

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., Feb. 22, 1963

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Twin 'Murder' Story Recalled

By NEIL A. MATHESON  
Provincial - Farm Editor

HERE'S A blood curdling tale with a - well, I think I had better let you read it and put your own label on the ending.

The story goes back almost 200 years, not long after the American revolutionary war, I am told by Mrs. Herman Lavandier, Georgetown. John Brown and a companion, Roy Gillis, of Georgetown were travelling across the North eastern portion of the Island to the village of St. Peter's when they became hopelessly lost in the vast forest they had entered.

When night fell they spied a light in the distance, and upon reaching the spot found a neat shanty nestled snugly in a small patch that had been cleared in the dense forest. The door opened to their first hopeful knock, and a tall bearded man invited the wandering pair to come in and stay for the night, as there was an extra bed and only himself and his wife in the cabin.

THE WANDERERS learned their host was Thomas Dawson, though they didn't know that he had fought in the late war, and retired to this little woodland retreat on a small pension. Dawson and his wife showed the strangers every hospitality. They appeared to be an unusually fine couple, yet there was a sinister air of mystery about their humble home. It fairly hung on the air. The feeling defied explanation, though there were visible objects that caused uneasiness. On the wall near the entrance hung a brace of heavy pistols, over the door was the longest musket the uneasy pair had ever seen, while back of the fireplace stood a great shining saber, that looked for all the world as though it had been scrubbed and polished recently.

Brown and Gillis had heard strange tales of people being murdered in out-of-the-way places. Sight of the ugly weapons brought some tales sharply to mind.

THEY HAD heard many such tales narrated by the older folks in their Georgetown home district. However they had accepted their hosts offer to spend the night and they smothered their fears as best they could, for they felt they would be slighting his kindness if they disappeared again into the night.

Supper ended, the men folk filled their pipes and talked late into the night while Mrs. Dawson busied herself knitting socks. At the stroke of one the travellers were shown to their attic bed, which could be reached only by a ladder.

Brown fell quickly asleep and was in the land of dreams, snoring like a runaway furnace. But the nervous Gillis could find neither rest nor peace of mind. The deadly looking weapons he had seen below filled him with uneasiness, with a sense of foreboding he could not dismiss.

Ominous Words Are Heard Below

JUST BEFORE the first streak of dawn he heard Dawson and his wife speaking in hushed tones. What were they discussing? He prodded Brown in the side but got only a grunt for his efforts, and wondered how his companion could sleep through such perilous moments. Gillis propped himself on an elbow and strained his ears to listen, as the quiet conversation continued in the kitchen below.

Finally four ominous words were heard faintly through the pre-dawn darkness "MUST BOTH BE SLAIN?" and the husband replied with grim finality "YES, BOTH OF THEM"

GILLIS NOW was certain the end was in sight and great beads of sweat burst out on his troubled brow and rolled on to the pillow.

Brown was still snoring peacefully and his friend decided it was best to let the man die in his sleep. It would be easier that way.

Looking through a small attic window, Gillis saw a vicious looking dog chained to a post at the side of the house. No doubt the animal had been placed there to cut off any chance of escape.

Gillis climbed back into bed and sweated some more. After a few moments he heard some movements, and looking through a small knot hole in the floor he saw Dawson ascending the ladder with a light in one hand and a huge ugly-looking knife in his teeth. Behind him came Mrs. Dawson.

#### Knife Is Used To Slice Ham

SILENTLY DAWSON opened the trap door and softly stepped over to the bed where the terror-stricken man lay shivering between the blankets. Then the host reached high over the bed to the attic ceiling where a large ham was hanging, and cutting off several slices, passed them to his wife.

Several hours later the strangers were called to breakfast and dined with unexpected pleasure on a meal which consisted of TWO ROOSTERS along with the few slices of ham. Not until then did Gillis understand the significance of the words which had caused such terror in the pre-dawn darkness several hours before.

"MUST BOTH BE SLAIN?" and the equally grim reply "YES, BOTH OF THEM."

Mrs. Lavandier tells me she doesn't know whether the old tale is true or not. But she assures me that it is old, that it has been handed down through generations, which makes it a part of our rich folk lore, to which I so often refer.

#### Snow Blockade January To May

THE MID-WEEK storm reminded me of the story Frank MacKinnon brought me from his mother-in-law, Mrs. Matilda Eldershaw, Morell. It pokes fun at our storms of the present and tells of a real whopper of a snow blockade that struck this province back in 1875.

Mrs. Eldershaw clipped it from a Nova Scotia paper several years ago.

"So winter is a little rough on Prince Edward Island. Not quite so rough as it was back in 1875. The record on the attempt to restore railway service out of Charlottetown that year is one of real futility and frustration.

“THE PLOUGHS went to work after the first big storm of January 3, but before they could get out too many miles the snow began to swirl and drift again, this time in increasing earnest. It was not until April 17 that the trains could get through to Royalty Junction, not far from the City. On April 23 they managed to make Georgetown. On May 4 they got to Souris and on the night of May 5 one finally puffed its way into Alberton.”

“And”, the item added, “there were no helicopters around then to come to anyone’s rescue.”

### Winswept Herd Notes Are Found

I SEARCHED my files last week in a vain effort to find the notes on Gavin Reid and his Winswept Ayrshire herd, that were made when Mrs. Matheson and I visited Mr and Mrs. Reid some time ago. That’s why my last week reference to the Victoria Cross breeder was so skimpy. I found them yesterday and want to include a paragraph or two here.

His Sunnyslope Bonny Jean and her daughter, Winswept Betty, were the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> cows in Canada to produce 100,000 pounds or more of milk on official tests. You will recall that they were also the first mother-daughter combination in Canada to achieve that production.

Incidentally Almon Wood, Marshfield tells me that the late Bert Brown, York - he lived where the Lewis Brothers operate a large farm now - had three of the first ten 100,000-pound cows in Canada, so the Island was prominent in the Ayrshire world in those days.

MR. REID’S mature cows average 12,000 pounds milk and his Ayrshire steers are making good beef carcasses. One weighed 1,295 pounds at slightly more than two years, he told me. Glencampbell’s Sensation was one of the best of the top sires he’s had over the years. He sold him to the late Senator John E. Sinclair. Emerald and he sold many of his get to R. O. Biggs, Dundas, Ontario whose father, Frank Campbell Biggs, was a highway minister in the Drury government.

He had been breeding artificially to Glengarry Classic and had five heifers that he really liked, when I was talking to him. On the average he has to raise four heifers to get one good enough to meet his herd standard. Classic is bred by Cummings Brothers, Lancaster, Ontario the farm that produced Glengarry Bit O’ Fashion that sired so many good ones here.

One of the best bulls he has owned in recent years was Royalty Fashion Montague, that he bought for \$20 from Col. F. I. Andrew, Charlottetown, which proves that it’s not always the high-price sires that are best.