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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Unusual Tales Of Storied Past

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THIS COLUMN on ghost stories and other unreal yarns is my reply to the many requests that have been received since I first wrote about this sort of thing last October. Some people believe the fantastic yarns, others do not, but I suggest they have become a part of the rich folklore of the province..

I wondered as I wrote this column if the lives of our forefathers - most stories are of other years - were not much more interesting because of those unusual tales. Imagine the interest, and the excitement some of the stories must have stirred up in those far off days.

Frank MacLaren, Morell told me what happened many years ago to people who tried to dig for treasure believed to have been buried by the French people in an old cemetery at Greenwich when they fled for their lives before the rapidly approaching English forces.

FRANK'S GRANDFATHER, Duncan MacLaren, and two companions John Sutherland and John Webster, were chased away once from a digging attempt by a severe electrical storm - the thunder fairly shook the ground and the lightening was unusually sharp - and there were gale force winds with drenching rain. None of them was easily frightened though they fled this storm which would strike terror into the bravest heart. But they found the day was fine and calm when they got a short piece from the diggings, just as it had been before they approached the old cemetery, which is on the farm now owned by Cyril Sanderson, Mr. MacLaren told me.

None of the trio ever went back for a second attempt. Nobody ever went back after one try, the Morell man emphasized, though many people had attempted to dig where money or other valuables were believed to have been buried. Harry Morris, Charlottetown gave me the tip on this interesting yarn.

Witch Strikes At Cattle Herd

FRANK STEVENSON. North Wiltshire and Harry Keating, Charlottetown but formerly of Elliotts recalled for me that George Yeo used to tell them that a witch had once put a curse on his cows and how it was removed. This was back in the days when many cattle were so thin and weak in spring they couldn't get up themselves - neighbours said they "were on the lifts" - but Mr. Yeo's herd were in good condition.

But the man who farmed on the Union Road near Charlottetown before he moved to the Breadalbane - Pleasant Valley area, said none of the cows could get up one morning when he went out to feed them. A neighbour told him to take the heart from one of them, pierce it with sharp needles and leave it in the oven overnight. "The witch

will be screaming with pain all night, and you will learn who she is, but your cows will all be up in the morning”, he was told.

The cows were up in the morning, though the story that’s been handed down does not reveal the witch was ever identified. Both Frank and Harry tell me that Mr. Yeo always insisted the story was true.

Curse On Churn Stops Butter

THE CURSE, “the hex”, or the “bad wish” idea was given a lot of credence from the folklore of half a century or more ago. Mrs. Malcolm D. Matheson, a boyhood neighbour - she was born Flora Munro and lived as a girl, I am told, somewhere in the Lower Montague area - used to tell of a family that suddenly found they could not get any cream off their butter. A man who was brought eight or nine miles, told them someone had put a curse on their churn, muttered some strange words over it and assured them they would have no more trouble, and they didn’t. But my cousin, Mrs. Katie Court, Charlottetown who was Mrs. Matheson’s niece by marriage, tells me some people blamed the same man for having “put the curse on” in the first place.

CALVIN LEWIS, Patriot editorial writer who comes from Alberton, tells me that a woman who was dispossessed of her property on the Centre Line Road - it runs from Alma to Miminegash - stood on the road and put a curse on the land before she left. The story is that nothing would ever grow on the farm afterwards.

The “bad wish” was commonly put on a valuable horse or other animal in previous years, people said. I remember as a boy that a neighbour who refused a big price for a horse, for example, would have neighbours shaking their heads and predicting “something will happen” to that animal because “somebody will put a bad wish on it.”

Woman Could Change Into Cat

WARBURTON GODFREY, North Wiltshire told me this week that a woman who lived in that district “perhaps a hundred years or more ago” reputedly could change herself into a cat, and walk along the top of the old pole fences, etc. There were many stories told to substantiate the belief. I’ll tell you one of them.

A couple of neighbours called one day at her home and could not find her anywhere, though they searched the house. Finally they opened a small closet door and found a cat sitting on the floor. But there was no cat in that house, they insisted, so the “cat” they saw, was the woman with the mystic power.

MRS. MALCOLM Buchanan, Breadalbane - she and her husband celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary last autumn - recalls seeing a persistent light hovering over the railroad track near her girlhood home on the Junction Road (It’s Glen Valley now). A short time later Alex MacLennan, a section man, died there suddenly.

She also recalled that an Elliotts man who “was bad and wild” was riding horseback one night when the bridle was seized by the figure of a woman who warned “Turn from your evil ways, your days are short”. They were short, as the man died of brain fever within three weeks. “Those are stories that cannot be disproved, amny people knew about them”, she emphasized.

Lonely Ghost At Tignish Shore

THREE FISHERMEN were walking one Sunday evening along the shore of the MacLeod property, called little Tignish to Tignish Shore when they were joined by a fourth man. He walked with them but none of them could get him to say a word, and he disappeared when they came to a wooded area.

Arriving at the shore worried and frightened by the experience, they were told "that is Blumpy's ghost". Smelt fishermen at MacLeod's Pond had seen him a few evenings previously, when he waited on shore until they stepped out of their dory, then vanished.

The old tale said the man had come from Newfoundland, got lonely, acted strangely for a time and neighbours found him hanging one morning from a rafter in an old shed. Since he could not be placed in a cemetery, he had been buried in a shallow grave on the shore of the pond. Years later the bank caved in and the grave disappeared, and that, Mrs. Edith Eldershaw tells me, is why Blumpy walked the lonely roads. He was looking for company.

Woman Ghost At Wagon Wheel

JACK M ACLEOD, Breadalbane was driving home one night on the Malpeque Road when the figure of a woman appeared by the front wheel of his wagon. He had the fastest horse he ever owned, and he had some dandies, but the strange figure stayed at the wagon wheel though the horse was going full out. She made her appearance by the gate of Dan MacKay who was once a member of the legislature - his son, Sutherland, lives there now. But Mr. MacLeod could not recall how far she stayed with him. "I was too scared" he admitted, though he normally was not frightened of anything.

The "woman" appeared on the right side where Jack's sister, Bertha, was sitting. The only probable clue to the incident is that when Bertha's husband, Jake Seller, Fredericton, became seriously ill a month later, the woman who came to nurse him was dressed like the strange woman who came out of the night.

A DESABLE man was dressing a piece of timber with an old Broad axe when he glanced up and saw a man with no head on the opposite end. The head was off just above the knotted scarf around the neck. But that belongs to a tale of foul murder of a century ago, which I'll tell you about later.

But some headless man stories have an explanation. Mac Nicholson of this staff told me his father, Sam Nicholson of Alliston, once saw a headless man on the road ahead of him one bright moonlight night. Mr. Nicholson found when he got close to the object, however, that it was an unusually thin horse whose hipbones were sticking up to look like a man's shoulders when seen from a distance.

Ball Of Fire At Alberton Church

WILL SHERRY, Alberton disappeared many years ago and it was some time before it was learned he had been murdered. While the countryside was still wondering what had happened to him, a young Alberton couple were walking one night past the Roman Catholic church on the Alberton South road when a ball of fire came rolling down the

walk, rolled down the steps, and across the road into the cemetery where Sherry was buried a short time later.

The story came from Mrs. Francis Larter who lives close to the church with her uncle Joe MacDougall who has many interesting yarns.

I OMITTED three names last week from the sons and daughters who have helped their father Charles Proud, Milton earn the distinction of holding the mail contract since 1919 for a provincial record. They were Edna who is Mrs. Miller Sanderson, North River; Grace who is Mrs. John Stetson, Fairhaven, Massachusetts and Russel who lives on the Loyalist Road.