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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Device For Boat Took Hard Work

By NEIL A. MATHESON

A FROG POND man – it's six miles northwest of Tignish – fashioned a mechanical device to propel a small fishing boat back about 65 years ago, but a neighbor, Tom Bernard, thought so little of it he called the device a "Sweatalene".

The term was used because Bernard thought it produced more sweat than speed.

I talked with Mr. Bernard last autumn and he recalled the days when every fisherman used sails for propelling their boats. This was fine when there was some wind, but there would be periods when there would be no wind for a week, Mr. Bernard recalled.

They'd row out to about 20 fathoms, which meant about six miles. It was heavy rowing with a full boat, he said.

So a neighbor brought material home from the United States – he had spent the winter in the Boston area – to make an engine.

The man brought a balance wheel from the States, a propeller shaft, and he built the engine.

Like Trolley Car

THE MAN built the device so it worked like a trolley car in the railroad. They pumped the boat to make it go, instead of rowing.

But the invention didn't impress Bernard.

"The boat was just moving, it wasn't as fast as rowing, and it was harder work. Two men would pump and the propeller went around, but the boat moved slowly, though the men worked hard."

When the day was calm and they had to "pump" the boat home, the sweat would be rolling off of them.

That's why Tom Bernard called it a "sweatalene".

The first marine engines were welcomed, he told me. They came more than 60 years ago. Mr. Bernard got his from the United States; it was a four-horsepower Victor engine. Tom Myers and Pat Perry were the others.

"They were great, we liked them", he told me. They were fast, though not fast compared to modern car engines and they were cheap to operate. The oil was mixed in with the gasoline in those marine engines.

Tom Bernard told me last autumn that he gave up fishing two years ago. Mrs. Bernard is sick, has asthma and he cannot leave her alone.

Lowest Lobster Prices

"THE LOWEST price we ever got for lobsters in my day," he told me, "was three cents a pound. But fisherman only got 25 cents a hundred pounds when I was a kid." And the lobsters would be big that were worth only a quarter of a cent. The small lobsters were thrown out, he explained.

They fished them with scoop nets, not with traps as they do now. The fishermen would tie the bait in the net. They'd have 25 scoop nets two to three fathoms apart. They'd pull the net, take the lobsters out, then they'd put the nets back and fish them again. They'd fish until they had their boat loaded, he said.

Big lobsters ran four to five pounds. The average market lobster now is two pounds, Mr. Bernard observed.

"But many lobsters are bigger. I got two that weighed 14 pounds, an average of seven pounds each, two years before I quit," he told me.

Tom Bernard recalls the time when there were 40 families at Frog Pond; now there's two. The other man lives there in summer, goes to Montrose in winter time.

85 Years Young

A STORY from Alberton said that Lester Wallace, Cascumpec, who is in his 86th year, was the oldest man to finish the Walkathon last Saturday.

I talked to Mr. Wallace last summer at the Alberton Exhibition – indeed I have known him now for a dozen years or more.

One of the directors of the Alberton show told me "Mr. Wallace drove up this morning with a 45-gallon barrel, backed his truck smartly into the desired location, jumped up on the truck, rolled the barrel off and had it in the desired location in jig time.

"That man looks and acts like a youngster," the man added.

Mr. Wallace used to dig mussel mud when that was used by farmers, was in great demand and was widely used. At first he dug the mud for 10 cents a load. Sometimes, he told me "I'd put it on the book for that, and some I haven't got yet."

The price was raised to 15 cents a load later and it would be 30 cents a load for a double team. But, he added, "I made money at it."

He dug 98 loads in a day – they would be single loads – and he would receive \$9.80 for his work, when the men paid him.

Of course \$9.80 would be a lot of money back in those days, much, much more than it is worth today.

At first Mr. Wallace used a horse and a capstan affair, with a scoop to dig the mud. Later he used a fork, and this was much better. Four forks full would make a load for one horse. They were "good, big dips". In some cases the mud would be hauled ten miles; that meant one trip per day. The round trip for the farmer would be 20 miles.

Palmer Cow 'Excellent'

I HAD a note in this week's farm column saying Harold Palmer told me he had a cow graded "Excellent" by the grader this year. I did not have his letter at the time and was shy on details.

The cow is a four-year-old animal, Maiden Jill Jocelyn. Her sire is Northern M. Royal and her dam is Maiden Jill Jane.

I may be wrong but I have a feeling this is the first cow of this age in this province to be graded "Excellent" which demands a conformation score of 90 or better. Congratulations to the Palmers.

I REMEMBER now, a week or more too late, that I told Ralph Adams, O'Leary that I was going to say something about his cattle auction last Monday, and the stunt he was putting on to stir new interest in an effective support for dehorning cattle when they are calves.

Ralph's idea was to get a mature animal in the ring and dehorn it with the big instruments that have to be used. That way it's a messy job and looks cruel. The dehorning as calves (?) is a relatively simple and painless operation.

Mr. Adams is always thinking up something to improve the cattle rearing operation. He has something cooking in his head right now that looks like another improvement. I'll tell you about it when he gets his planning completed.