

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., 26 April, 1963

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Haunted House Stories Heard

By NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial - Farm Editor

A COUPLE of haunted house stories intrigued me because they were told by living people who experienced them . Previously all the haunted house yarns I heard were from the dimly distant past.

Mr. And Mrs. Sam Smith, West Point lived for years in a house where they heard noises repeatedly; more unusual still, Mrs. Smith lived there alone much of the time while her husband was at sea, yet she insisted she was not afraid.

Some of her recollections are humorous. She was in bed once, shortly after a baby had been born, and some of the neighbour ladies were in "sitting up with her". The women, who were in an adjoining room heard the tramp of feet coming down stairs and they came scurrying into her room, and almost jumped into bed with her.

But Mrs. Smith insisted to me that it didn't frighten her and that both she and her family had often heard such noises. They used to hear a noise as though someone was rustling through papers, hunting for something.

MR. SMITH heard a tremendous noise upstairs one day while he was out at the barn. He had a bunch of old boat cranes stored upstairs in the house and thought someone might have upset them. His son was in the house shaving and heard the noise too. "What were you doing, Dad?" he asked his father when he came in. Investigation showed nothing had happened, except the noise.

The Smiths often heard knocks at the door , even in daytime, but nobody was ever to be seen, though they watched closely. First noise he heard was "as though a bunch of boards and posts fell down", Mr. Smith told me.

Children Saw Old Men In Rooms

THE CHILDREN used to speak of seeing old men going through the rooms, but how much of that could be attributed to a child's fertile imagination, the Smiths could not tell me.

The Smiths sold the house 31 years ago. It was moved to Dubiane, one and one-half miles away, but there have been no rumors of haunting from the people who have lived in it since.

The ghostly sounds never awakened the Smiths from sleep. They must have been considerate ghosts.

An old legend says a pedlar had been killed in the house once, many years ago. But I couldn't get anyone to elaborate on the old tale.

WILLIAM MACDONALD, father of Mrs. Smith, told Mr. Smith to jump up and swear at the ghosts in a loud voice when he heard one of the noises. He tried it and didn't hear any "noises" for six months or more, he told me.

Mr. MacDonald - he was light house keeper at West Point then - had his own problems. He used to find his horses soaking wet with sweat and with their manes braided in the morning, his daughter told me. But he never found any reasonable explanation. I never heard of such a thing, but find that Sir Andrew MacPhail in his book "The Master's Wife" reports that such acts were attributed to witches in former years. The witches would ride horses and tangle the manes as they grasped them on their wild ride.

Haunted House In Eastern Kings

THE OTHER haunted house story was much more recent. It concerned a young couple who lived there for a time, then left the house. I can't give you names, nor the district, for I have not permission to do so. But it was pretty close to the eastern end of the province.

The young man's brother while visiting one night, heard the noise and said it was a loose board upstairs. They hunted but found every board was nailed down solidly. They did find a loose railing on the staircase. They took it off, but the noises continued.

A child was playing on the floor one day. The mother saw a strange man walking down stairs and choked back her scream of terror lest she frighten the child. But the little one saw the man too, and cried out in fear. He disappeared through the pantry door, and just plain disappeared. He wasn't in the pantry when someone looked.

THE YOUNG people left the house, but the man's brother had potatoes stored in the cellar of the now empty house. He was in the cellar grading one day, when he heard a rocking chair in motion overhead. Pushing up the cellar hatch gently, he could peer into the kitchen, but the chair was empty and still.

But the rocking sound resumed as soon as he returned to the cellar. So far as I know the old chair may still be rocking gently in lonely solitude in the deserted house; or would it be lonely when there are unnatural forces to stir it into action?

Car Story From Long Ago

I'M ROAMING today and I think of the old automobile story Allie Cutcliffe, Charlottetown told me recently. A leading Summerside businessman was driving his car down a steep hill in Hope River, overtaking a farm wagon drawn by a horse, the motorist pulled out to pass it just as the farmer turned the horse in at his gate. Perhaps brakes were not good in those days, at any rate he crashed into the horse and broke two of its legs, which would mean the animal would have to be destroyed.

A deeply religious man, the businessman was exclaiming his deep regret over the unfortunate accident, then added "It's too bad Mr. . . . , you did not put out your hand to let me know you were going to turn into the gate," which brought the salty comment:

"How in H- - - could you see my hand when you couldn't see the horse and wagon?"

Open Voting Is Recalled

LAST WEEK'S reference to First Great War voting stirred memories for J. A. MacKenzie, Kensington, who recalls people voted openly when he first came of age. "It took a little courage to answer the question, who are you going to vote for?" recalls the Kensington man, who observed the open vote had much to recommend it. The returning officer was the same man at every election and both parties were satisfied.

Legislature members at that time received \$100 per year, plus expenses, says Mr. MacKenzie who invited me to check on the amounts, but the means of checking is not available at present. The first move to increase the salary, or indemnity, was to make it \$200, without expenses, he recalls.

Federal members worked at the time for \$600 a session, or was it as low as \$400? he asks. Perhaps some reader can confirm those amounts, or correct them if they are wrong.

A VETERAN tells me he voted at 18 during the First Great War. But I was referring to civilian votes when I said no one at that age voted.

One First Great War veteran told me he must have voted at the age of 15 that time. He gave his age as 18 when he enlisted, though he was three years younger, and the December 1917 vote came shortly afterwards.

James Walker, Charlottetown, was a deputy returning officer in that 1917 election overseas, and he tells me he didn't ask any question about the men's age. He collected their ballots and that was that.

Dairy Industry History Is Told

TO GEORGE Mayne, Emerald and several other people who have asked me to do a story on the history of the dairy industry development here, look for a story on the subject in our farm edition which will be published early next week. Thanks to Henry J. MacDonald, provincial dairy superintendent, the subject is pretty well covered. Incidentally there are a number of unusual stories in the edition which I believe many of you will find interesting, even though you are normally not interested in farm stories.

And that reminds me that I must thank the many people whom I met across the province, and who made my task so pleasant by their friendly co-operation. It's been so long since I've met anyone who has not been helpful, that I cannot recall a single incident. And that makes work a pleasant experience.