

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., May 29, 1964

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Ghost Stories Heard From Many Districts

I LIKE the type of ghost story where a logical explanation is a part of the yarn. It is not really as bloodcurdling but it is interesting.

Allison MacMillan, Fairview tells a yarn of how a man from his area was driving with a horse and wagon from Lowther's Point once in the long ago. And when he was nearing the site of the present Nine Mile Creek school, a very tall woman dressed in white and with two heads dashed toward the wagon. Keeping pace with the horse, she seemed to glide along with ease, staring at the man with bright, piercing eyes, all four of them. The badly frightened man drove his horse a furious speed over such a long distance that the animal died next day.

That sets the stage for Allison's personal experience story and it goes something like this. Then a youngster, Allison had been working all day with his father digging potatoes at the farm of William Ross in Nine Mile Creek.

LEAVING THE FARM that evening in a cart with his father, the boy had fallen asleep in some straw in the cart box, while his father sat in the front of the cart with his feet on one shaft and drove the horse as was the custom in those days.

Suddenly, though, the horse stumbled and threw the elder Mr. MacMillan to the ground. The cart box upset and threw Allison to the ground. But the basket came down too and fell over his head so that the handle became temporarily fastened around his neck.

Awakened suddenly the young boy was almost frantic with fright as the thought that burned on his mind was that the ghost of which he had heard so often had him by the neck.

Dark Bay Horse Turns White

JOE MacDOUGALL, Alberton told me that Joseph Hammill who lived in Greenmount 80 years ago or more, had borrowed a tub to scald the pigs in . That evening he was taking the tub back to the owner, Tim Ryan, who lived on the O'Rourke Road, when the dark bay horse stopped and refused to move. Hammill got out and found the bridle was off the horse. A little farther on the horse stopped again, and again the bridle was off.

The horse stopped a third time, but this time he bolted and ran before Hammill could get to replace the bridle. The animal ran all the way home in apparent terror. Next morning the Hammills found a white horse in the barn where the dark bay had stood. The suggestion is the animal had turned white because of the fright.

THE COLOR of a horse can be affected by fright, insists Mr. MacDougall who recalled an experience back in his younger days where he worked for Mrs. Dan Gillis, Montrose and was driving to Alberton wharf for a load of coal with a team of her horses.

One horse was terribly frightened of cars which had just started to run, and he met an automobile driven by Merrill Myrick at the foot of Gordon's Hill.

The frightened horse lifted his head skyward, looked up at the crossbar of a telephone pole and shivered and trembled as the car rolled slowly by. Next morning the animal had "a white ring as big as a saucer" in the area of his heart. The ring never left the animal," Mr. MacDougall told me.

This story is a bit different and again Mr. MacDougall is the man who told it.

Phantom Prowler Tough Opponent

PETER AHEARN, a one-time town clerk at Alberton, was one of the men who lived in a fishing shack near North Cape during the lobster season. Each night the men would hear the sound of heavy boots clumping up the steps to the shack, which had been made mostly from lumber taken from wrecked ships along that stormy coast. John Agnew, father of William E. Agnew, former P.E.I. trade director, ran the lobster factory in the area.

The steps would approach the shack, the door would open, they would hear the sound of someone tramping around, then the door would close and the steps would be heard clumping down the steps, as the nightly intruder left the area. But nobody was able to see anything, though all of them could hear the noises.

Finally one, John Ireland, brother-in-law of Mr. Agnew, heard the tale and decided to do something about it. He went to the shack and waited until the boots clumped up the steps, then dashed out to grapple with the intruder but, Mr. MacDougall told me, Ireland "took a terrific thumping" but he couldn't catch hold of the intruder or feel it at all as he struck at it, or where it should have been judging from the sound.

Barn Was Built On Fairy Hill

A MAN who lived on the O'Rourke Road, near Alberton, was losing most of his best cattle and horses. So many died that it was becoming impossible to carry on the farm operation. An Old Countryman heard of the trouble, and proffered advice.

"Your barn is built on a fairy hill", he told the stricken farmer.

"But what can I do about that?" the man replied.

"Select a spot that you think will be suitable, not too far away from the house, so it will be within easy reach," the man advised.

"Then drive a sharp stake into the ground at that spot. If the stake is still there in the morning, move your barn to that spot, and your troubles will be over. If the stake is not there in the morning, drive a stake in another location the next evening, and keep on doing that until one stake is still there in the morning where you drove it the previous night. That will be the new location for your barn", the advisor counseled.

Fifteen stakes were driven before the man found one that had been left in the ground overnight. "He moved the barn on to that spot, and never lost another animal", Mr. MacDougall told me.

Butter Would Not Come In Churn

WILLIAM GORRILL, O'Leary passed on a story his father had told him about a woman in a West Prince locality "who was the only known witch in the area".

The trouble on this occasion was that butter would not come on the cream when it was churned. That's a familiar ghost story subject, but this time the solution is a bit different.

The farmer was told to draw a likeness of the woman on a wide board, and shoot at it with a shot gun. The likeness was crudely drawn - few farmers are artists - and a blast from the gun hit the figure in the ankle. The man had aimed low purposely because he couldn't shoot at a woman, not even a likeness on a piece of wood.

The story that had been handed down says the woman broke her leg at the ankle, at the exact time the shot was fired, and the curse on the churn was removed.

I often wonder about those stories about "curses on churns" for I recall that as a boy I handled the churn for hours on end sometimes, without getting the butter, which would come quickly when everything was right. And we never went looking for a witch. The explanation was that the cream was not the right temperature or any one of a dozen other reasons.

But the old "curse on the churn" stories make interesting reading.

If you are inclined to scoff at those curse stories, and I imagine most of you are, I should explain that it was a common belief in earlier years.

Captain Seeks Ship After 25 Years

TOM MORRISON, Montrose told me the story about Isaac (Ike) Lewis who was "baching" for a day or so on "the sand hills" near Alberton at the close of the lobster season. He had laid in a supply of wood in the old shack one afternoon, and had piled it under the stove, as it looked like a storm would develop.

That night he was awakened by the sound of a man pushing in the door. The midnight intruder went to the stove and started pulling the wood from underneath it.

Ike lit a lamp and shouted "what do you want?"

"I am looking for the stern of my vessel", came the reply.

Then Lewis who was short sighted, grabbed the lamp and came close to the night visitor. Imagine his amazement when he found it was an old friend, a Sea Captain who had gone down with his ship in that vicinity 25 years previously.

Step-Dancing And Fiddling Contest

The Maritime Centennial old time step dancing and fiddling contest at the Charlottetown Forum tomorrow night recalls to mind the first competition of that type I saw there. If this one is as good - and it should be better with Maritime entries - I hope to have a look at it, for an hour or so at least. There are 10 divisions, and there will be 30 prizes awarded.

The famous Cheverie fiddlers of Bear River - all five of them - were prominent contestants, and winners, the night I am recalling. I hope some of them will be playing this time.

