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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Mrs. Buchanan's Death Recalls Ghost Story

By NEIL A. MATHESON

THE RECENT death of Mrs. Malcolm Buchanan of Breadalbane recalls a visit I had with her and her husband – he is also since deceased – at their home almost 10 years ago.

The conversation turned to ghost stories, as it often does when Scots get together, and Mrs. Buchanan told me this one:

She recalled as a girl seeing lights along the railway track near what was then Junction Road – it is now Glen Valley.

The lights were seen on the track for sometime before a section man, Alex MacKenzie, died suddenly while he was at work. Many people saw those lights, she told me.

Of course they were regarded as “forerunners” as the Scots called them in the earlier life of the settlers and their descendants.

A Bit Puzzled

I'M JUST a bit puzzled over the fact that “many people” had seen them. It confuses me a bit, because the general observation regarding forerunners was that only certain people could see them. The Scots used to say that person had the gift of “second sight”.

Mrs. Buchanan, incidentally, was the former Mary Nicholson and was born on the Junction Road.

Mr. Buchanan was born in a log cabin on the Dixon Road alongside the farm which my maternal grandfather Alexander McLure settled. He used a word I had never heard previously when he told me that “Chrottle” – I'm not sure of the spelling – was used to fill up the cracks between the logs when the log cabin was built. It was taken from trees and he described it as the “hairy, wooly stuff you see growing on trees”.

Their 65th Wedding Anniversary

THE OCCASION of one of my visits with this grand old couple was the observance of their 65th wedding anniversary. They had been married in Boston in October, 1897.

I've used this story before but am going to repeat it:

Malcolm had spent six and one-half months in a Maine hospital after having had one leg crushed by a chain when he had worked in that state.

It was the Eastern Maine General Hospital, he recalled for me, and the leg refused to heal completely. Indeed he had suffered from a “running sore”, as he described it, for a long time.

But Dr. H.W. Robertson, who practised at Crapaud at the time, had advised applications of brick clay from the MacKenzie Brick Yard in Rose Valley and it effected the cure.

And this was after many failures in previous attempts to get the sore to heal, Mr. Buchanan told me.

For Crapaud historians, Dr. Robertson died in August 1905, Mr. Buchanan told me during our visit together.

Early Island Exports

THE QUANTITY of oats exported was, apparently, an indication of progress in this Island in former years. Campbell's history notes that though the oats exported was only 943,109 bushels in 1863, it had grown to 1,555,322 bushels ten years later.

The dollar value of Island imports and exports during the period 1870 to 1875 were listed as follows:

Year	Imports	Exports
1870-----	\$1,928,662	\$2,154,603
1871-----	\$2,336,800	\$1,625,635
1872-----	\$2,569,878	\$1,894,173
1873-74-----	\$1,908,522	\$1,908,461
1874-75-----	\$1,960,997	\$1,940,901

The apparent decrease in imports, and exports I should imagine, is accounted for by the fact that the Island, having entered Confederation in 1873, Canadian manufactured goods since have not come under the head of "imports", because all Island products sent to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Magdalene Islands and Canada, which were formerly "exports" are not so reckoned now. In the value of exports is included the price of the tonnage sold, transferred, to other parts.

Tuna Fish Contaminates Mercury?

HOW ABOUT that story of the man who let his tuna fish sandwich drop into a load of mercury, had the entire load rejected as contaminated. And we had thought previously that mercury was the harmful contaminator.

The story appeared in this newspaper several days ago. And that reminds me that the problem of "pure water" was being talked about in Charlottetown approximately 100 years ago.

Campbell's history of Prince Edward Island notes that one William Murphy, "the representative of pure water" had been re-elected to a Civic seat, "from which he never should have been ousted in the first place".

There is no explanation of what Murphy had done for pure water in the few lines that old history devoted to the subject. It was published in 1875.

But the history did note that there were "devils which can no longer exist without injury to the health of the inhabitants".

Early Hotels Are Described

ON THE same page the history referred to the Island Park Hotel of Mr. Holman, which had been referred to in this column several times. It was termed "A credit to the Island".

The reference adds the hotel of John Newson at Rustico is also well reported, and we are given to understand that Miss Rankin, determined that Charlottetown should no longer lag behind the times, is about to have a handsome house erected in a most suitable locality locally. (The first name was not given.)

I wonder if any reader now had any knowledge of Miss Rankin, or her establishment. I would like to hear from anyone who may have this knowledge.

Passing Of John Glover

SUNDAY AFTERNOON Mrs. Matheson and I attended the funeral in Murray Harbor of John Glover who died suddenly late last week. He was Mrs. Matheson's cousin and we had called on him several years ago for a visit. I had been hoping for a story on his service with the RCMP, which dates back some 50 years ago.

He entered the service when he was about 18, I was told, and he was in his 68th year at the time of his death.

Unfortunately Mr. Glover was not at home, so I missed that opportunity.

Later a cousin promised to set up a meeting with John and I would be present. The suggestion was made in good faith, but I never did get around to taking advantage of it.

So another chance for a good story for this column went without result.

To John Glover's relatives and friends, I am not making light of his passing, nor am I suggesting my mission was that important. But I know I missed a chance to talk with a most interesting man.

Wet Weather Is Unusual

I KNEW previously that wet weather had kept many farmers from completing their spring seeding. But a White Sands man told me yesterday that in more than 50 years he has never seen the water on the land so late in the year, on a certain area of his farm.