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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Idaho Couple Trace Gold Watch Award

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I GET dozens of phone calls, letters and personal calls from people who are trying to trace relatives of another day, or some unusual event. Usually I am unable to help, but last week a Mrs. Charles L. White from Boise, Idaho called one night about 10:30.

She told me she and her husband had been trying to find me for two days, which is not so unusual. I move around a good deal, and much of my time has been spent at the hospital. (Mrs. Matheson is improving, though very slowly and is still in the hospital.)

Mr. and Mrs. White were trying to find a newspaper reference to the incident which won a citation and a gold watch for Mr. White's father, John Elipaeth White, away back in 1881. He was a boy of 16 years at the time, and he and a number of older companions made several perilous trips to take off passengers and some crew I understand, from the Northern Light which was ice-bound about 15 miles off Cape Bear and in bad circumstances.

BY A strange coincidence I had returned an old scrap book only that morning to Alf Egan and I suggested she call Mr. Egan next day. She would probably find something, for I recalled that I had read in it about such an incident.

Sure enough the Whites found the name they were looking for. What they would like to find now is the citation. If anyone happens to have an old clipping of it please send it to me and I will make a copy and send it to the Whites in Idaho.

The old paper – it was an Examiner of February 1, 1881 – listed these men as heroes of the rescue: Charles Machon, Daniel Machon, Thomas Davy, James White, James Clarke and John White, a lad of 16.

### Gold Watches Given As Awards

THE DARING rescuers were presented with gold watches in appreciation of their actions. Mr. White had his watch for many years but it was destroyed by fire. All of the names, apparently, are those of men from the southern shore of the Island, in the vicinity adjacent to where the old Northern Light was in trouble, I presume.

I imagine that some of the Guardian readers in that vicinity will recognize most of the names listed, though the action took place some 85 years ago. John White died in 1955, Mrs. White told me.

It was on Thursday, December 6, 1876 that the first ice-breaker, the Northern Light, came to maintain winter communications between the Island and the mainland of Canada.

"The Northern Light is unquestionably a powerfully-built boat," said the Island Argus back on December 12 of that year. But the Argus was less prophetic than it realized, apparently, when the editor wrote in part "she will probably be able to perform her duty satisfactorily".

The boat was “145 feet long, 25-foot beam, and is of 397 tons burden”, one part of the description said.

### Never Was Satisfactory

EMPHASIS SEEMS to have been laid on making the ice-breaker strong, to withstand the heavy pressures of the ice, but the Northern Light never was satisfactory so far as maintaining the communication with the mainland of Canada is concerned.

The power plant was an engine of 9800 horsepower. It was built by Carrie Leine and Co., Levis, Quebec. The boat had two boilers, each of 11 feet diameter, tested to a pressure of 148 pounds to the square inch.

There were 22 staterooms which afford sleeping accommodations for 40 passengers, first class.

The builder said at the time she would go through 24 inches of solid ice, and “with some backing she is capable of making her way through three feet of solid ice”.

The captain was John Finlayson, the first mate was John MacKay, the first engineer John MacMillan and the purser John Westaway, the old newspaper said.

### Fish Catch Was A Miracle?

THE ARGUS of 1877 looking back to the first winter of the Belfast settlers who had arrived in the Polly, referred to some of the hardships the newcomers suffered.

One interesting story concerns a group of settlers who co-operated in making a large herring net. In the spring they cast the net in the Pinette River – they had no idea where to put it – and the next morning, the Argus reported, each of the five settlers had a nice half-barrel of fish each.

The miraculous part of the catch was “there has never been a herring caught there since”, the newspaper reported some 70 years afterwards.

### Lady Chases Bear With Fire

IT WAS very close to the year 1800 when a Belfast woman, Mrs. D. McInnis – her husband was away one night – went to the door to investigate an unusual noise outside.

When the lady saw a “large bear”, she remembered hearing that nothing would frighten a bear more effectively than fire. So she grabbed a burning stick from the fire place and “chased the big bear along a little path leading from the door, and sent him scampering into the wild night-shaded forest as though Old Nick was after him in hot pursuit”.

There are many old stories about encounters with bears. Every story I’ve encountered so far ended in triumph for the human beings. But somewhere there must have been cases where the bear was the victor.

C. Stewart, another Belfast, caught a bear once that was about the size of a full grown sheep. He slew it with a stick.

But the Rev. McLennan killed a large bear with a stick. The reputedly powerful clergyman met the animal while he was out walking one evening with his wife.

But here's one where two women chased a bear up a tree. One of the women kept the bear up the tree while her companion went home to bring a man to shoot it. No names were given but the ladies came from Point Prim.

#### First Belfast School Teacher

DONALD NICHOLSON who came from Scotland on The Polly, was the first school teacher in Belfast. He was also the first merchant. He was the first to ship off produce, to import supplies. He was the first ship owner. He had two vessels in the Newfoundland trade, shipping cattle and produce.

A few families who had been in Belfast prior to the Polly, "were known to have supported life for one winter when provisions were scarce, by catching rabbits, and digging clams after cutting three to four feet of ice on the flats, the old story said.

#### Two Important Anniversaries

A COUPLE of old friends from the Breadalbane area have most important anniversaries coming up in the near future. Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Buchannan celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on Wednesday, October 26, and Mr. Buchannan observes his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary on Thursday, October 10.

Mr. Buchannan and Charles S. MacDonald, who now live in the Montague area, were born within one mile of each other 100 years ago. Mr. MacDonald observed his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary on Saturday, July 23 and now Mr. Buchannan's turn comes only a few months later.

Mr. MacDonald's birthplace was in Stanchel.