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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### MacAusland Woolen Mills Visit Interests

By NEIL A. MATHESON

“WORK FAITHFULLY eight hours a day and don’t worry, in time you may become boss and work 16 hours and have all the worry.”

“Yesterday I thought things were so bad that they couldn’t possibly get any worse. Today I find I was wrong.”

I read the messages on two cards pinned on the wall of the MacAusland Woolen Mills, Bloomfield while I waited until Ed MacAusland was ready to talk with me about this business which goes back many years.

The present mill started in 1932 but we used to card wool for hand spinning for years before that,” Mr. MacAusland explained.

In the earlier days there was a saw mill and also a grist mill where grain was ground by the stones imported from France.

### More Than A Century

I ASKED Mr. MacAusland how many years the original business went back. He said the old building went back more than one hundred years. You could tell its age because the braces, etc. were put together with wooden pins

The timbers were “solid as a church” –the timbers were 18 inches square.

“You wonder how the old generation got those huge timbers up into place, but they were put there by main strength and awkwardness, I presume,” Mr. MacAusland suggested smilingly.

The old mill is no longer there, as “a flash fire in the afternoon back in 1949 destroyed it completely. Within an hour everything was in rubble,” he recalls.

The same week our father passed on, so it was somewhat of a double tragedy in the one week.

Father was Fred MacAusland, the founder of the business. The two sons Ed and Reg run the business now.

Father’s word was law, when he told us something, he meant it, said this son who assured me he and Reg got good sound advice from their father.

The brothers, Ed and Reg, consulted their banker and he told them to “go back home and go to work”. They had his backing all the way.

### Hunt For Machinery

IT MEANT considerable travelling as the two brothers took off looking for machinery. Montreal and a number of places in the United States were visited.

They put in the foundation for the present building October 1, 1949 and by December 31 “we had machinery on the floor, and in operation.”

“We’ve been going ever since, making yarn and blankets. We do an extensive trade with Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. There are woolen mills in New Brunswick.

The MacAuslands get a lot of wool from Quebec. They import New Zealand wool through a Toronto firm, from the same firm we buy wool that comes from Bradford, England.

“It is a very fine quality of wool, very nice to work with. It’s much cleaner than our local wool, but we blend it with the local product.”

The MacAuslands meet a great many people. “We had about 1,000 people sign our guest book this year.”

But here’s a story with a difference:

### Lost One Daughter

IN MID-SEPTEMBER a man and his wife from Talahasee, Florida visited us. They had a travelling home and they had their nine children with them.

They were in here for an hour or more, but they forgot to call the roll when they left. As a result we had a nine-year old girl, she came up to the office here, the tears, understandably, were flowing down her cheeks.

We consoled her, took her over to the house and the women got her acquainted with some of the grandchildren; they were playing around together.

The father and mother had motored down to New Glasgow, to the lobster supper there, before they found she was missing. They went to get their tickets for the Lobster Supper and that is where they missed their little girl.

So they called us on the telephone and had to drive all the way back to pick up their daughter.

A Vermont sheep rancher called and said he was going to ship some of his wool to the mill. Mr. MacAuland warned him, though, that he had better consult with Canada Customs before he tried to ship his wool.

The people at the Mills have not heard from him, so, apparently, the Customs charges must have been discouraging.

“We meet so many interesting people,” Mr. MacAusland summed it up.

Purchasing wool casually has its problems. People ship what they called “washed wool” and really it has “just been dipped in the water and given a scare” so to speak.

“But it’s been very interesting, all through my life. I’ve enjoyed it very much.”

### This One Is Different

HERE IS another of the better stories I gleaned at the MacAusland’s mill:

Back in the “Hungry Thirties” the price of wool was down to about eight cents a pound. A Port Hill lady decided she would not sell her wool but she would wash it and have it processed into what they call batting.

She was going to make a mattress with it. She got her husband to make the frame of her mattress, she went to Holman’s and got the ticking and she brought her wool up here.

She got her wool processed into batts and got her mattress made.

About seven years ago this lady arrived at the mill and said she had some good wool. My son and I went out and brought it up – the office at MacAusland’s Mill is upstairs one flight from the ground floor level – but it was a mattress.

We weighed it and opened the mattress very carefully, so as not to injure the fabric. It was in beautiful condition.

#### 40 Years Good Interest

WE PAID her 70 cents a pound for her wool, so she had 40 years of good interest on her money. She got the long price for it, after sleeping on it for 40 years.

I asked Mr. MacAusland "how have wool prices fluctuated over the years?"

I remember, he said, that wool started out at a dollar per pound here a few years ago. "We paid a dollar a pound to approximately five farmers for their wool."

It levelled off at approximately 85 cents a pound, but that was only for one year.

Next year the wool started off at 40 cents a pound, and gradually crept up five cents to 45 cents.

There's practically no difference in the quality of wool that is produced by various breeds of Island sheep. It's all good quality wool.

#### Australian Lambs' Wool

"WE USUALLY get lambs wool from Australia. It's a very fine wool. We blend it with our own." We usually use it for making blankets. There's a distinct whiteness to it. The sheep are out on the range in Australia the year around.

Today people demand a napped blanket they want it soft and fluffy.

Asked how prices varied over the years, Mr. MacAusland said "I remember selling our blankets for around \$6.75 to \$8.75 a pair. Now our white blankets sell for \$10.75 each, and the colored ones are \$11.75 each or \$22.00 a pair.

But the price doesn't seem to bother the tourists. I suppose one of those blankets we sell for \$10.75 here would probably retail for up to \$13.00 in the United States, he suggested.

"The mill pays the farmer 34 cents a pound for unwashed wool. For nice, clean, washed wool the price is 54 to 55 cents a pound. If the farmer in each case has 100 pound of wool he gets a deficiency payment from Ottawa. It amounts to perhaps 20 cents a pound, Mr. MacAusland was not sure of the exact amount.