



Seed Potato Growers Had Rough Initiation

I am always conscious of the co-operation I receive from so many people who read this farm column, and "Across the Island". They supply me with readable stories; with some that are a part of our Island history, and at times they check me up when I get a bit off the beam.

Allison MacLeod, Charlottetown, always tells me "don't use my name" when he calls me as he has done so many times with helpful information. But I'm going to use it this time because the story resulting from his call is so good.

A few weeks ago I told how a potato production "started in this province in 1918". That was true in the sense it was intended: the seed potato certification service at Ottawa was only set up in 1916.

But seed potato attempts in this province, particularly the attempt to produce them in volume, goes back to Sir Andrew MacPhail and his brother Alexander, in the early years of the century.

I got the details of the story from Col. G. Elliot Full, Charlottetown on Allison's suggestion. Sir Andrew and "Sandy" played with seed potatoes — they grew as much as 25 to 30 acres, Col. Full believes. And the effort covered the years 1906, 1907 and 1908, it is suggested.

Apparently the effort was not too successful — I have no direct knowledge of this. But one interesting story I heard suggested that the MacPhails tried to ship seed potatoes in boxes, with the spuds carefully wrapped in a type of paper that would protect them from any type of bruising. The story said that the tubers were wrapped too tightly and they spoiled. I pass it on just as I heard it.

EARLIER EFFORT

But the information from Col. Full is authentic. He recalls that his father, George E. Full,

had purchased digging and mechanical planting equipment from the MacPhails. Mr. Full had tried producing seed potatoes back in 1909 and 1910. But the effort did not prove economically successful for Mr. Full who was seeking some endeavor that would work in with the operation of his starch plant at Hunter River.

But his son recalls that Mike Melver of Kinkora was the man who really brought the big-rod concept of seed potatoes to this province. It was back in 1922 Col. Full tells me that Melver came back to Kinkora from Maine where he had been growing potatoes in volume.

This native Kinkora man brought with him the sort of mechanical planting of hill planting and other ideas which were unknown here at the time.

It just happens that several people had been talking to me about Mr. Melver only a few days before I talked with Col. Full. The old story was that the man came here with \$100,000 and lost all of it. I recall visiting him in the Village Green area back in the early 1950s when I was in politics.

I recall that Melver built a beautiful mansion of a home in Kinkora. It's the one that is now used as a convent. It was a bit of optimistic advice that proved unreliable that resulted in Mr. Melver's financial downfall, old residents of Kinkora tell me. He was advised the good price would be high in spring, bought very heavily, at better than going market prices, and then was stuck with the result when the market flopped, the old story said.

MARKET FLUCTUATIONS

Here's an exercise in memory for some of you who remember the ups and downs of the potato market. Col. Full recalls that the potato prices were low in 1924, tops in 1925, medium in 1926 and 1927, they hit bottom in 1928,

were good in 1929, fair in 1930 and went to pieces in 1931.

This was the 1930 crop that had to be sold in the winter and spring of 1931. The disaster brought prices that gave Island producers as low as six cents per bushel for seed potatoes.

And the only reason they got that much was that William R. Boulter — he was secretary of the old P.E.I. Potato Growers Association — made enough money on fertilizer sales the previous spring to make a little more money available to the association members, I am told.

This is from my own memory but I think it was in the spring of 1933 that I attended a meeting of the old Potato Growers Association — I'm sure "Life" Howatt would remember this — when one of the members made a particularly angry attack on the association's president, J.J. Trainor, Bedford and on Mr. Boulter who were on the platform.

I was a youngster at the time — I had started with the Patriot several months previously — and I wondered just how the chairman, Mr. Trainor, would handle this rough attack. But I was in for a most pleasant surprise.

"I thank you sir for having an honest opinion and the courage to express it so forcefully. Is there any other gentleman who wishes to speak?" was the cool reply. And it just about took all the fight out of most of the angry members who were in the hall. I always had an admiration for Mr. Trainor after that.

Col. Full's story about Sir Andrew and Sandy MacPhail's potato growing effort reminds me of a visit the Mathesons had back in May to the home of their niece, Florence MacPhail Peck in Nobleboro, Maine.

TALKED ALL NIGHT

I was asking many questions

about the MacPhail family and I recall her telling me that Andrew — he was knighted later — and Sandy MacPhail sat up and talked all night in their home at Orwell the night war broke out. And the next morning they left their home; Andrew for Montreal — he became a high ranking officer in the Canadian Army Medical Corps; and Alexander, or Sandy, for Kingston where he recruited a company of engineers from the students and graduates of the engineering classes, he had taught at Queen's University.

Oswald Newson and Son, Kingston have two animals from their good Diamond Hill Holstein herd entered in two nationally known sales next month.

SALES COMBINED

Diamond Hill Lyn is entered in the Sale of Stars held at the Royal Winter Fair and Diamond Hill Rocket is entered in the Amalgamated sale which combines the two sales known previously as the National and the All Canadian.

The Amalgamated will be held at the Hays Sales Arena in Oakville, Ontario on Wednesday, November 10; the Sale of Stars at the Royal Winter Fair on Wednesday November 17.

Rocket is a January calf. His dam Diamond Hill Texal Lady, 11 years is a former grand champion at Charlottetown after winning her class as a three-year old. Texal Lady's best production was 17,144 pounds of milk, 725 fat for an average test of 4.23 as a seven-year old cow.

Robarts Sees Canada Strong And Independent

TORONTO (CP) — Premier Robarts asked himself Monday whether Canada can continue as an independent nation — and answered himself with an emphatic "yes."

He said that holding to Canada's political and economic independence would be a backward step if it did not offer Canadians a rich and rewarding life.

If the situation was such that Canada could not meet the needs of its citizens, then Canadians would have to give serious consideration to other forms of political and economic organization.

But such was not the case, Mr. Robarts said.

Speaking to a board of trade dinner, he said:

"I for one, am convinced that Canada will continue as an independent nation with a national economy for the betterment of all its citizens from coast to coast."

He said Canada, in the late 1960s, must make basic decisions about its future course as a nation. The country must ask itself where it stands on national unity, national development and national independence.

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Owners: Chester Hayes - Herbert Matthews
Auctioneer: J. Frank Bryan.

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Tues., Nov. 2, 1968. 9

How to relieve BACKACHE

The newspaper says the statement by Premier Fidel Castro's brother was made recently on a visit to East Germany where he watched Soviet, Czechoslovak, Polish and East German troops engaged in joint manoeuvres.

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(Inserted by Kings Co. Liberal Ass'n.)

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