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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Letter From The U.S. Recalls Race Tracks

By NEIL A. MATHESON

THE COLUMNS I've had on horse racing and race tracks attracted some of the keenest attention of anything I have written in the nine years of this column's existence.

This week I came across a letter written from North Cambridge, Massachusetts by Borden B. Fraser who went to Prince of Wales College with me some 40 years ago.

Borden says in part:

"I got an old paper in which you refer to Joe Acorn reminding you of some old tracks. The one at Hermitage I do not remember, but the one mentioned on Pisquid Road, or Avondale as it was later called, I can remember because the Joseph Fraser who owned and operated "Prairie Park" was my father's brother, and it was on our old farm that the track was built.

They held races there about the late 1890's and up to around 1903 or 1904. Some 20 years ago Col. Dan MacKinnon ran a summary in The Guardian of a race held there in 1902.

When I was young, Borden says, the Riverside track was owned and operated by Dr. Albert Fraser of Montague – he was the father of George Fraser, now deputy Minister of Tourism.

"Fonce" Keoughan, Avondale raced a mare, "Cora Lee" at the track in that area and she was sired by Lord Jellicoe a horse that Hammond Kelly brought to the Island and raced in the early years.

Remember 'The Steels?'

ABOUT TWO miles north of "Prairie Track" was "Primrose Track" owned by John H. Curtiss who owned a stallion of local fame "Progress Lad". This horse was by Parkside who was brought from Winnipeg back in the early 1890's, by John Steele, Summerside. This man was the father of Dannie and Mack Steele, both of whom were prominent in the racing game some 30 years ago or more. Dannie went to the United States and raced horses on the Bay State circuit until a few years ago, Borden tells me.

Dannie brought American horses to race at the Provincial Exhibition on several occasions when I was writing Sport for the Patriot from 1932 to about 1942.

Memory is hazy on this one but I believe that I saw as a boy, one, or possibly both the Steele boys driving horses for John P. Smith of Kinkora.

There was another old track years ago at Peake's Station owned by Allan MacDonald and in true old Scottish fashion it was called "Allan Big John's" Track, Mr. Fraser recalls.

On 'Black Farms' Road

MANY YEARS ago there was also a track near Lot 40 on the "Black Farms Road". Walter O'Brien should know about this one, Borden tells me. Mr. O'Brien writes of many

interesting items in this paper under the Bristol heading. How about some reminiscences on that track Walter?

If any old friends want to write to Borden Fraser his address in North Cambridge is 10 Day Street.

I have a number of other letters on old race tracks. I'll get around to them one of those weeks.

Production of Christmas trees has been added to the list of items on which the Canada department of agriculture is offering advice. The publication "Christmas Tree Management in the Maritime Provinces" deals with the Fir which is recommended for those trees.

Forestry people are preparing another on the insect pests that torment tree producers.

Scots Pine and Douglas Fir are other varieties discussed.

When most of you are reading this I expect to be on my way to Halifax and the Atlantic Winter Fair which runs from November 2 to 9.

Big feature of the fair for me – it's one of the most colorful phases – is the steer show on Saturday afternoon, and the sale that night.

Explosion Threat Recalled

I'M REMINDED now of the fact that I can see the Bedford Magazine from my room in the Wedgewood Motel where manager Jock Wilks always has a warm welcome for me.

Some readers will recall that there was the threat of a second "Halifax Explosion" there back in the days of the Second World War when a fire started on the magazine wharf and somehow got into the magazine itself.

For a time it looked so threatening that the authorities ordered the evacuation of all but service personnel from the North End of Halifax, Dartmouth and the Bedford areas.

The "Halifax Explosion" as it is called practically blew the city apart when two ships, one of them loaded with ammunition, collided in the harbor waters back in the days of the First Great War. That was in December 1917.

The Bedford Magazine fire is believed to have started on an ammunition lighter at the wharf.

An interesting feature so far as Charlottetown is concerned is that Surgeon-Lieutenant L. E. Prowse, as he was then, crawled into the magazine despite exploding bits of ammunition, to render medical assistance to the chaps who had been injured inside the magazine.

There was imminent danger, Stan Bowles of this news room recalls that the entire magazine might blow at almost any moment. The first explosion was heard about supper time, Stan tells me and the people of that area must have gone through some anxious hours as they waited in fear that their city and their homes would be blown to utter destruction.

'Mentioned In Despatches'

FOR HIS part in the business, Lieutenant Prowse was mentioned in despatches – he was later to hold the rank of Surgeon-Captain. He's now known as Dr. Prowse and lives in Charlottetown.

I often think as I look from the motel room across the peaceful waters of the Bedford Basin of the many thousands of ships that gathered there in wartime for the convoys of war supplies overseas. Many of those ships never returned, but enough got through to make the convoys worthwhile.

Islanders Supreme

I HAVE learned that the Red Point tug-of-war and the St. Peter's team both pull at 10 o'clock on Saturday night at the AFW. Both teams are heavyweights and they have dominated the heavyweight picture for the last three years.

Apparently the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick teams have decided the Islanders are too strong for them. They don't know how close the Gaspereaux team came last year to beating the St. Peter's club. Coach S. MacEwen told me after the pull that it was the toughest pull they had up to that time. For a time he had thought the Nova Scotians were going to win, he told me.

Ross Young's boys have been the AWF heavyweight champs every year since the fair started. St. Peter's have given them solid competition but have not yet managed to beat them at Halifax.

The P.E.I. Fur Breeders live fox and mink show will be held on the week of November 10th. The mink will be judged on November 12th and 13th and the foxes will be on November 14th and 15th.

The annual banquet will be held on Wednesday evening November 13th. This corrects an error in this week's farm column.