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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Myrick Story Is Interesting

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THE DEATH of John B. Myrick in Tignish this week reminds me that I called on this friendly, courteous businessman last fall on a four-day trip to West Prince, and talked with him about some of the earlier developments in that area. Unfortunately I mislaid the note book in which this and several other interviews were recorded. It was only a few days ago that it turned up.

"IT WAS my grandfather, John H. Myrick, who started the business in this province when he located at Yankee Brook, near the old Nail Pond Beach, but he later moved to Tignish," the grandson told me.

It was a long time ago, before the days lobsters were fished commercially, that the Myricks came to this province. They had stores at Alberton and Tignish with a private telephone line between them, and that was long before telephones were available to the public generally in that area, I gathered. The Myricks had a fish market in Charlottetown too, but they closed it about 1910.

IT WAS a Myrick school chum, J. Henri Blanchard, who told me recently he recalls the great Tignish fire which burned through Tignish Sunday, August 30, 1896. It was in the midst of a miserably hot spell and 66 buildings were destroyed in all. Nobody could do anything to stop it as most of the wells had dried up, Mr. Blanchard recalls.

Merchants in those days used to lay in their winter supplies early in the year - they came by ship - and Myrick's had such stores as molasses, sugar, and lard. The Myrick buildings were destroyed along with the others. "I remember that there was a huge stream of molasses running down the center of the roadway that day", Mr. Blanchard tells me.

Mr. Myrick recalled for me the huge codfish that were caught in those early days, some of them so heavy they virtually had to be hoisted by derricks.

Myrick Beef On Boer War Field

THE MYRICKS canned fish and they also canned meat at Tignish Shore. They brought cattle in from all over Prince County and that is a story for another column, but one story interested me.

A Harvard graduate who was retained by the Myricks to tutor their children spent one summer travelling and visiting the Boer War battlefield. Imagine his surprise to pick up a tin of bully beef on the old battlefield that had been packed by Myricks in Tignish.

Several of the older West Prince residents told me that people used to spread lobsters on the land for fertilizer in the early days, before they were marketed as a food delicacy. Mr. Myrick could not confirm that for me, but he did tell me that thousands of

tons of Irish Moss had been spread on the land before it became known as a commercial product, and a great deal of it had also been used to bank houses.

“It was back in 1940 that Henry Holman, Summerside, called and told me a New Jersey man was interested in the possibility of getting the product on the Island”, Mr. Myrick told me. Dr. A.W.H. Needler, then head of the biological station at Ellerslie, was naturally interested in the idea. Dr. Needler was here this week as deputy minister of fisheries attending the fisheries conference.

Myrick took them to Nail Pond where a bunch of the moss had piled. The pile had disappeared but it left a “white ring” and the New Jersey man explained “my God, that’s Irish Moss”.

Mr. Myrick recalled that his mother had used it to make Blancmange pudding, but up until then it had not been recognized in the community for its true commercial value.

Incidentally the demand for Moss came to the Island during the war years when it was impossible to get ships to transport it from the normal sources of supply across the seas.

### An Important Industry Now

PRICE WAS a problem at first as the seven cents per pound reportedly paid to people in France was not enough to make it worth handling. “Finally we got the price up from seven to eight cents a pound for unbleached and 12 cents for bleached moss to the fisherman, and it was worth gathering”. Myrick and MacIntosh handled the sale of the first moss shipped from the province.

It developed into pretty steady employment for 30 to 40 boats that rake the moss - a large percentage of the moss is raked - and a great many other people harvest it off the shore. “I think the moss industry will come back,” Mr. Myrick observed as last autumn the market was limited because “the big plants are overloaded now”, he told me.

Commenting on proposals at the time to establish a processing plant on the Island, Mr. Myrick suggested the matter should be given a great deal of study as a plant would cost a great deal of money and there were also other factors that were costly. They use carloads of sugar and chocolate in the manufacturing of the product, and the manufacturer must have a tremendous selling agency, he emphasized. The sales of pure extracts alone would not keep a plant going, he explained.

Mr. Myrick came to the province and the family business, he told me, because his eyesight was bad after graduating in engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But he did not consider his training wasted because “it taught me to think, and that has helped me later to think out problems for myself,” he observed.

The Tignish man was chairman of the first fisheries conference of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces held in Charlottetown. He was president of the P.E.I. Fisheries Federation. He was a director for five years of the National Fisheries Council and served on the advisory committee of the fisheries support board.

### Big Dairy Farms In Florida

CHARLES W. MACARTHUR writes me from Daytona Beach, Florida about a namesake, Charles MacArthur, 27 (no relation) who milks 3,400 Holstein cows daily to supply the Miami market. An uncle of young MacArthur runs a 6,000 cow herd, the former Charlottetown police chief reports.

The younger man milks 150 cows at a time in each of four barns, and these units are kept in separate pastures so there is no trouble in keeping the milking times straight.

Milkings start at 12 noon each day and again at 12 midnight. The job usually takes about five hours, he reports.

There are some very large cattle ranches here in Florida where “the old time cowboys are in use as they were in the west”, Mr. MacArthur adds.

MR. MACARTHUR sent me a tear sheet from the Daytona Beach Evening News which carries a “Readers’ Editorials” corner and Charlie’s guest editorial on the huge dairy establishments occupied a feature spot.

I recall talking some years ago with a cattle buyer for a huge fluid milk dairy farm, outside Boston, and he told me they fed their cattle inside throughout the year. Like the Florida herds, the Boston people did not raise calves, bought their herd replacements and got rid of milkers as soon as they started to drop in production to an unprofitable level.

#### Snowshoes Used To Get To Work

MANY PEOPLE in this province have never seen snowshoes but I have used a pair to get to work on stormy days this winter. Several days I came in when I couldn’t see anything stirring but myself, and I used them last Friday afternoon to go to Charlottetown from Southport. The hope is expressed that the equipment will not be needed again this spring.

The pair I have are more than 40 years old. I bought them several years ago from Warren Lord, Charlottetown who bought them around 1920 or 1921. He was a commercial traveller then, and used the equipment to get around when other means of travel were not available. The old pair are in good condition with not a break showing in the webbing.

#### Island Man Was First Governor

MY ATTENTION has been called to a “Fathers Of Confederation” series circulated for publication, that lists Sir Adam George Archibald as “the first effective Lieutenant-Governor of the Northwest Territories”, now the prairie provinces.

Research I did for a column more than a year ago indicates that Hon. David Laird, a Prince Edward Island man, was the first to undertake that assignment. And everything I read about him indicated that he was effective and successful in the performance of his arduous duties. I recall that he was particularly effective in dealing with the Indian tribes, which was a major problem in itself in those times. Mr. Laird received the appointment in 1876, a short time after the Sioux Indians had wiped out a large American force under General Custer.

There was color, adventure, hardships and danger in the long trip Laird and later his family, made from the east to Swan River, and in many of the tasks he assumed on his arrival, but available literature indicates that the Island native did his job well. It was on “an extremely cold day in March 1877 for example, that the first council of the new country was held and Laird read the “Speech from the Throne” while seated on an ordinary straight backed chair.