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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Picture Of Old PWC Points Development

By NEIL A. MATHESON

CONGRATULATIONS ARE extended to the Prince of Wales College people for the interesting displays they had for visitors to their "Open House" last Friday afternoon. It was natural that I was most interested in their historical display, but there many others.

A rare picture of the first college building showed it to be the size of a large house, and Dr. Ian Brown told me that the second storey had been used for the residence of the principal.

I recall that Charles MacDonald told me at Wood Islands in October 1961 that there had been only three teachers there when he attended PWC – he was born in 1866 so the time, I suggest, would be in the early 1880's. They were Alexander Anderson, John Caven and Thomas LePage. The picture on display in Montgomery Hall had S.N. Robertson as a fourth staff member. He was principal when I attended PWC about the mid 1920's.

The picture of the college that burned in February 1932 brought back several memories. There were many happy experiences when I attended as a student. Some were not so happy. The day I kicked a football through a second-floor hall window, and Dr. Robertson brought it out with appropriate comments, is fun to look back on. It wasn't funny then, though.

Tremendous Organizational Job

I WAS on the Charlottetown Fire Department when that building burned. The fire was discovered about two or three in the morning, and we were still pouring water into it when the students came to class shortly after eight o'clock. They expected at least a week's holiday, but they were back in class just one day later. It was a masterly job of organizing classes under great difficulty, though some of the students didn't appreciate it.

We held all of our football practices on the field behind the College building, the field has long since given way to the building that housed our first Vocational school, and now is part of the University that is to be.

I had no thought of business when I strolled into Montgomery Hall, I wanted to have an hour or so with our daughters – Mrs. Matheson, of course, could not be with us – but several enthusiastic faculty members insisted on giving me a blitz course on what they insist is the tremendous future of the University that is in the making. "Educationists all across this country are excited about this small college that is determined to remain small," these men told me. "We'll be doing several things here next year", they told me, "that will be unique in Canada."

Exciting Development Foreseen

IF THE DEVELOPMENT of the university of Prince of Wales College matches the enthusiasm of these young men – both are senior professors, and they insist most other faculty members are just as enthusiastic – this province is in for some exciting educational developments. Talking to them made me wish I could be around in 50 years time, or even 25 years, to see if the developments really match the enthusiasm and the conviction of the men, and women, who will be striving to make their dream come true.

“We’re getting some of the best teachers on the continent, Prince of Wales is attracting top men from New England to California in the U.S.A., as well as from our own country,” I was told. As I’ve said, I’d like to be around to see just what does happen.

Spent Bitterly Cold Night On Ice

IT WAS JUST 82 years ago that William Ellis, Tyne Valley and his son of 15 years had a most difficult experience on the ice on a bitterly cold, storm-swept night.

The pair crossed Richmond Bay to Fox Island with two teams of horses for loads of hay.

It was snowing heavily as they started for home, after loading the two sleighs, about two o’clock in the afternoon.

After some time they lost their way, and decided to stay where they were for the night. Mr. Ellis put the loads of hay in V-shape on the ice, stood the horses in the shelter the loads afforded, and tried to make his boy and himself as comfortable as possible with a buffalo robe and a rug.

The boy, however, appeared to be perishing, says an old story in the Summerside Pioneer of January 28, 1885, and he started to run on the ice in an effort to get some warmth back into his body.

To make matters worse, the wind had shifted and was blowing in on them, so they had to seek shelter on the opposite side from which they had been huddled.

Fierce Northeast Blizzard

AFTER PASSING such a night as one can scarcely imagine in a fierce northeast blizzard, the boy said he was dying of cold and urged his father to start for the lighthouse on Fish Island, about five miles distant, and not far from the spot where they had gotten the hay.

His father helped the boy onto the back of one of the horses, covered his son with a buffalo robe, then mounted the other animal. The pair did reach the lighthouse and the keeper, and his wife, Mr. and Mr. MacLellan (first names are missing) gave the best of care to the man and boy who remained there during the day.

Meanwhile a search party had been looking for the missing pair. When they found the loads of hay, far out on the ice, and found an oyster-bed hole in the ice they concluded that the man and boy had drowned. They were still deploring the sad fate of their neighbors when Mr. Ellis drove in sight and arrived home safely that night. The boy remained in the lighthouse, but he came home the following day.

Father and son had their hands and feet considerably frozen, the old story said, then added "This is understandable since the thermometer registered 16 degrees below zero, and there was a strong wind blowing."

The father had tried to start a fire after he had found a cedar log and had split it into small pieces, but the fierce wind was blowing out his matches before he could get the wood splinters ignited.

How Mr. Ellis had found a cedar log five miles out on the ice is not explained. The item came from Alf Egan's Scrap Book.