Essay Competition, Post Office Box 546.

The age intended in the "when I was very young" essay can cover activities anywhere in the year from the first remembrance to the late teens or even 20. The idea is to get interesting stories of the long ago, and not to impose any restrictions that will make the job difficult, Committee Chairman Isabel Kipping explains. Her address is 9 Newland Crescent, if anyone wants to write to her.