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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Tignish Native Tells Of Big Fox Bonanza

By NEIL A. MATHESON

ANGUS A. MCGINNIS lives in Elizabeth, New Jersey but he was born in Tignish. Our energetic Tignish correspondent, Edie Eldershaw, has sent me a story from a New Jersey newspaper which tells something of this man's colorful story.

The former Island man now in his 80th year, recalls when breeding of foxes was a major industry here. McInnis was himself very much a part of the development.

The New Jersey paper indicates that McGinnis "credits himself with being among the first to employ the stud system with foxes."

The paper adds that "Charles Dalton, the Prince Edward Islander who started fur farming in North America" bred then in pairs and others followed this technique.

McInnis began rotating one male among several females in the 1920's.

"Dalton by then a millionaire, came over personally to see how it was done. But McInnis was no slouch himself. He estimates that during some good years in the 1930's he sold 60 to 70 pelts. At \$600 a pelt, this could amount to a fairly substantial income. As he says with Scottish terseness, "I made out pretty good".

\$30,000 A Pair

"BUT RAISING furs wasn't a quick-cash field. A pair of breeding foxes could cost as much as \$30,000, which is what made McGinnis's innovation important to breeders.

"Foxes only breed once a year, producing a litter of three to five, generally. They are also subject to worms. One farm lost several thousand of the animals in one year, he recalls.

"At the height of the fox fur fashion in the 1930's, Russian trappers began sending silver foxes they had captured to Canada. Wild fox pelts were sold for \$15 each and the Canadian domestic fur market collapsed. Finally furs lost their chic and today, he says, there are only a few farms left."

I've heard many reasons given for the decline of the industry but this is the first time I have heard this explanation.

Second Time Around

TALK OF BREEDING once a year, Norman "Hawk" Larter, Milton told me a few days ago that he has geese which are now laying for the second time this year, and this is most unusual, Mr. Larter emphasizes.

The Milton farmer, who is also a keen hockey booster, would like to hear about any other flock of geese who started breeding and laying for the second time in a single season, after completing the first cycle. He has never heard of it himself, he tells me.

Mrs. Eldershaw tells me that James and Paul, sons of Angus, were prominent boxers some years ago and I'm wondering if the first reference is to the chap we knew as

“Jimmy McInnis” who was drowned here close to 30 years ago. He was one of the smartest Island boxers I have seen in my time of observing sport here.

Angus took a few of the better fox furs with him, the New Jersey paper reports. He is acting superintendent of a comfortable building at 409 Westminster Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Mr. McInnis had great pride in the industry, Mrs. Eldershaw relates, and often after the industry had died down, would show off the few furs he had kept for such purpose.

‘The Victory Chimes’

I HAD reference to the schooner “Victory Chimes” in this column some months ago. It brought considerable correspondence, but one of the most interesting, and informative letters came from my old friend Dougald MacKinnon, Mt. Buchannan.

This man who was a long time member of the legislature and a member of several Island governments, believes that the “Victory Chimes” built by the late Senator John A. MacDonald, Cardigan “was one of the most successful and rewarding enterprises in the saga of what some people called “The Wild Ships” , Mr. MacKinnon observes.

But he observes also that the Victory Chimes to which I had reference in this column is not that ship at Cardigan.

“I saw her hulk , ‘the Victory Chimes’, minus spars and standing rigging on the beach on the west side of the outer harbor at Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. The last time I looked all that was left of her were her bleaching timbers strewn among the flotsam of the surging Fundy tides.

“She had been owned in her latter days by a captain on West Side where they kept their ships in front of their houses; they stood high at low tide, with guy ropes running to their fence posts from ships’ rigging to hold the vessel on an even keel in the hard sand.

“But one day, after the tide had fallen something happened to the line on the Victory Chimes, she fell over on her side and the sudden jolt parted the plank from her keel from end to end.

“So that ended the life of one of the lucky few, which escaped the requiem, “Never Returned, of Fate Unknown.”