



Tobacco Growing Gives Farmers Opportunities

By JOHN MCCABE
Tobacco farmer, Iona, P.E.I. growing as a cash crop is something reasonably new to farmers in P.E.I. although it has been grown in individual garden plots for many years in various places. The P.E.I. Department of Agriculture purchased a farm in Greenfield in 1959 and grew approximately 18 acres in 1959 and 1960. The first commercial plantings were in 1961 when eight farmers grew some 85 acres. Since then the number of growers and acreages have gradually increased until in 1966 there were 17 growers planting 465 acres or an average of 27 acres per grower. One of the enthusiastic P.E.I. farmers who is now growing tobacco is John McCabe of Iona. This is an outline of his experience in tobacco production.

"The McCabe farm" has been farming in Iona for a long time, in fact the farm we are now operating is one of the 1864 Centennial Farms. I purchased this farm from my father in 1958. At that time we had a general mixed farm with a few dairy cattle and a small potato acreage. We were looking for more income because our farm is not large in acreage and we wanted a crop with a high return per acre. I didn't feel that we could expand very much in dairy cattle or potatoes so thought that tobacco might be worth a try on a small scale at first to learn what I could about the crop and to get some experience. Our farm has light sandy soil and it seemed as if it might be suitable to this crop. In addition it has a reasonably high elevation—about 300 feet above sea level to give us good air drainage to help prevent frost damage in the spring and fall. As well protection from wind is desirable as it may damage the leaves in late summer and early fall.

"The first crop which I grew was in 1962. This was on a farm in Greenfield, not on my own farm. Another Iona grower, John Power had an extra kiln, so I bought plants and started

on seven acres. The first year I got some experience and confidence. Although the money return wasn't too great, the experience was very valuable. The next year, in 1963, I started on my own place with 20 acres. Then in 1964 and 1965 we grew 24 acres each year and this year we increased it to 33 acres.

SPECIAL BUILDINGS

A couple of specialized buildings are required to handle tobacco. Since tobacco is transplanted the seed is started in a greenhouse. By the way the seed is very fine and one ounce is enough to plant 30 acres. My first greenhouse was made of glass and measured 60 feet by 28 feet; the cost was about \$2,000. The second greenhouse use which we now have is covered with plastic and is 100 feet by 28 feet in size and cost about \$600. Glass is a much more permanent greenhouse but the cost is quite a lot more.

Kilns, or curing barns, are different also from buildings found on other farms. A kiln will cost in the vicinity of \$2,300 fully equipped. I now have five kilns, one for about every six to seven acres of tobacco. Most farmers have a barn that can be used for

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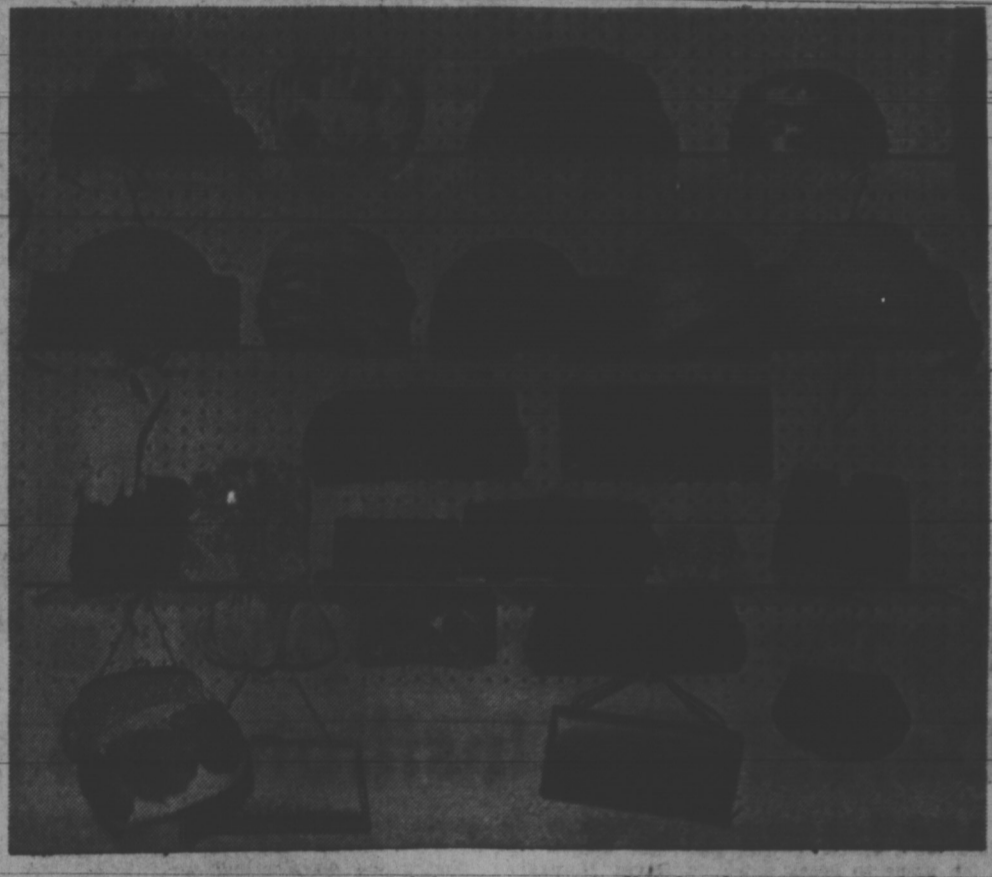
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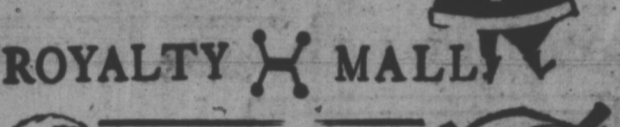
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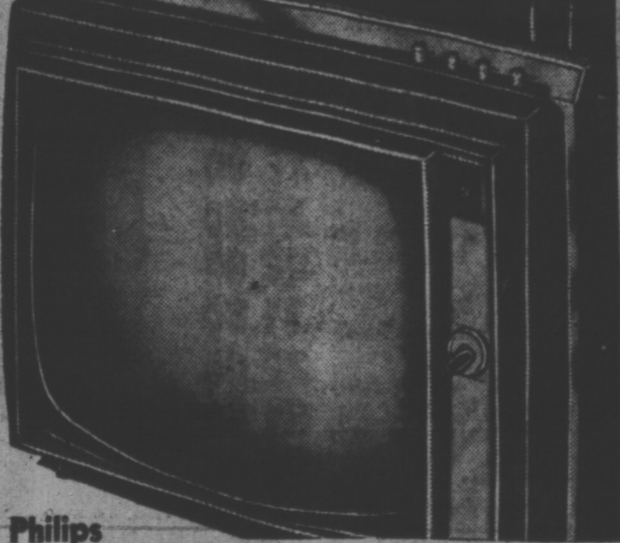
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