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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### 1920 Trip To Japan With Foxes Recalled

By NEIL A. MATHESON

THE BIG sales boom of \$20,000 a pair was over but the silver fox was still bringing \$800 to \$1,000 a pair when a Springfield man, William Haslam, took eight pairs to Japan back in 1920.

I talked to Mr. Haslam recently and found the foxes had been sold to a Japanese company by Gavin Harding, Graham's Road and Harlan Found, Clifton. Mr. Haslam went along as caretaker and stayed in Japan through the first breeding season.

The Japanese wanted him to stay through another breeding season – he was to go with another Japanese group that was interested in buying some pups from the Island-purchased stock. But Mr. Haslam came home in 1921. He didn't tell me this, but I imagine it was partly the desire to get back to his sweetheart who has been Mrs. Haslam for these many years. She told me she knew the man who is her husband before he went to Japan.

Mr. Haslam was paid by the Japanese and received \$100 a month and found – his housing, meals etc. – which was really good pay in those far-off years.

#### 'Russian Blue' Foxes

THE JAPANESE were no strangers to foxes for they had a large ranch of Russian Blues – Crisp Moore, Westmoreland and Dr. Leo Frank, who ranched on the land where I am now living, had some here. But they did not last long. Mr. Haslam thinks it was probably because their furs did not bring a price comparable to our own foxes.

Mr. Haslam and his foxes left here on a Monday, arrived in Vancouver Sunday forenoon, took a Canadian Pacific Overseas Service boat for Yokohama – it was a freighter – and arrived there 20 days later. From Yokohama he moved the foxes, perhaps 1,000 miles north to the Island of Hokkaido where he put them in their pens on October 20, 1920.

#### MacDonald Biscuits

LEAVING HERE Mr. Haslam fed the foxes biscuits which were sold by John A. MacDonald who was known across the province. I have been told that this tall, kindly man used to take large quantities of candy with him to toss to school children at their recesses or noon hour breaks. The foxes were fed once a day.

At Vancouver he got some beef hearts and fed them to the foxes. In Japan Mr. Haslam fed the foxes fish and whale meat.

Mr. Haslam ate rice and fish for his own food. The fish was usually salmon. Mrs. Haslam told me that William got fat while he was in Japan.

He got along splendidly with the Japanese people and found them kind. He found the people eager to learn all they could about fox ranching. Seven men worked with

him all the time, one in particular went with him and watched everything he did. This man took over when Haslam left.

The Japanese burned wood in their homes, charcoal in their fireplaces.

### Sat On The Floor

THEY HAD matting on the floor – they sat on the floor – and took off their boots when they came in, so did Mr. Haslam. “I did as the Japanese did”, he told me.

There was a bed in his part of the living quarters, but the Japanese slept at the floor level. The bed was a solid bottom, had boards on the side and it was filled with moss. This was covered by a sheet – there were lots of bed clothes, he told me.

An old folder I have found carries a program that was used at an elaborate dinner given in Charlottetown on January 20, 1920 by Dr. Leo Frank to Keishi Ishina, listed as “Fur farming expert of the Imperial Japanese Government”.

The elaborate affair was given at the Victoria Hotel, the posh hotel of that time.

Talk about a posh dinner. For the main course there were turkey, savory dressing, cranberry sauce, roast lamb, mint sauce, roast duckling, sage dressing and spiced jelly.

For dessert there was choice of apple pie, lemon pie, raspberry tarts, English plum pudding, hard and cognac sauce, caramel ice cream, assorted cake, Imperial cheese, crackers and Canadian cheese.

In addition there were such fruits as grapes, oranges, figs, apples, assorted nuts and layer raisins.

Back to the main meal there were such things as boiled Columbia salmon, sauce au cardinal, pommes Croquettes and lemon slices.

I got to know Leo Frank well in his later years and recall him telling me that he sold many shares in the Rosebank Silver Fox Farm, but many times, he told me, it had cost \$125 for the promotion work to sell \$100 worth of shares.

He must have really spent a huge amount on this dinner for the Japanese fur farming man, but I have never heard him say that he had sold any foxes to Japan.

Back to Mr. Haslam, the Springfield man told me that he had purchased a pair of foxes the fall he left for \$775. Next fall he could have bought a pair equally as good for \$400.

### Salt Is Washed Away

ONE STORY he told me is interesting. They had salted whale meat in Japan at times. So he put a box in a swiftly running stream, with holes in either end. He put the salt meat inside and let the water wash away the salt.

The breeding results in Japan were satisfactory, though not spectacular. One female had a litter of two and lost them – she was a young female. Of the eight females bred six females saved 17 pups. One had four pups and lost them all.

The young female – she was one of the two pups taken over – kept carrying her pups all the time, even digging a hole to bury them once. “I couldn’t do a thing with her”, Mr. Haslam told me.

He had good luck with his own foxes here. He had 12 females and had 48 pups one year, he had 44 pups from the dozen females another year.

There was no church in the part of Japan where he was and no clergymen of any kind. The people had temples in their own houses, or religious symbols. Sometimes they pulled the “temple” – that may not be the right word – out of the wall to worship.

He recalled that here on the Island ranchers sometimes fed calf meat to their foxes. He had a job one summer gathering calves for Mr. Harding. He paid two and three dollars for each calf, a really good one would bring five dollars.

Mr. Haslam came home aboard the Empress of Japan and made the ocean crossing in 11 days. He came by rail from Vancouver.