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ACROSS THE ISLAND

'Pretty Yellow Pigs' Spanish Armada Gold

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I HAVE to thank Mrs. Edgar Murphy, Clermont for one of the more interesting buried treasure stories that have come to Across the Island. Here is the story as the Clermont lady told it to me earlier this summer.

My grandmother, Mrs. Garrett Fitzgerald, came to Prince Edward Island from Tralee, Ireland in 1858 and settled in Waterford, then called Horse Head. Her husband had come to the Island a year or so before that and had built a home of lumber he took from his land. He made the cedar shingles by hand. Several rows of his cedar fence are still standing.

One day, in the 1890's, my mother brought home from the store a bean pot, which had two handles. The old lady seemed to reminisce on seeing it, then said:

"I saw only one other vessel that shape, and do you know where it was?" "In Tralee".

Kettle Was Full Of Golden 'Pigs'

"ONE DAY I was playing on the shore and gathering mussels and cockles off the rocks. The tide was very far out. When I tried to climb back over a sturdy rock, the edge of it moved. I took a tighter hold on it, and sure enough off came the top, like a table leaf. Inside was a hole big enough for a large iron kettle, which had a heavy lid.

"What a sight when I lifted the lid. It was full to the top of 'little pigs', so shiny, and beautiful and heavy – I took a few up in my hand. I was so interested that I scarcely noticed that the other children were going home, and were calling for me to come along.

"I put the cover back on the kettle and climbing up, rushed home to tell my father. He just laughed, but to please me finally he went down to the shore with me, but the tide had come in, and we could not see the rock.

"Several times I persuaded him to try to find it, but that was all I ever saw of the beautiful little toys," Mrs. Murphy's grandmother had told them.

Mrs. Murphy tells me, and the quotes are hers now:

"Mother told me this story many years before she died, and she said that grandmother never exaggerated, and heartily disliked 'tall stories', so my mother believed the story was true.

The old grandmother's granddaughter was secretary to the Dominion archivist in Ottawa about the time I heard the story and she asked the archivist if any European country had had its gold bullion made into the form of pigs, and the man said 'Spain had done that at the time of the Armada'. He had added that some were actually buried along the coast of Ireland."

So there you have a buried treasure story right from the land of Erin itself, told by a daughter of that country who came to this country in the long ago.

Bonshaw Road Race Recalled

FINLEY MACKINNON, Marshfield brought me a story this week which included a note on a Bonshaw road race held perhaps 55 years ago. I was unable to get a more definite date.

Of the men who ran the five miles on that occasion only two are now living. They are John A. MacKinnon, Churchill who finished second and Premier Walter Shaw who was third. The race was won as near as I can learn, by a man named Russel Smith. I talked with the Premier about it before he and Mrs. Shaw left for Europe a few days ago, and he recalls the event, though neither he nor Mr. MacKinnon was sure of the exact year.

The race started at Crosby's Mills, went up a sharp hill to the Green Road to "The Portage" and then back to Bonshaw and to Crosby's Mills, Mr. MacKinnon told me this week.

Puppet Show Is Really Fun

I SAW the Canadian Puppet Theatre's show here this week for the first time and suggest to parents of young children they take in this show if at all possible.

It runs about an hour and it's crammed with fun and action. They even have a bull fight in it, and there's a bushel of laughs. I saw the show from the theatre first and then went back stage and watched the people work the puppets.

Frank and Marilyn Rodwell, a man and his pretty wife from Toronto and John Rapsy – he's a post graduate student at Bishop's College near Montreal – and Alex Eftimoff who is master of ceremonies all seem to get a tremendous kick out of doing the show.

THESE PEOPLE laugh at times as they follow the busy routine of bringing the many puppet characters to life, even though they've done the show dozens of times, and might be expected to get bored with it.

But there are unusual things happening back of the curtain. Alex is the guy who works the Bull Puppet in the bull fight and John handles the matador. On one of the charges Alex made with the bull, he swept past the matador and as he turned to come back for another charge, Alex tipped off the tiny wheeled-box on which he sits, lost his balance and had to scramble back into action quickly to maintain the rapid pace of the show. Those people really work strenuously on their show.

I spent a great deal of my time out front watching the children – the theatre was filled - and I've never seen happier or more interested faces. They were fairly bug-eyed with excitement.

Impromptu Star Has Island Parents

A TOP part in the show for me was the performance of John Feehan of Dartmouth, a nine-year-old boy Alex called up to help him as he sang the folk song about the "old woman who swallowed a fly," and various other things. John was asked to sing the line "I guess she'll die" and Alex told the boy he should make it sound sad. The Dartmouth youngster almost stole the show momentarily with the degree of synthetic sympathy he put into his voice as he sang the line.

I talked with Mrs. Feehan after the show and found she and her husband come from the Island. She was the former Hazel Hughes of Fort Augustus, and she taught school for a half dozen years. Her husband, James Feehan, is from Mt. Stewart.

The green monster they have in the show made me think of the “serpentine sea monster” Raeford MacLean, O’Leary and John Ellis, West Point told me about. (The story ran in this column July 8). For the benefit of summer visitors, the monster was estimated to be 60 to 90 feet long. The puppet monster doesn’t compare for size, but he’s an interesting looking ‘monster’ for all of that.

Before I leave the puppet show, I’ve always been interested in puppets and wondered just how they are worked. My 60 minutes backstage Tuesday afternoon was interesting and enjoyable. My thanks to the four friendly stars who made me welcome, despite the already cramped quarters in which they had to work.

I should tell you also that a great deal of professional know-how goes into some of those puppet acts. Most of you have seen the “Italian mouse” puppet on the Ed Sullivan show. It was Irene Rapsy, John’s charming wife, who told me that there are four puppeteers manipulating the tiny mouse. And John tells me that some of the top international puppeteers refuse to divulge some of their secrets for making their puppets come to life.

Puppets are normally considered for youngsters but I spotted a good number of adults in the audience as I glanced around. All of them seem to be amused. But the youngsters – boy, they really had a ball.

If you want to get in really good with your youngsters, I suggest you see and hear Frank, Marilyn, John and Alex in their really entertaining routine.