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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Smallpox Story Proves Timely

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THIS COUNTRY owes the existence of two of its better known families to the quick thinking of a canny Scot who captained the Romulus that brought John Ferguson and others across the Atlantic more than 150 years ago, I learned recently from his great-granddaughter, Mrs. Heber Crosby, 297 Kent Street, whose father Donald Ferguson was named to the Canadian Senate in 1893, after a career in provincial politics, when the remuneration was exactly \$1,000.

The Romulus was somewhere in the Atlantic in the summer of 1807 when it was hailed and stopped by an English warship which put an officer and several men aboard looking for men for the navy. "Recruits" for the navy were taken by force in those days, anywhere they could be found. But the captain guessed the intent of the warship when he saw it in the distance, ordered all of his passengers below decks and into their bunks. When the officer asked where are your male passengers? - only a few crewmen were visible - the captain remarked innocently "they are in their bunks below". When he was asked why? he added in solemn tones "we have Smallpox on our ship" and the navy lads couldn't get off the ship fast enough, I was told by Mrs. Crosby as she related the tale that has been handed down through the years.

THE FERGUSONS, I understand, played a part in having the Robertsons come out 11 years later, and I also have a story about this nationally famous family.

The Romulus reached Pictou May 1, 1807, an old diary reveals, and the Fergusons and others slept that night in a factory that made cart boxes, with the children tucked into the boxes for their slumber, after eating a meal of fish and potatoes that cost a shilling.

The menfolk chartered a boat that reached Charlottetown on "a bleak, rainy day" in May and the ship was almost lost with all on board, when it ran into a vicious storm on the way back to Pictou.

The Fergusons settled in Marshfield on the "Craggan" farm as they called it, the farm now occupied by Almon Wood, and Donald Ferguson later bought the "Tulloch" farm, now owned by H. Lyle Boswall who still uses the name for his registered herd of Scotch Shorthorns. Mr. Wood's son, Wallace, owns the farm formerly owned by Mrs. Crosby and her late husband in Marshfield.

Donald Ferguson imported a herd of Galway cattle from Ireland and Mrs. Crosby recalls that they were beef animals, black in color, and her father once had several sleigh robes made from their hides, much like the "buffalo robes" so many people used in driving sleighs when that was the popular mode of winter transportation.

Prominent in P.E.I., Canadian History

THE ROBERTSONS came out in 1818 and their names are prominent in Island and Canadian history even to this day. Recently a plaque was unveiled here to "Lemuel Robertson, Classicist 1873-1956 and George Robertson, mathematician, 1864-1945" who helped him organize the University of British Columbia and became head of its department of classics. The plaque was unveiled, you will recall, "to the distinguished graduates of Prince of Wales College" by Norman Robertson, undersecretary of state for external affairs, Lemuel's son, who is a former Rhodes scholar and on whom Toronto University is to confer an honorary doctor's degree this year, Mrs. Crosby tells me.

Lemuel Robertson whose great grandfather came from Blair Atholl, Perthshire, Scotland was a one a one-time advisor on external affairs to Prime Minister MacKenzie King, whose success as a political leader was largely credited to his ability to surround himself with able advisors. Lemuel's father, Randy Robertson of Marshfield, was a first cousin of Mrs. Crosby's father.

MRS. CROSBY'S brother, the late William Scott Ferguson, had a distinguished career at Harvard from 1908 until his retirement in 1945 and he was professor emeritus until his death in Boston April 28, 1954. He became the first professor of ancient history in the United States in 1912, according to a copy I saw of the Harvard Gazette, which adds that he made a discovery in the first year of study for his Master's thesis which ultimately established the chronology for three centuries of Athenian history.

Mrs. Crosby has many items of unusual historic interest in her home. A gold-lined silver mug was brought back by her father when Donald Ferguson went to England in 1886 to consult with an outstanding engineer on the tunnel which was being proposed then between P.E.I. and N.B. She has an oriental painting beautifully done on cloth, not on canvas, that her great grandfather MacBeath bought from a sailing vessel in Pictou when he came out to this country approximately 150 years ago.

Mahogany Table Is Valuable Item

BUT HER most valuable item - I believe - certainly it is the most beautiful - is a Mahogany table brought to the Island by Hon. Walter Patterson, the Island's first governor in 1769, and her husband's grandfather bought it at a sale just before Patterson departed. She has had many offers for the beautiful piece of furniture, one for \$500, but "it's not for sale at any price" and will go, I believe, to our provincial museum which is to be established in the Fathers of Confederation Memorial building now under construction.

While researching this story I found that Senator Ferguson had suggested Senate reform even in his day. His idea, an old Guardian clipping said, was to have Senate appointments made on recommendations of the Conservative and Liberal parties and also the universities. There were no details.

First Strait Swimmer Is Home

I TALKED this week to the lady who made the Maritimes Northumberland Strait swim conscious. Neighbour Evelyn Henry, now Mrs. Brown, swam the strait for the first

time back in the summer of 1951 in eight hours, 49 minutes. She had reached the half-way mark in three hours but was later carried off her course by strong currents which she encountered, and this slowed her time greatly.

She ate sandwiches and chocolate bars for energy, and forgets what she had to drink during the energy sapping task. "I just wanted to see if I could do it" was her answer to my query what caused her to try the swim.

Evelyn who graduated from the P.E.I. Hospital school of nursing that summer, had swam the five miles from her own shore to Charlottetown and back several times and found it easy, so she wanted a more strenuous test.

MRS. DOUG Brown of Bogunda Station, Prairie North, Queensland, Australia and her husband have a 130,000 acre ranch, have had up to 13,000 sheep and also breed Devon and AIS, a type of Shorthorn cattle.

Shearing is done by a team of professionals who can average 100 sheep each in a day. Roustabouts do the rest of the labor involved. The shearing team complete the job in about three weeks.

EVELYN WILL be home for the summer with her mother Mrs. Stewart Henry. Her father who proudly told me the story of her swim 12 years ago, has since died. He and his son Edwin Henry accompanied Evelyn in a row boat as she was making Maritime history. Mrs. Brown has three children.