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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Westmoreland Riot Goes Back 70 Years

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IT'S SOMETHING like two years since I wrote the story on the "Westmoreland Riot". The long delay is caused by the fact I mislaid the manuscript and only found it a few days ago.

It was Dr. R. G. Lea, Charlottetown who tipped me off to the old story and it was Art French, who used to run French's Mills – when I was a youngster we took our wool from Rose Valley to be carded – who gave me the details. Art's neighbor, Bert Trowsdale, also had a hand in supplying the information. My only regret for the long delay is that Mr. French has since died, and I would have liked for him to have seen the story in print after he had been so helpful in digging up the facts for me.

My apologies to Mrs. French who was the former Annie Nicholson who lived just below the Hartsville church.

The 'riot' – actually it wasn't a riot for there were only two men directly involved – occurred about 1895, so near as Art could determine.

IT STARTED with a quarrel between Dave Edwards – he was a Rose Valley neighbor when I was a boy, and was the brother of Bert Trowsdale's mother – and David Rodd who hailed from Kingston. The pair agreed to meet on a chosen date and settle it with their fists. But Dave and Rodd settled their differences peaceably in the meantime, and the threatened fight appeared to have been dropped.

But, as Mr. French recalled, a Breadalbane man – the name given to me was Jim Hertz – took up the quarrel for some reason and he and Rodd fought it out.

Shot Gun Used To Chase Crowd

A LARGE crowd had gathered near the home of Anthony Collett and the beer he sold them helped to enliven the proceedings and whet the appetite for a scrap. The combatants were going to fight on the Collett property but he took a shot gun and ordered them off, I was told. One hundred people had gathered.

The scrap lasted for a half hour or so, with Rodd the eventual winner, I was told by Mr. French, who was just a youngster at the time.

Dr. Lea told me that a colorfully descriptive piece of poetry was written about the event. I believe the late Crisp Moore was the author, but I did not run into a copy. I can't use poetry anyway, for I'd be swamped with it, if I ever did start to use it. And I never did learn how to accept one piece and turn another down without hurting someone's feelings.

MR. FRENCH bought the mill from Mr. Collett in 1900 and ran it up to 1950 or 1951, he told me. He started to card the wool at three to four cents per pound, and raised it later to 10 cents, with one cent off if the wool was oiled before it came to the mill.

On a good day the mill could handle 200 pounds of wool and the carding operation ran each year from the first of June until cold weather shut down operations in the fall. Carding 200 pounds of wool was a big day's production, I was told.

Big Lobster Catches Recalled

ANGUS MACNEILL, Murray Harbor and Dan MacLean, DeGros Marsh told me last week two of the better lobster stories so far as the size of catch is concerned.

Mr. MacNeill was fishing at West Point with a companion in 1922 and the first haul produced 2,472 pounds of lobsters. They started running their lines early on a Wednesday, started to put out traps that evening. They hauled on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Monday and took a total of 7,749 pounds of lobsters. Only 300 traps were fishing, the Murray Harbor man told me. Nobody in that area had ever seen the fishing so good. It has never been that good since, he told me.

Lobsters were worth five cents per pound at the time, but I was doing some arithmetic a few minutes ago to find the value of those hauls at today's inflated prices.

The price for lobsters at Launching last week, I was told, was a straight 62 cents per pound for canners and markets. The Launching fishermen, incidentally, were making little money even at that. Their catches were so poor they were pretty discouraged, this man told me. He was Joe MacLellan who lives, I believe, in the Newport area.

At 62 cents per pound MacNeill's first day's haul would have been worth \$1,532. The four-day haul would have brought \$4,808 and the seasonal catch of 28,000 pounds would have been worth \$17,360.

900 Lobsters From 50 Traps

DAN MCLEAN told me that his father once took 900 lobsters out of 50 traps. But the price at that time was 50 cents per hundred by count, not by weight, so the value was a mere \$4.50.

The best single trap lobster catch I ever heard of was the 25 to 30 lobsters that were taken from a trap set off the southeastern coast of the province. The story came from two reliable men. The reason I'm not identifying them is that the catch was illegal. The big trap – it was 42 inches long – was set in the closed season.

Dog-Fur Collar Story Is Recalled

WESLEY MACNEVIN of Stanchel is probably the only one besides myself, who will recall the incident I'm going to relate now.

It was back in my later school days and my sister, Marion – now Mrs. John A. MacLeod, she is visiting her friends on the Island at present – was teaching in Stanchel school. It seemed to make sense at the time that I should go to Stanchel that winter, as we took the horse and sleigh the distance of two and one-half miles, and I always stabled the horse in Wesley's barn. There was a visit at noon to feed him, and I went to get him harnessed when the school was out in the afternoon.

A man's overcoat with a curly cloth lining, and a fur collar, was popular winter apparel at the time. I used to wear one that belonged to my step father – I was practically full grown at 14 years of age – and would leave it in the box sleigh during the day.

Imagine my surprise on one particular afternoon to find Wesley busily sewing the fur collar back together. His Collie dog had discovered the fur and had torn it pretty well apart. Luckily Wesley knew how to sew fur. He showed me how to do it and both of us went at it.

It would never do to go home with the collar ripped to shreds. So far as I can recall, the folks at home never did know that the collar had been used as a plaything by the Collie.