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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Part Of Last Coach Is On Bedeque Farm

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I DON'T KNOW when the last stage coach ran between Bedeque and Charlottetown but a part of the pole of the two-horse rig is somewhere around the farmstead that is owned by Douglas MacFarlane in Fernwood.

This I learned recently from Harrison MacFarlane, father of Douglas, when I visited him in his home in Bedeque.

"The stage coach was run by John MacFarlane, a first cousin of my father", Harrison MacFarlane told me. The stage would go to Charlottetown one day and would return the next, he stated. How many passengers it would carry is not known, neither is the price of the fares.

Harrison thinks, however, that his uncle must have been subsidized to run the stage. He could never make the thing pay on his own, he suggests.

The stage left a tavern in Bedeque, took the shore road to Charlottetown and stopped at Kenny Holm's place in Hampton, or DeSable, to change horses.

MacFarlane would sound his horn as he came close to a village. In the early part of his trip he would wake up everyone in the village. At least that's what people said about him, Harrison told me.

The man would arise about 3:20 in the morning to feed his horses and would be on the road at daybreak in the longer days of the year. He'd leave before daylight in the shorter days.

A young lady from Cape Traverse, Eliza Clark, was learning the dress-making (trade?) in Charlottetown. She went to and fro on the stage. A romance developed and she and John MacFarlane were married, Harrison told me.

We talked of many things including the Family Herald and Weekly Star as we knew it in the days when I was a boy. At the MacFarlane home they called it "The Star" and Harrison recalls his mother telling the children on Friday evening "Children get your lessons learned tonight. You'll want to read "The Star" Saturday evening."

Bi-Weekly Mail Service

MAIL CAME twice a week to Bedeque in those days and they had to go a mile to the post office. The post office in those days was run by Charles MacFarlane, a first cousin of Harrison's father.

As is generally known the Family Herald, as it is now called, is closing out publication the end of this month. And that reminds me that I met my friend Jim Thomson, editor Maritime Farmer, at the exhibition last week. He recalled that a mutual friend of ours who is a retired associate editor of that paper, had predicted this would happen when the Family Herald changed its style and its contents a few years ago.

I have been associated with the Family Herald for many years as a sometime writer and more recently as a 'stringer'. But I recall the reception we gave it at our Rose Valley home when I was a boy. I recall particularly a serial story "The Pearl Hunter" that

gripped me so intensely, I could scarcely wait for the paper to come the following week. The old Family Herald and Weekly Star – it has been published by the Montreal Star – was almost a family byword in rural P.E.I. when I was young. People liked the paper as it was then, but a new man came in several years ago with new ideas about what the Herald should be. Now it's closing out.

Back for a moment to the stage coach days, Harrison told me that Summerside was merely "Green's Shore" at the time. That, apparently, is why Bedeque was the western terminal of the stage route.

Old Church Discipline

HARRISON'S GREAT, great grandfather was an elder in the first session of the Presbyterian Church in the area. And this brought a comparison between church discipline then and now.

If a man was "anyways sidestepping", Mr. MacFarlane told me, he would be hailed before the session.

For example the Methodist Church was started at Bedeque by Joseph Pope who lived at Bedeque at the time. Some of the Presbyterians left their church for the Methodists. As an example, Harrison told "I recall once when a man went to the Methodists, the Presbyterians named a committee of two, a Mr. Muttart and David Morley, to find why the man defected from the Presbyterians."

The reason was that he had a Methodist wife and had attended one of the Methodist revival meetings, Mr. MacFarlane recalled. This man had been an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and those were the days when people of different churches were severe about one of their members even going for a casual visit to another church.

In this case the Presbyterians cancelled his eldership and removed his name from the church roles, Mr. MacFarlane recalled.

Incidentally Harrison MacFarlane gave a short historical sketch of the old church – it's United now but was Methodist previous to Union – at both services of the church at the anniversary service on Sunday August 11.

Offenders Punished

BACKSLIDERS WERE dealt with summarily by the Presbyterians, for example – I do not have information on the other churches – and a man who was reported to the elders was brought before the session and examined closely on his actions.

The man had to repent publicly and do other things too, if he was to be excused, Harrison told me.

Heaters In Automobiles

WE TOUCHED on many things of interest as Walter Shaw and I met together while we watched the horse show at the Coliseum last week.

One of our subjects was the early cars and Mr. Shaw recalled that early cars – they were all touring cars then – had no side curtains on them. Later the side curtains were supplied with isinglass inserts that allowed the passengers to look through and see something of what was on either side as they drove along.

Later the cars had heaters placed in them and Mr. Shaw recalls that he thought that was going a bit too far. I gather he probably considered heaters in closed in cars a needless luxury.

Remember that in those early days of the automobiles here, people had been travelling for many years in open wagons, and in open sleighs through all kinds of weather.

You can see why my friend did consider placing heaters in cars going a bit too far in those early years.