

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS

CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming

Chinchilla Fur — Boom or Bust? It is editorially discussed by Doc Collins of the National Fur News, Denver, Colorado. This in part is the pro and con of the question. Is the Chinchilla business, as it exists today, mainly a promotion for the sale of breeding stock? Or is it the beginning of a sound, permanent fur business? On this subject there are two schools of thought, diametrically opposed.

ada, three times the number in 1949, and they're valued at some \$80 million. This is money.

There are also big ranches. The two Chapman ranches in California house about 3,200 Chinchillas. Several other ranches carry from 500 to more than a thousand breeding animals. A few old-time fox and mink men have established Chinchilla units. No other fur, not even Silver Fox (which rode into popularity on a mighty wave of promotion), has been so richly publicized. Mathias Chapman's Original Eleven have been embellished with the romantic background of the Incas, Spanish Conquistadores and snow-capped Andes that they are now legend.

Magazines, newspapers, radio and TV have carried the Chinchilla story to the people in continuous streams. That these regulars do have news value is proved by the large public attendance at Chinchilla shows. Some 14,500 spectators were clocked at the Eastern Regional Show in Boston last February.

Not forgetting the big IF—Will the pelts sell?—live Chinchillas possess several advantages. They are clean and odorless. Vegetarians, their feed bill is only \$4 or \$5 a year. With sound ranching practices, mortality rate is comparatively low. They are prolific, giving between one and three litters of two to make an average yield of 3.85 per year. And Chinchilla has no competition from either wild or foreign furs. "There is definite need for a new fur, and Chinchilla will emerge within the next five to eight years to make fur history," said Esther Dorothy, famed fur designer of New York. Another Chinchilla champion is Willard George, Los Angeles furrier, show judge and Chinchilla breeder. He said, "I predict a price level of \$3,000 for short coats to as much as \$12,000 for long coats. They'll be more popular than mink."

But J. D. Silberman, president of the American Fur Merchants Association, urges that something be done to protect the public from investing in "highly speculative Chinchilla breeding in order to avoid a situation that would reflect adversely on the fur industry. This opinion is held by some auction company men. Many a fox farmer, caught in the trap of fickle fashion, may well wonder at seeing "society fur farmers" getting rich selling Chinchillas at from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a pair, while he was forced to pelt out his beautiful, unwanted animals at much less than cost of production.

Other fur farmers, with an eye to the future, are taking themselves if Chinchilla can be a profitable second fur. Only time can reveal the destiny of Chinchilla fur. But when a little business becomes big business in such a short time, we believe it demands the objective study we have tried to present.

Howard McKendrick and Mrs. McKendrick of Glasgow, Scotland, are visiting relatives here. Howard is the son of the J. C. McKendrick, who was a prominent fox rancher in the great days of the industry, and Howard learned the business from his Dad. Some years ago he took a shipment of foxes to Norway and ranched them there, afterwards leaving there for Scotland where he ranched foxes for some years, but he is now a manufacturer of plastic novelties and is doing well. They plan on staying here about two months and we are sure will receive a warm greeting wherever they go. During Wallie Scantlebury's visit to the Old Country last year he was entertained by Howard and his wife (Wallie's sister) and brought back some of the products of Howard's factory, and on our desk we were very proud to show a memo pad which Wallie brought back for us. We discussed the status of the fox business now and the desperate drop from the days of its great prosperity and asked him if he thought it would ever come back. "Well," said Howard, "one thing I can tell you is that I have seen more silver fox made up and worn in Glasgow the past few months than I ever saw before."

"It is being popularly priced and people who could never afford it before are buying capes, single and double skins and other make-ups." We mentioned the big sale of furs made by the London brokers and he said, "There is another indication. Those people don't buy almost a million dollars worth of furs without being sure of an outlet for them."

Two capes made of Norwegian blue fox were presented last week at the Park Sheraton Hotel, New York, by the Norwegian Fur Breeders' Association. One was presented to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt as a goodwill gesture. The other was given to Miss Eva Johnson, who is Miss Norway in the United States on tour. Both capes were made for the Norwegian Association by Gruskin & Co., fur manufacturing specialists of New York.

FAMOUS VOLCANO

Mount Vesuvius on the Bay of Naples in Italy has a record of 50 eruptions.

NEWSY NOTES

By J. A. Clark, D.Sc.

Early Island Mail Routes

During the early British occupation of the Island of St. John, the mails and passengers to and from the Island and Nova Scotia were carried by boat from St. John's to Pictou Island and from thence to Pictou. Governor Walter Patterson inaugurated the first winter mail service, by persuading some men to attempt a passage by the above route in February, 1775. Using a small canoe they succeeded in reaching Nova Scotia a distance of about 23 miles. This was a long and hazardous route and sometimes a number of weeks would pass in the winter when no crossing could be made.

Donald McInnis and Mr. Neil Campbell made a crossing from Cape Traverse to Cape Tormentine during the winter of 1827; the distance between headlands being about nine miles. The tides in the Strait are also said to meet near this point. It was the former one to Pictou was such that some of the mail was sent that way the next winter. An agreement was entered into between certain Cape Traverse parties and the Island Government in 1829 so that during the winter all mail to the mainland went by the "Capes Route."

Ice-Boats

There were developed for this service small sturdy boats with runners on either side of the keel, shod with iron, for hauling over ice and snow. They were constructed so that they would withstand rough usage and yet be light enough for the crew to haul them up out of the water onto high pressure ridges and through drifted snow. Some of the early ones were sheathed with tin to withstand the grinding action of newly formed ice, when the boats were propelled by sail or oars. A definite type of boats were eventually developed known as "ice-boats."

They had good strong leather straps attached along each side of the boat with a harness that fitted over the shoulder and around the waist of boatmen, and the passengers who paid \$2.00 per crossing, if they worked their passage, by hauling Her Majesties mails, and such passengers as paid \$5.00 for the privilege of remaining in the boat during the whole trip. The strap over the shoulder was for heavy pulling when the boat had to be hauled out onto the ice or up over pressure hummocks or rafted ice, and for steady long hauls that sometimes lasted for hours and over many miles of smooth new ice or rough broken ice cakes, that scuffed the rubber from over-shoes, like when walking on coral formations. The waist-belt was to hold one up when the ice gave way or an ice cake tipped and the passenger dropped into the icy water. When such a dip occurred on a frosty day, one had to keep the clothes at his knees pliable and not interfere with his movements. His frozen garments shut out both wind and cold.

Boat Trips At The Capes

The writer made his first trip by ice-boats and considered it a real adventure, later trips, however, were made only when it seemed absolutely necessary. It was difficult, dangerous and hard work and great respect is due the sturdy, efficient ice-boat Captains and their hardy crews who maintained for so many years Prince Edward Island's only winter communication with the mainland.

One trip stands out in the writer's memory as representing an ordinary routine crossing; eight ice-boats loaded with mail, including one trunk in a mail bag, and a number of passengers left Cape Traverse about 4 o'clock in the morning. The thermometer was below zero and a light wind was blowing that increased with the coming of daylight, and the temperature moderated. When leaving the board-ice sails were hoisted and the crewmen rowed for several miles until they reached a field of newly formed glare ice. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the boats up onto this field. The boats after breaking the thinner ice along the edge separated at least 10 yards apart; No. 1 boat was placed in position with the bow sinking the edge of the ice in front of it and when all the others were in a similar position, the Captain gave the word for No. 1 to start and keep going, each other boat was to follow a parallel course and start at about one minute intervals.

We were all soon going at a dog-trot, with a bow-wave of a few inches in the ice in front of each boat and the rear of the runners cutting through the thin ice, so that when the eight boats had passed in the long angle formation, a section of the ice field from 80 to a 100 yards wide was all cut into small ice cakes.

The dog-trot had to be maintained for about 2 miles until an older ice field was reached. After a brief rest, this large field of rough and broken ice does was crossed, pressure had piled some cakes on edge or over on others. There were patches of open water, and what was much more difficult to navigate, there were areas of "lolly" or "Frail" ice, which would not support any weight but too firm to allow a boat to be moved by oars.

To cross these areas, one boat was shoved into the lolly from the solid ice, then it was pushed forward by placing the bow of another boat against its stern and shoving each boat in turn its own length. On one occasion it took the whole eight boats to form the bridge across a heavy strip of lolly made of snow and finely crushed ice. The crews tied the boats together, crossed to the solid ice and hauled the whole line of boats across.

When leaving solid or rafted ice and going into open water, every volunteer and crew member had to pull the boat forward, then jump

In at the last moment. In pulling the boat out of the water onto the ice, the occupants climbed out and each caught their own strap to pull. Once in doing this, the boat was being righted it fell sideways, striking the writer on the shin and laming him so that he thought the bone of his leg was cracked. A very high ridge of ice on the Cape Tormentine Reef that had been rafted up and grounded was the greatest obstacle on the trip, perhaps because everyone was hungry and tired.

Once safely over that and onto the board-ice we arrived at Cape Tormentine about 3 p.m. A train was waiting and there was no chance to eat until we arrived in heavy rain at Sackville. Having had nothing but stale water and sea-biscuits since very early in the morning, the party supported the Senator, when waiters at the hotel, would not serve us at that hour, raided the kitchen, each serving himself and paying the hotel for the meal.

EVESHAM, England — (CP) — Vegetable and fruit farmers in this Worcestershire district are planning a pigeon-shooting week. The birds have been damaging crops to the extent of thousands of pounds.

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