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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Island Man's Service In Klondike Recalled

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Provincial - Farm Editor

I DIDN'T hear Pierre Burton when he was here - he's not one of my favorite people - but I'm told he referred to a Percy Reid who was associated with his father, Frank during the colorful Klondike Gold Rush days.

I have the Reid story for you this week, thanks to his sister Mrs. J. H. Stevenson, who is living in the Livingston-MacArthur Nursing Home, and it's an interesting one.

Percy Bearisto Reid was born in Summerside August 21, 1874 in the house which later became the Prince County Hospital Nursing Home which was later torn down to accommodate the Linkletter Motel which stands here now.

Educated at the local school and Prince of Wales College Mr. Reid worked for a time with a Toronto firm of law stationers which was headed by W. B. Newsome, who came from Crapaud, P.E.I. Returning to this province he travelled for a time for the Tryon Woolen Mills of which his father, John Dawson Reid, was president.

THE GOLD rush lured Mr. Reid to the Klondike in '98 and he, at 24, was the youngest of a P.E.I. party that climbed either the Chilcook or White Pass and descended in frail boats the headwaters of the Yukon River via Lake Bennett, Miles Canyon and the Five Fingers Rapids, finally reaching Dawson City.

Mr. Reid, his sister tells me, "always discounted the tales of lawlessness of Dawson in those early days, for the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, forerunners of the RCMP, were in effective charge. Incidentally, an Island lady, a Miss MacKay, was the wife of one of the first governors, a Mr. Ross.

Lawlessness On U.S. Side

ON THE American side in places like Skagway, Alaska where thousands of miners landed "nobody was safe" but in Dvea, Canada "across the Lynn Canal from Skagway, the Mounties were in charge and it was law-abiding", Mr. Reid always maintained.

Percy Reid's claims failed to produce any gold, but he attained greatness another way, as he became one of Canada's best known and most travelled civil servants of his time.

At first he became mining recorder on Dominion Creek and few miners questioned any of his decisions. Later he held civil service positions at Kluane, Carcross and Whitehorse.

He came "outside" long enough in 1905 to marry Gertrude MacPherson, Chatham, Ontario and the next year his son, D'Arcy Reid, was the first white child born in Whitehorse where the Indians fittingly celebrated the event.

Owing to Mrs. Reid's failing health her husband was transferred to Ottawa in 1914 to the department of immigration which he soon was able to master.

German Spy Case Recalled

ONE OF the most interesting cases concerned a German spy in the First Great War, 1914-1918, and it brought him to Charlottetown at one time.

It is believed, although I am not completely sure, that Mr. Reid was the first civil servant that was sent to Peking, China where he went in 1921. A sister, Miss Ethel Reid, then a Presbyterian missionary at Kongmoon, went with her brother as an interpreter, as she was fluent in the Chinese language.

The mission to the Orient was soon followed by service in several European capitals, where he opened the first Canadian offices for the purpose of bringing desirable immigrants to this country.

HE SPENT considerable time in Holland and was a firm advocate of bringing Dutch farmers to Canada, a policy that became effective many years later.

His travels included such other places as Italy, Belgium, Poland and Hungary for the immigration department and he considered "The Temple of Heaven" in Peking to be the most beautiful building, the Dutch to be the most friendly people, and Belgium the place where the finest food in the world could be obtained.

MR. REID was sent back to Dawson in 1924 as Gold Commissioner of the Yukon, a position he held until he died in a Toronto hospital at the age of 53. Mrs. Reid had died two years previously.

Mrs. Stevenson who gave me the story was herself in the Yukon for a time, as she went to keep house for her brother in 1926 following Mrs. Reid's death.

One of the finest tributes to the Island man came from the Interior Magazine published in Ottawa in 1927.

"Mr. Reid's predominating characteristic was the mastery of the details of all work pertaining to whatever office he held. The multifarious regulations, rulings and decisions relating to mining were at his fingers' ends, as were also those concerning immigration when he was in that service, and his practice of dealing quickly and competently with questions presented to him conducted to the prompt despatch of government business, and gained him the high regard of his superior officers and of the general public."

Frank Berton, the father of Pierre, worked in Mr. Reid's office when he was Gold Commissioner.

Mrs. Stevenson still occasionally hears from Mrs. Frank Berton and considers her book "I married the Yukon" one of the best pieces of reading she has seen on that part of the country. The book can be obtained in the library here, Mrs. Stevenson tells me.

Ira Brown Has New Book

MANY BOOKS are being written on the Island this year and one that came to my desk this week is by Ira M. Brown of Charlottetown and contains "Sketches of Little York".

One of the stories is about the pirate, Paul Jones, who allegedly talked his fellow crewmen into mutiny against the captain of one of the British ships that was heading back to England following the American Revolution War of 1775.

With Jones as captain the ship preyed on many immigrant ships coming to the Americas, Mr. Brown writes, and the pirate was finally chased up the East River and the boat was beached on Hartz's shore. Jones was later captured, taken back to England and hanged.

The old legend is that the loot was buried in iron pots in the nearby swamp, Mr. Brown's book notes.

Digging was done on several occasions many years ago, Mr. Brown's book notes, and further excavation work was done perhaps 20 years ago or a little more.

Andrew Wells Has SPF Pigs

I SAT in this week on a conference of livestock men with a representative of the Connaught Laboratories, which is distributing under contract SPF pigs, animals that are taken from their dams by Caesarian operation, and are free from the diseases of rhinitis and pneumonia that are two of the pests of the pig world.

They have been getting feed conversion results so good that this type of animal could practically revolutionize the commercial hog industry, if the conversion figures stand up.

Andrew Wells, Alberton has been the first in this province to purchase and breed the SPF animals, and he deserves credit for his initiative. A series of meetings are being held across the province to make people in various areas aware of the benefits of this type of animal.