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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Horse Racing Tracks Review Is Completed

IT'S TIME, I suggest, to complete my review of horse racing tracks that operated in this province in the years that are gone.

I want to thank the many people who called me – one man called from New Brunswick – wrote to me or called at my home or at the office.

George A. Small, Summerside, tells me a track operated at Travellers Rest and was owned by Stephen MacNeill. The present farm owner is Stirling Barlow.

Mr. Small writes "my father told me that Mr. MacNeill bought horses and cattle and shipped them by schooner from Summerside to Newfoundland."

Charlie MacKenzie, Charlottetown – he farmed in South Granville before retirement – recalls that as a young boy he was at the Millvale race track about 79 years ago. It was the first race held there and the owner was Pat Quinn.

There was a puncheon of home-made beer being sold by the dipper, right at the front of the farm. The dipper would hold about one-half a pint. It's easy to believe that a bit later there was a fight in the hollow, below the track.

Hugh MacLeod, father of the present John or "Jack" MacLeod, South Granville, used to breed and raise "Strawberry Grey" horses. He had a driving mare on the farm which he thought was pretty good. First he walked to the Millvale track which was not far away, to have a look at the opposition. Then he went back and got his "Strawberry Grey". Mr. MacKenzie recalls that the MacLeod mare was so far ahead of the others at the finish that that particular race was over. There just wasn't any competition. The men used driving wagons for the race. Mr. MacKenzie believes that track operated for some five or six years.

Mr. MacKenzie tells me the first prize for a race would probably be about \$1.50 which "was a lot of money at that time."

Four Tracks In O'Leary Area

LONG-TIME FRIEND, Mrs. Sally Carruthers, O'Leary, told me there were four tracks in the O'Leary area. One was owned by Robert Ellis, Jr. 67 years ago and it was on the land now owned by his sons, Clifford and Bayfield Ellis.

Another track was on the Gibbs farm in Unionvale, now owned by Dan Smallman.

The third track was on the farm now owned by Bruce Carruthers in Howlan, and "some people claim it was the first track on which the famous Joe O'Brien ever drove a race", Sally tells me. Joe would be a small boy at the time, and this sort of ties in with a story his father, the late Henry O'Brien, told me five or six years ago at his home in Alberton.

The fourth one was in O'Leary and was owned and operated by Sanford Phillips. Sally thinks it was in the general area where the Imperial Oil Plant is located now.

Incidentally the Bayfield Ellis referred to is the man who is now connected with the Potato Marketing Board office here.

Rupert Godfrey, Marshfield, called about the Parkview race track at South Rustico which was operated by Amos Gallant, who has a store at South Rustico.

Mr. Godfrey recalls that he supplied his "Photo Finish" equipment for several years, from 1948 until 1950.

Roy Hayes, Moncton, a former Island man, phoned me about the track that had operated at Ellerslie and my good friend, Hugh Smith, 375 Cedar Avenue, Charlottetown, wrote me about it.

Hugh tells me that "the late Hon. John Richards of Bideford had a race track located between 'Little Edwards corner and Ellerslie station".

"I remember being there to an English church picnic held at the track in 1903", Mr. Smith writes.

"Fist fights at picnics in those days were the entertainment. I saw a big Irishman, half drunk, beat a little drunk until he was bleeding like a stuck pig and he had a lump on his jaw the size of an average mushroom", Hugh writes.

"A Stuck Pig"

BEFORE I leave this part of the story, the expression "a stuck pig" had a real meaning. In my day as a boy, and I suppose long before that, the standard way of butchering a pig – and all pigs were slaughtered at home – was to stick the pig in the throat, with the idea of cutting the jugular vein.

If that seems a cruel practice to most younger readers, who never saw it done, I would agree. The animal was stuck without being stunned first, as they are now, and I've seen pigs running around the yard, when the job was done outside and gradually weaken, as their life-blood ebbed, and stagger, and finally fall down and die. That will help to give you the real picture of the expression "bleeding like a stuck pig", the blood would actually pour from the place where the knife entered.

"Jimmy Ben" MacMillan

FRANK MACMILLAN, retired Prince of Wales College professor, tells me that his father James B. (Jimmie Ben) MacMillan had a race track on his own farm at Summerville in the late 1890's and the early 1900's. They had races there every summer from, perhaps, 1897 to 1906. Those dates are approximately correct, Frank tells me.

Later a group of men got another track going on the North side of the road – this is on the old road from Cherry Valley to Georgetown - and north of Summerville school house. This would probably be around 1919 or 1920, Mr. MacMillan suggests.

Frank MacMillan's grandfather who was known as "Johnny Sandy" had owned the land first, later it was owned by William Cronin. The track ran for five or six years and "Jimmy Ben" MacMillan was one of the group that operated it.

Frank spoke also of the Curtiss track near Pisquid and recalls driving to the track with his father in an express wagon pulled by two horses in a pole hitch.

Only this week I dropped in to chat with George Roberts at Kinkora, scarcely ever pass by without making an excuse to drop in at his restaurant for a cup of tea, sandwich, or sometimes a meal and chat with this friendly young man.

I spoke of a Kinkora track previously, George tells me it was on the farm of Jerome Ranahan, but he told me this week that there had been two tracks on that farm. One was at the back of the farm. Later, I understand, a track was built closer to the highway. This would be many years ago.

Later, about 1951-54 a track was operated on the farm owned by Ralph McCarville, Wilfred Smith owns it now.

I may still be missing a few tracks, people stopped me and talked of tracks all over the place. In some cases I may have forgotten. If I have missed any, I'll appreciate a call, or a letter.

I HAVE space, I hope, for two brief references. I want to thank my friend Joe Curran, Charlottetown for giving me a copy of The Prince Edward Island Magazine of June 1899. It was in perfect condition and I was proud, as well as greatly relieved, to take it to the man whose magazine I had lost.

My thanks, also, to Robert Cotton, Charlottetown, and an Alberton lady whose name I did not get, who also offered to help me out of my predicament.

Grain Corn At Alberton

CHARLIE THIBERT, who is working so diligently to introduce new and profitable small crops in the Western Prince area has written me about Don Campbell's success in growing grain corn. I'll be talking of that in my farm column next week, also of a letter that Dr. Charles Rogers sent me on the growing of silage and grain corn in the Maritime area.