

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., Mar. 14, 1969

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Holey Dollars And Shipwrecks Recalled

By NEIL A. MATHESON

MRS. ROY DAWSON, Tryon has sent me a bit on coin collecting which her brother sent her from California. The column is by Robert Svensson and is called "Canadian Caper". He talks of the "Holey Dollar".

He talks of the "coin crisis" in Prince Edward Island – actually it was the Island of St. John at the time.

The crisis came at a time when coins were in short supply and this Island resorted to "a most unusual expedient".

"It was forced to make one coin do the work of two. It was none other than the Spanish Milled Dollar.

"The governor rounded up all of the coins he could find. He then ordered the centre of these coins punched out. The separate pieces were counter stamped to give each piece a separate denomination.

"The outside or 'ring' was passed for five shillings. The center became one shilling. The system worked for some time, but then residents discovered the centers were three pence overweight, and thus worth more than a shilling. So the coins disappeared from circulation.

"A large hoard was shipped to England for melting. But, alas, the ship carrying them sunk in mid-Atlantic."

MR. SVENSSON says the "Holey Dollars" are a prized collectors' item, as coin collectors here will realize.

Island Shipwrecks Told

I'M ALWAYS interested in digging up interesting Island tales of the past, but sometimes I'm plain lucky. Today, for example, I have some data on shipwrecks of our past, and I must thank C.W. Murray, 3218 Glendale Road, Halifax, N.S. for the information.

In 1812 the ship "Two Sisters", 19 tons, James van Emberg, Master, was lost on "Indian Rocks" on the south side of P.E.I., in the fall. The ship was trading between Newfoundland and Bay Chaleur. The crew was saved.

In 1820 the schooner "Atlantic", 63 tons, was wrecked on the North Shore in October, John Perry was the Master and she was bound for New London, P.E.I., from Yarmouth, N.S. The crew was saved.

In 1844 the brig "Mariner", 195 tons, Crocker Hemeon, Master went ashore on P.E.I. She sailed from Charlottetown for the United Kingdom on December. The ship was a total loss but the crew was saved and landed at Pictou.

In 1850 the brig "Dahlia", 133 tons, Alexander Lovett, Master, was wrecked at North East Point, P.E.I., in October. She was bound from Richibucto for England. The crew was saved.

In 1866 the ship "Fanny Fern", 622 tons, John Butler, Master, was wrecked at North Point, P.E.I., on October 29. Five of the crew perished. She was lost at Horse Head Lot 1 on a Saturday night.

Two local landsmen, Michael Shea and a Mr. McCarrey, were drowned in a rescue attempt. The bodies of these two, a Mr. Smith, the mate, and two seamen were buried at Tignish on October 31.

Guardian Subscriptions \$1

AGAIN I'M lucky, for this item is also contributed; it comes from Mark Arsenault of our staff and it indicates the subscription rate one paid for a newspaper 80 years ago.

Mark gave me a receipt from the Island Guardian – that is what it was called then – of April 9, 1888. It said:

"Received from W.A. Morson, City, one dollar, subscription to the Island Guardian and Christian Chronicle. It was signed R.H. Crawford and was for one year.

The man who printed the receipt form was J.W. Mitchell and someone here has suggested that this man was the father of Charles J. Mitchell, or "Charlie" as I knew him when I worked with him at The Patriot back in my earlier days of newspapering.

Funeral Costs Were Low

THAT REMINDS me that Sigsworth Ross, Vernon Bridge brought me an old receipt which is also interesting. It is the receipt for a funeral and the total cost of the funeral director at that time was \$73.

Jenkins Brothers were the funeral directors, and they also were merchants at Millview at the time which was March 1927.

Charge for "funeral services" was seven dollars, for the casket it was \$55, for the shell (some people used to call it the rough board box) the charge was five dollars and a robe cost five dollars. And there's a real switch from today's prices.

Mr. Ross also showed me a receipt for two dollars which his father, James L. Ross, paid as land taxes on 50 acres of land in 1901. The land was valued at \$1,000 and the tax rate was one-fifth of one percent. It was signed by Robert Furness, then deputy treasurer and receiver.

Robert was a half-brother of Milton Furness, Vernon Bridge who has been having health problems recently. Mr. Ross tells me he is now out of the hospital, and I hope you are feeling better, Milton.

Buggy Cost 'About \$34'

ANOTHER RECEIPT Mr. Ross showed me for four dollars which was the balance owing on a buggy. It was paid by Cephas B. Ross and the receipt was signed by B.F. Dingman, Vernon Bridge. I note that it was apparently called "Vernon River Bridge" at that time.

Mr. Ross tells me that a buggy would cost about \$34 at that time. The year was 1905.