

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., July 5, 1963

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Stormy Horse Trips By Island's Pioneers

By NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial - Farm Editor

I HAD an interesting chat a few days ago with Joe Robertson of Pinette who told me some interesting stories of days that are gone.

The ice wasn't bushed in the early days and a number of men on their way from Charlottetown got caught in a terrific snowstorm and stopped just off Tweedy's Point - in the Earnscliffe area, I imagine - formed a circle with their horses and sleighs, rugged the animals as warmly as possible, and started tramping around inside the circle to keep from getting too cold.

Sometime later George Buchanan, Mt. Buchanan drove up with his horse, "Pony". The group of men asked him if they would make room for his horse in the ring, but he replied "No, I'm going home."

"But you can't possibly get home in this storm", the others protested. "How can you possibly make it in this weather?" one man queried.

"PONY WILL take me home", was the reply. Pony was an old horse, who had crossed the ice many times and he had an uncanny ability to make way in all kinds of weather conditions.

Mr. Buchannan took the bridle and reins off his horse, because he was afraid he might try to guide the animal at times, and pull "Pony" off in a wrong direction, Mr. Robertson told me

The old story says that "Pony" took his master home, and Mr. Buchannan persuaded the others to follow him. "Pony" went straight to his own barn, says the tale that has long since become part of the folk lore of the Belfast district.

People used to go on the ice at Corish's shore in Southport, or Kinlock to use the local name, after crossing the old Hillsboro Ferry before the old bridge was built in the early 1900's. "I remember crossing the ferry," Mr. Robertson told me.\

Old Diary Would Be Fascinating

MR. ROBERTSON voiced a thought that has often been in my mind when he said "If someone had kept a diary covering the first few years of the early settlers here, it would have made wonderful reading."

Those early settlers came from parts of Scotland that had been settled hundreds of years. Most of them would have no experience with an axe, or as woodsmen. Yet they had to start hewing homes, and later farms out of forests, he said.

I recall that a friend of mine in Rose Valley told me last year he had heard his grandfather talk about the first settler in their family who chopped down one tree, then sat on the stump and cried in helpless frustration. Second and third generation men

were axemen - they had to be to survive in those early days, I would think - but some of the pioneers must have had a terrible time.

HE told me a story about a Dr. MacAulay who was on "The Polly" that brought early settlers close to the spot where Lord Selkirk Park is now located. A British warship had hailed them, and a boat came alongside to seek "recruits" for the Navy. They took replacements where they could find them in those days, and never stopped to ask whether the men were willing.

But the canny doctor had men lying about the deck wrapped in sheets or otherwise trundled up. When the sailors asked what was wrong, the doctor calmly told them "we have yellow fever aboard". It was one of the terrors of the time, and that was the last they saw of the warship.

The Doctor is buried in the Polly cemetery, Mr. Robertson told me .

Freight Was Done By Horses

MERCHANDISE, and other goods, had to be freighted by horses in winter, once the summer boats had stopped in late fall, and the Pinette man who used to farm in Eldon, had some tales of those early days.

Tom MacKinnon - he lived where Robert West resides now in Eldon - used to drive one horse and lead another behind him drawing a second sleigh. The freighting fee was 20 to 25 cents per 100 pounds, and MacKinnon would probably make up to \$10.00 with his two sleighs on one trip. He would haul up to one ton on each sleigh when the ice was good, it was observed.

Hauling by horses was the only way of freighting in those days in winter, prior to the building of the Murray Harbor railway line about 1905 or 1906, the Pinette man said. Schooners carried produce and merchandise along the coast in summer.

OWEN MARTIN had a contract to drive the mail from Charlottetown to Murray Harbor. He would take it as far as Eldon and a brother would drive it the rest of the way to Murray Harbor, Mr. Robertson said.

Horses were understandably valuable in those days. A man would get \$225 to \$250 for an 1150-pound horse when a cow would bring \$20 or less, he said.

"Lying Is Part Of Horse Trading"

I LIKED this story about the circuit court judge at Eldon, who was trying a case involving horse trading.

"There has been considerable lying in this case" observed the judge.

"Yes, your Honour" replied one of the horse traders. "Lying is part of the horse trading business."

I'd like to do a column on horse trading yarns, if I can find someone who will talk on the record. Nobody ever complained when he got the worst of a deal. For one thing his neighbours would only laugh at him. And he had to make the horse he got look good, because he wanted to trade him off to someone else.

THE WOMEN'S Institutes are presenting a pageant here Wednesday evening at the 50th anniversary of their founding which should prove of unusual interest. I saw a small

part of the pageant in rehearsal several weeks ago, and they even have some quotes from minutes of a 1913 meeting where Institute members passed a resolution against allowing automobiles to travel on P.E.I. highways.