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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Summerside Man Has Another Ghost Story

By NEIL A. MATHESON

GHOST STORIES are ever popular and here is another one from Morley M. Bell, QC of Summerside.

"It was about the year 1906," he says, and "my uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. John MacDonald lived a short distance over the county line, in an adjoining school district from Tryon.

"My uncle was an excellent wheelwright, and as there was a limited demand in this province for his skills, he worked in Sydney, Cape Breton in the winter.

"As they had no family this left my aunt alone, and she would not stay alone at nights, because of some unexplainable visitations, or incidents that happened sometimes during the night.

It was known in the district, Mr. Bell explains, that a certain Mr. Blank – I have deleted the man's name lest any descendants might take offense – a former owner, or occupant of the house, had died a violent death there many years before. The old tale from the mouths of neighbors was that he died in the D.T.'s swearing and cursing God."

From time to time, after his death – at long intervals the story said – his spirit would re-enter the house and a violent disturbance would erupt in the attic of the house.

"On this particular night," Mr. Bell recalls, "when it was my turn to stay with my aunt, we retired as usual, my aunt in the bedroom and I on the couch in the kitchen at the foot of the stairs leading to the attic.

Terrific Noise In Attic

"SOME TIME during the night, I was awakened by a terrific noise in the attic which continued for several minutes. The noise was indescribable but it sounded to me like as though ALL HELL HAD BROKEN LOOSE, a noise such as would occur if several intoxicated men were tearing the place apart, the house literally shook.

"Then the noise ceased as suddenly as it had begun. There were no voices heard, only a terrific din, such as would occur if the place were being torn apart."

The next morning, Mr. Bell recalls, his aunt "had a lighted lamp and asked me to go to the attic and look around. I had not known until later about the facts, but went to the attic with considerable reluctance. The attic itself was unfinished, and there were no windows, the floor was open to the plaster, and there were only one or two boards laid loosely on the sills.

No Human Force

"IT WAS apparent that no human force could have created such a disturbance; otherwise the laths and plaster would have been broken in places, but this was not the case. My aunt later described the disturbance as similar to someone heaving a heavy trunk, or some other object up and down on the floor."

A few years later, Mr. Bell relates, the property passed into other hands and the house was remodeled, the roof raised and windows placed. So far as I can learn, he adds, the visitation has not since occurred.

“It is probable, therefore, that when the house was rebuilt the spirit of the departed sought another place for its nocturnal visits, as I have heard has happened in other similar cases.”

Mr. Bell is serious about this story, as he is about others he has put at my disposal. “As you read this,” he emphasizes, “You will realize that this is not hearsay, as I was there and vouch for the facts. I may say,” he adds, “that the older residents of the district had no doubts about the visitations over the years when they occurred.”

Outstanding Son Of P.E.I.?

A BOOK “Imprint of the Maritimes”, loaned to me by Sterling Lane of Charlottetown, brought a number of good stories about Prince Edward Island sons who made an imprint on the life and times of the United States. The book is written by J. Ernest Kerr.

One of them was a son of Fredericton, P.E.I., Dr. Frederick J. Stevenson. The information – it’s sketchy in spots – is as follows:

“In 1930 he was named to the technical staff of the United States department of agriculture as principal geneticist of the division of vegetable crops and diseases of the bureau of plant industry at Beltsville, Maryland.

“Under Dr. Stevenson’s leadership the national potato breeding campaign has been enlarged to include formal arrangements between 25 States and the department, and further developing co-operation between Canada and foreign countries.

“Twenty-seven potato varieties since 1927 – the book was written in 1959 – resulting in nearly 50 per cent of the certified seed potatoes produced in the United States by 1951. In the Maritime Provinces it accounted for more than 70 per cent.”

Dr. Stevenson attended school at Hazel Grove, the book relates, and leaving home early for the state of Washington, he taught school, was principal for one season before receiving Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from the State College of Washington. In 1929 he came back to accept the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

It was in 1919, the Imprint of the Maritimes reports, that Dr. Stevenson began his definite study at the State College of Washington leading to farm crops’ specialist. He was called to the University of Minnesota, as assistant professor in agronomy and plant genetics to serve there from 1925 to 1930.

Dr. Stevenson was elected as honorary life member of the Potato Association at its annual meeting in Cornell University in 1952. The Island-born man is rated a leading authority on potato investigations, “Imprint of the Maritimes” emphasized.