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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Johnson Violin Is 'Stradivarius'

By NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial - Farm Editor

I SAW a "Stradivarius" violin last week and the story of how it came to the home of Joseph Johnson in Georgetown is just as interesting as the old instrument itself.

Mr. Johnson's father was returning from the West Indies with Captain Hugh MacPhee, father of the late H. Frank MacPhee who was one of Charlottetown's best known and most capable lawyers. Mr. Johnson found he had the wrong suitcase when he opened it in his home and it contained the old violin in its case. The man who took Mr. Johnson's suitcase by mistake was drowned when the ship he was on was lost off Panmure Island shortly afterwards.

Before I leave that part of the story, I should tell you that Mr. Johnson's suitcase had also contained an item valuable to him. It was his mother's gold wedding ring.

THERE'S ALWAYS a question as to whether a Stradivarius violin is a genuine master or not. Mr. Johnson doesn't know, but his instrument carries the name of the old master and the words "Anno 1717" which dates it almost 250 years ago. I didn't hear it for there was nobody around at the time who could play it, but I was told it is "an unusually sweet-toned instrument."

Mr. Johnson has had many offers for the instrument ranging up to \$1,000, but it's not for sale, he told me. "It's a valued and treasured keepsake now. If I sold it, I would spend the money and have nothing left," he explained. Offers include one from the Boston Pop orchestra people, which qualified the bid by saying they wanted to have a look at the old violin to see if it is genuine.

Assessed value of violins made by Stradivarius runs from 15,000 to \$50,000, an issue of a nationally known American magazine stated some time ago. It said in part:

"The Stradivarius has a remarkable resonance, a unique carrying power, a full, rich sonorous quality, an ineffable sweetness."

Antonio Stradivari, 1644-1737, "had an instinctive knowledge of acoustics", the magazine emphasized.

Chair Carved From Market Sq. Tree

MY FINDING Mr. Johnson came as a result of my search for an old chair of considerable historic value which has been in Holy Trinity Church for some time.

I have to thank Edward Easton, owner of the interesting museum at Georgetown, for telling me about, and for going with me to see Mr. Johnson who kindly opened the old church and showed me the chair.

The old story says it was carved from a tree that was cut when the site for the first market house was being cleared on Market Square. I couldn't trace all of its history. If

anyone knows it I would appreciate a call - but I do know that it was owned for a time by the late Maria Easton who died here April 5, 1963 in her 102nd year, and I understand she gave it to the church. The old chair is certainly an interesting piece of furniture carved as it was in one piece, with the exception of a piece set on the top of the chair back, which I believe was a separate piece.

Grisly Rum Barrel Kept Tars Happy

A RELIABLE lady from Prince County tells me a "true story" that has its origin in the Bideford area, not far from where the fisheries biological station is situated at Ellerslie.

The Ellis and Yeo shipyards were manned mostly by men from the Bideford, Devon areas and a sea-going captain took on a neighbour's young son as cabin boy, for a lengthy voyage that ended with a call at the Barbados for a cargo of rum for P.E.I.

On the way home the young boy sickened and died. The captain didn't want to bury him at sea, because the ship was so close to his parent's home so he broached a puncheon of rum, put the boy's body inside and resealed and marked the cask so he could tell it from the others. The other casks were unloaded when the boat reached this province, but Malpeque Bay was freezing up and he was forced to tie up there for the winter.

THERE WAS a sailor's home, or boarding house nearby where crews could stay, but usually they were always stirring up trouble as they fretted through a long and restless winter. This captain was appreciative, though, for his crew appeared to be unusually happy. They liked to stay aboard the ship and spent a great deal of time in their bunks, the old story relates.

Spring came at last, the ice moved out of the bay and the ship was freed. A cargo of deal was loaded and the captain went to check up on the puncheon of rum and the boy's body.

Imagine his shocked surprise when he found the cask was empty, so far as the rum was concerned. A pole had been bored into it from beneath - through the floor, or deck, apparently - and the contents had been drawn off and consumed.

The captain finally had the reason why his crew had been so contented and uncomplaining through the long winter.

Horse Pumps Own Drink Of Water

LAST WEEK'S column on horse stories of the long ago brought many comments and a story suggestion from John Martin of the National Film Board.

Eugene Cullen, former agriculture minister, who is the proprietor of the Purity Dairy, recalls an old black horse, Sam, that showed some unusual intelligence.

The Cullens had an old horse-power machine hooked up to the barnyard pump, so it could pump the water for the livestock. The platform was rigged so the horses could easily get on to the tread-mill portion and off again without trouble.

Sam knew that, apparently, for he would come for a drink, find the water trough was empty, and promptly walk on to the mill and pump some water, then back off carefully and have himself a drink.

It's one of the better stories I've heard and I thought you might like it too.

Congratulations To Institutes

A PACKED auditorium gave full marks to the Provincial Women's Institutes on Wednesday night for their production of a colorful pageant which portrayed vividly some of the scenes and activities of 40 to 50 years ago. I'm not going to mention any individuals, even though some appear to be worthy of it, for I couldn't possibly help overlooking some worthy ladies. So here's a bouquet to everyone who helped make the 50th anniversary one to be proud of.

I have always had a warm spot in my heart for the Institutes. In the earlier days of their existence they started the trend toward better schools and better facilities, in a period when such improvements were badly needed. The costumes of those days were different, as the pageant showed, but the women were the same. In fact I suggested to several of them, that the costumes made little difference anyway. They seemed to have been doing the same things that women do today with their more glamorous dress, and all of the modern beauty aids.