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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

Old Beliefs, Stories Found Interesting

By NEIL A. MATHESON

SOME FLASH backs from the book "A Saga of a Family" are interesting enough to reproduce here, even though the book by Whitman Cecil Daly is largely a story of the Daly family.

Now living in Michigan, he is a native of this province and there are many references to the early settlers of that part of the Island. The period he describes was after his grandfather arrived in the province.

The settlers bought or rented land, built homes, cleared numerous wooded sections of property, and most of them became occupied in either farming or fishing.

"The first rural schools were built on the Island in 1877," he writes.

"My father said he did not attend school until he was nine years of age."

"When he was eight he caught a severe cold which developed into pneumonia and for a long time afterward he was continually catching colds and had to stay inside the house most of that winter."

### Never Combed Grey Hair

ONE DAY when Joe Daly was ill, his mother called the doctor and asked "Why can't Joe go out and play with his brothers without catching cold, or coming down with a fever?"

The doctor, apparently convinced the boy would not live long, replied in a low voice "Mrs. Daly, you may as well face it, Joe will never comb a grey hair."

Of that statement Joe said much later "I didn't understand what the doctor meant at the time, but you know he was nearly right because I have been bald since I was 30. Joe added "Now I come to think of it, I helped bury that doctor and the two others that followed him."

Joe Daly actually lived to be in his 91<sup>st</sup> year, thus he lived longer than any of his seven brothers.

### Many Flashbacks Recalled

THE DALY book contains dozens of flash backs. Here is one I find interesting because it applies, in part at least, to the era which many of my own generation remember.

As Daly put it "That was the era of house parties. Neighbours visited neighbours, there were barn raising parties, grain threshing parties, rug and mat hooking parties. There were pie socials, quilting bees; in short everyone in the village helped his or her neighbor."

Joe Daly got a job in a Maine fishery plant, Tildens, or rather brother Dan got the job for him. His first job was boiling lobsters and the first pay was five dollars.

But from that five dollars Joe bought a pair of boots for his mother for \$1.50 and paid an additional 40 cents for sending it parcel post. He stayed with Dan and paid \$1.50 for room and board.

### Seven-Day Week No Good

Joe Daly quit Tildens when he was made supervisor. It would mean he would sometimes have to work on Sundays and he always said a man who had to work seven days to make a living should get some other kind of work.

Whitman Daly's book said that the lobsters sometimes came in on a Sunday and they had to be processed right away.

They were dumped into a tank of boiling water "to preserve the meat and keep the lobster meat from sticking to the shell".

I checked with Friend Herring at the P.E.I. department of fisheries and found this is not the case now. Lobsters are kept in trays with water circulating around them, or kept in crates in clean salt water. They can be kept that way for months, witness the lobster pound operations.

But Mr. Herring agreed that the more direct processing must have been thought necessary in those early days of which The Saga of a Family reports.

### Most Unusual Forerunner Story

UNUSUAL FORERUNNER – Here is one of the most unusual "forerunner" stories I have ever heard or read.

Joe Daly's first wife, Maggie MacEachern, whom he had married in 1895, died soon after bearing a son, Stephen, in January, 1896. The baby, Stanley, was cared for by Maggie's mother.

Whitman Daly writes:

My father told me this story. About four months after Maggie's death, while sleeping on an old-fashioned lounge he had a dream where she (Maggie) appeared before him.

She stated that although her lifetime had been brief, nevertheless he had made her happy.

Maggie in the dream said "Joe, you are a young man and being a sailor, you have to be away from home while earning a living and I'm afraid Stanley will become a burden to you.

Anyway you will be unable to care for him by yourself and this means that either my mother, or some other woman will have to raise him and I don't want this to happen, so I'm taking him with me."

Whitman adds in his book that "Father said that although the boy appeared quite healthy, he took a convulsion and died within a week."

Joe Daly later married Miss Ida A. Whitman of Beaver Harbor.

### "Mother Just Died"

AND HERE is another unusual forerunner story from "The Saga of a Family 1820-1926".

My father was aboard the schooner Dianthus off the Nova Scotia coast. While asleep in the cabin he dreamed that the steamer Electra came into the harbor at Beach Point, past the Beach wharf and travelled overland to the front door of Grandmother Daly's house where all of her passengers disembarked and after entering the front door and searching through the house, all came out the back door of the house and returned to the steamer.

When father awakened and noted the time by his watch, he went on deck and said to Uncle Abe (Joe's brother) "Mother just died."

Upon his arrival home he found that his mother had passed away at the very time of his dream. She was in her seventieth year.

BEECHER GRAHAM'S STORIES – On Friday I attended along with many old Rose Valley neighbors the funeral of Beecher Graham who came to Rose Valley when I was a young lad.

The large number of people who came to Charlottetown to his funeral was evidence of the esteem in which they had held this friendly man who was rarely stuck for a laugh provoking story in his better days.

I recall two of the many stories he had. Both were fantasies, but they brought laughs to his neighbors and visitors and that is what this friendly, cheerful man liked to do best.

He told one night of how his family had been very poor when he was young.

With a straight face Beecher said "I remember that we had very few chairs in our kitchen so when company would come, father would put each of us little chaps into a bag and hung us on nails which were in the walls around the kitchen."

NO SUPPER – PENNY EACH – Another time Beecher said that often his father and mother would not have enough food to give the children their supper so "they would give us a penny each to go to bed without our supper."

"When we got to sleep the penny would usually be under our pillow and they would take it back and give us the same penny for the same reason the next night."

I remember just one more. In the dead of winter neighbors would gather and start swapping yarns about the coldest nights they could remember.

When Beecher had heard most of the whoppers he would come up with this one.

"I remember it would be so cold in our kitchen in the winter mornings that the nails in the board floor would be covered with frost. We had to be careful not to step on them with our bare feet or the frost would pull the skin off."

I lack the exact wording in some cases, particularly in this last yarn, but the stories are true in substance as I recall over a span of many years.

To Mrs. Graham and members of their family, I'm not being light in my reference to your husband and father. I feel the man that he was would like to have somebody use several of his old stories, to bring a laugh to a reader, even though I cannot tell them with the color he could get into a yarn when he told them to a crowd.