

Politicians Seen Lacking Enthusiasm Over Advice

In a democratic society great influence of political parties, emphasis is placed on government. The importance of political parties and the importance of their policies must be recognized but con-

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Murder Stakes Desable Woods

By NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial-Farm Editor

TODAY'S COLUMN takes us to Desable for the murder of Jerry Sweeney, a black and white pecker, in the early 1800's, and the story of the United Church at Desable which once served the Crapaud Methodist congregation and was torn down stick by stick, and hauled to the present site. Also involved is a story of the Lorne Orange Lodge which met for some years in a blacksmith's forge, but that will come as the story develops.

Sweeney had sold out his stock and was on his way to Charlottetown with 10 pounds Sterling in the pockets of his black-corduroy suit he always wore. He had stayed overnight with MacAdams, an elderly highly respected couple. The prenat might had been spent at Story's Mills. Neither place is standing now, though traces of the old cellar remains.

That was the last the country-side knew of Sweeney who disappeared completely as though the ground had opened to swallow him, and many a family wondered what had become of the man they had liked to see come to their home.

Some years later Christopher Smith—he lived just back of the site of the present Crapaud cement works at the cellar are still visible—called in a neighbour for a death bed revelation. Sweeney had been murdered by two brothers who had lived not far away, but had later moved to New Brunswick and by that time were both dead.

Corduroy Suit Marked Victim

SMITH had come upon them that early December morning as they were burying the body of the man whom he recognized at once by the brown corduroy suit. At first he was going to tell Smith too, but he thought better to keep it to himself, only on his solemn oath that he would never breathe a word of what he had seen. The secret had to be kept for a long time, but he had kept it within him until his dying moments.

The cold blooded murder for 10 pounds—! It would be a large sum in those days—was done under a large Yellow Birch tree in a ravine on the back of the farm owned recently by Clifton Ince, now by Henry Ferguson. A large tree three to four feet in the trunk, it split into a number of branches, and the air much like a horse's hames. Mr. Ince told me when I visited him. The now dim outlines of a cross and the word "death" are still faintly visible on a tree, a night's foot away, Clifton told me.

This part of the story has been told many times—Frank MacArthur did it for The Guardian a long time ago under the by-line "Uncle Joe"—and there are many variations, but I have heard it a great deal to make room for another phase of the story which is not so well known. I doubt, in fact, that any of it has ever been told in print.

Norman Nicholson, Charlottetown tipped me first on the Todd Road murder, as it is known, for it was the road, perhaps a biased trail in those days, that Sweeney was following when he was waylaid by the two men and done to death. Norman had heard the story 30 years or more ago from his father-in-law, the late John H. Myers, a one-time member of parliament, who had been provincial minister of agriculture before he went to Ottawa.

And Mr. Nicholson was good enough to take me to Mr. Myers' brother-in-law, Reg Dixon. Trvon who was born on the Todd Road close to the spot where the murder was done, but he told me, but recalls clearly that he wouldn't go near the spot, not even in daytime. Horses shied when they went close to the spot, and many tales of Sweeney's ghost being seen. Many people avoided the vicinity, particularly in the early days.

'Ghost' Terrifies 'Big Archie'

THE ONE I LIKE best concerns "Big Archie" Campbell who had led a "big" once, and was starting to limber it up one end, when he looked up quickly and saw the figure of the little pecker standing on the other end of the tree, and his head was off just above his "shoulder" around his neck.

A normally fearless man, Campbell was tremendously shaken by the ghastly encounter. His daughter, a big woman with a grey cloth wrapped around her head and long skirts sweeping the ground, as was the fashion in those days when even a lady's smile brought blushes of at least pretended modesty, told the story in her own words.

"When father came home that night he speak no word, he feared nothing that crawled or walked, but he lay on the sofa with his face to the wall. He ate no food."

There are many others but I must get to the other phases of this fascinating yarn.

Soon after Smith died people who presumably were relatives or friends of the murderers, the late relatives, erected a monument to him in the Crapaud cemetery which bore the words "Erected to a man of real worth". Smith's people naturally did not take kindly to the idea, and the monument was placed in a place which somehow got placed in the back seat of the Crapaud Methodist Chapel. The headstone bears the date 1837.

As that brings me to the end of the Crapaud Methodist story, who had built their chapel in 1840, on the lot where the cemetery is now, decided about 1890 to give it to the Methodists. Desable had no church, and to the Lorne Orange Lodge, who were meeting in a forge because they had no hall.

So the chapel was taken apart stick by stick, and hauled by oxen and horses to the spot made available for a church by Lord Melville—the church is on the South Melville Road—where it was rebuilt with the lower part serving as a house of worship, and the upper as a home for the Lorne Lodge which is still going strong. Mr. Ince told me as he took me into the church that he stepped in history, and showed me the old timbers that are heavy and large, as building timbers were in those days.

Anvil Rates As Museum Piece

THE ORANGEMEN had met previously in a forge on the farm now owned by George Villet and they used the anvil as an altar. I visited Mr. Villet and found the anvil is still there, though it has been unused for some years. The lodge was founded in 1890, E. C. Helm, Desable told me.

Surely here is one of our most interesting historic relics which, I suggest, should find a spot in the provincial museum. We are to have when the Fathers of Confederation Memorial Building is completed.

The monument to Smith stands in the Crapaud cemetery. I visited it with Mr. Ince on one of the coldest days of the past winter, and recall that my fingers numbed with cold in the few seconds it took me to scribble the part of the inscription I have written here.

The old stone bears scratches, and other scars inflicted on it, I'm told, by the boys sent in to the back seat and whittled at it with pocket-knives, possibly to pass the time while the service progressed. What boy has not at least one memory of having sat in a back seat and done something he shouldn't have done, while divine service was being held?

Chat With A Woman Sharpshooter

I TALKED A FEW DAYS ago with Mrs. Crilly Lee, Murray Harbor whom most of you know better probably as the former Miss MacLennan, the Alexandra girl who was the only female sharpshooter ever to make a Canadian Bisley team, and I believe that also includes other Commonwealth Bisley teams.

I had often talked with Mary before but this time there was a difference. I had always had to speak loudly as Mary's hearing was greatly impaired. This time I spoke in a natural tone and the lady who was on Canada's Bisley team in 1961 heard me clearly. Better still, she told her sister Annie, Mrs. Robson, Carter of North Millton had had the same transformation wrought and she now hears just as easily and distinctly.

The two sisters went to Toronto early last month for what is known as Stapedectomy at the Sullivan Clinic where Dr. Kenneth MacKisic removed the bones of the ear from them. Although it would only be a slight exaggeration to say it is little more than visible to the eye, it is in its nature a very delicate operation, I understand, and this gives the resonance that renews hearing.

Spots fans in particular will recognize the Sullivan name when I say he was the goalie for the Toronto Varsity Grids hockey team that won the Olympic title for Canada in 1928. Now a member of the Canadian Ice Hockey Hall of Fame is Senator Joseph Albert Sullivan.

I asked Mary what it felt like to hear clearly again. "I'd overheard several loud and jarring to you!" I wondered. Her answer was in the negative. The hearing comes back gradually, it seems. It seemed perfectly normal when I talked to her.

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SPRING PROSPECTS

As a springer early date farm lanes and the better graded side roads are responding to dragging. We do have in this province a very large number of expert road builders, unfortunately their capabilities are not recognized in a fitting manner by the engineers who have the responsibility of constructing roads that will stand up and stand up. In our personal experience with one side road which a number of years ago was the worst in the world indicates that a miracle was performed when the road was widened out, given an application of sandy gravel with one of hard gravel on top of that. The results in question for practical purposes is just about as good as pavement for paving. It is a fact that on many paved roads, we have the impression that roads will from up rather than down this year and that the restricted party on highways will be shorter than usual.

DAIRY ACTIVITIES

As this column is being written prior to the annual meeting of the Dairywomen's Association we are in no position to comment on that gathering. The association's question is as to what our history of the department of agriculture of the province has supported the association steadfastly in its province. Over the years the dairy industry has supported the association in many ways. It has been rewarded with the development of policies which have a number of years ago, on the dairy operation. On April 10 the Nova Scotia dairymen are meeting in Truro to complete the representation which they will have in the regional committee which will be dealing with dairy production. Tentatively April 18 has been set as a date for a meeting in Moncton of the Maritime Regional Committee which will be setting a regional operation underway. Finally on April 25 and 26 the 24-man Dairy Service Bureau will hold their 1st meeting in Toronto and deal with matters related to the new promotional and advertising efforts the fund raising part of which must be underway by June 1.

BEEF MATTERS

The last week has seen a variety of activities in the beef business with the parade being led by very successful Easter show and sale in Charlottetown. Certainly this year's price for the champion steer almost equals with a winning ticket in the Irish Sweetcashes. Returning from their Ontario tour, 70 enthusiastic farmers who felt they had had an course of considerable value, the directors of the Beef Producers' Association have held two meetings and arrived at a number of important decisions. Whenever beef people get together on questions that are sure to come up it is now big an operation or how much land is required to make an economic operation and whether it is safe to give up the security of that so dependable milk or cream cheque. Certainly it is obvious that substantially more capital is required to raise up a beef operation and this is always a bothersome problem.

Another subject that is always good for an argument is the relative merits of the T & F right beef animal and the cross bred as a dollar earner. Certainly we haven't had too much experience in this province with straight beef cow operations. If good dairy calves are available at about \$80 this would appear to be a more attractive way of getting feeders than keeping a cow matter how economical for twelve months.

JUNK PROBLEM

We heartily endorse the legislation introduced in Quebec which gives towns and villages the right to make regulations covering the disposal of junk. It is in its nature a very delicate operation, I understand, and this gives the resonance that renews hearing.

Item that does more to one single from the beauty of our countryside than does the used car body. Either on its side, on its rear or in its rear, it is a very effort spectacle. For 1964 every effort should be made to get these eyes sore out of sight.

POTATO