

The Travels of A Fredericton Editor A Century Ago

Where Were the Inns of the Miramichi—Miller's and Brown's? The Nashwaak Described

R. P. Gorham, B.Sc., of this city, who is one of the leading authorities on matters of local as well as of Maritime history is furnishing The Daily Mail with a series of historical sketches dealing with past events in this locality. The sketch which we publish today contains an account of the travels a century ago of the Editor of a Fredericton newspaper, Edward Ward. Ward describes in this issue conditions on the Nashwaak and on the Miramichi. Many residents of this section will be interested in these sketches. In this article there is one question regarding the Killarney Road which it might be well for residents of that section of the country to provide an answer. Mr. Gorham's article in today's issue is as follows:

(By R. P. Gorham, B.Sc.)
Ninety-nine years is quite a long time in the history of a young country like New Brunswick and a good many changes may have taken place in that number of years. In 1937 a newspaper man with a typewriter travelled about the province and told his readers many charming stories about the interesting things he saw and the whole population followed his journeys with absorbed interest and were sorry when he decided to stop. In 1839 a newspaper man did something of the same kind without the typewriter and although his tales are more or less descriptive of roads and places and industries and are told in the long rolling sentences of the age and intended for readers who had not his opportunities for travel, they are nevertheless interesting and present many items of historic interest.

Fredericton Editor
The man was Edmund Ward, editor of the Sentinel and New Brunswick General Advertiser, which was published weekly at the Phoenix Building or Tank House, in Fredericton. The Sentinel was a Saturday paper of four pages, printed in type about one half the size of that used today, so it contained nearly the same amount of text as an average weekly of the present. The subscription rate was fifteen shillings per annum, one half payable in advance and one of the objects of the journey was to collect some of the arrears of subscriptions and the second was to help in organizing temperance societies, of which the editor was an ardent advocate, in an age when in the lumbering towns there was a real use for such associations. The editor carried his note book with him and from time to time he told his readers about what he saw of the works of his fellow men. Like many a later traveller he criticized the roads but his criticisms were never very severe and on the whole one gains the impression that he enjoyed the little trips and incidents of the way with a wholehearted zest, and that he looked for the best of everything and was in general a man who wanted to see the province and people prosper. In that he was a true newspaper man as have been practically all of his successors.

The part we quote today tells of a journey from Fredericton to Chatham and to those who know the road well and can cover the miles in three hours of any summer day, by motor car, the mention of the ferries should be of interest. Incidentally we can gather some side lights as to how the early settlers on the Nashwaak carried their produce to market in the days before there were dams in that river, of the enterprise and community spirit of Mr. Boies of Boiestown and of the energy of the Cunards. But let him tell his own story in his own way and let readers judge for themselves.

"We quitted home in the stage for Newcastle, crossing the river and proceeding by the Nashwaak. Here the traveller is struck with the neglected and dangerous state of the high road in the immediate vicinity of the capital of the province and which abounds with romantic and picturesque scenery. After riding about eleven miles over an exceedingly hilly country, the road winds along the more level bank of the river, and passed in front of several well cultivated farms. We are aware that the neglected state of the road alluded to, may be attributed to the circumstance of another line being about to be opened; but still it is one of importance to a large part of the people of the Nashwaak; and particularly so since the impediments and obstructions which have been placed in the river by the Mill Company, preclude the possibility of their bringing their produce to market by water. There are objections also against the new line of road. It comes out much higher than it was originally intended and terminates with a steep hill at a bridge, which it has been found necessary to raise eight feet during the present year; altho' without entirely obviating the danger of the descent."

This road ending in a steep hill was no doubt the Killarney Road.

Who knows where the old one was? Bishop Charles Ingles wrote in 1792 of travelling over a very rough road to the Nashwaak.

"At a distance of eighteen or nineteen miles from Fredericton, the road crosses the Nashwaak river, and after passing over a portage of about twenty miles, the traveller finds himself at Boiestown. The road over the portage is generally level and dreary, rendered more so by the fires which have swept over the country, destroying in a great degree the foliage of the trees; and it is not until he has arrived within five miles of the village, that any cultivation or improvements are seen."

On the high and dry portions of the portage route the burned stumps of the old time fire are visible and the forest trees are only now beginning to develop to useful size.

"Boiestown is a more compact village than is usually to be met with in this province and is situated on the south west branch of the Miramichi River, nearly eighty miles from Newcastle, and probably one hundred and twenty miles from where that river empties into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The settlement owes its foundation to the lumbering pursuits of the population of that part of the country, and the enterprise of Mr. Boies whose name it bears. This gentleman has erected a large and commodious schoolhouse, the seats rising in the form of an amphitheatre, capable of containing at least two hundred persons and which is occasionally appropriated to the purpose of divine worship, whenever a stray preacher of the gospel finds his way to that neglected portion of the Christian fold."

In another history of the period we find mention that Mr. Boies welcomed the clergy of all denominations and told a traveller that he had had Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists and Anglicans to preach in his private chapel. Rev. Walter Price, rector of St. Marys in 1792, was probably the first Anglican to visit the region. His sons later settled in Ludlow. Rev. Mr. Hudson, "Father Hudson," was the first settled clergyman on the upper Miramichi.

"After leaving Boiestown at a distance of about eighteen miles the road which passes through a well settled and cultivated country, crosses the Miramichi and traverses the right bank. After crossing the ferry at a distance of ten miles, is a most excellent house of entertainment kept by a person of the name of Decantlin and which may be considered with the exception of those at Boiestown, as the only good house on the road to Newcastle, subsequent to leaving Miller's and Brown's on the Nashwaak."

Where Was Miller's?
Miller's and Brown's were probably inns for travellers. Probably some reader can contribute information on where they were located.

Was this first ferry at McNamee? The text indicates that the old road followed the north side of the river for a time and then crossed to the right or southern bank and followed the trail back of the river through the present Doaktown.

After leaving Decantlins the road is less settled and in many places entirely new, a party being at present engaged in opening another line to Newcastle. We believe the supervisor on this road is Mr. Goodfellow, who seems most unaccountably to stand high as a roadmaker, in the estimation of those who have the management of these matters; and who possesses the almost exploded faculty of clambering over hills, instead of sweeping around their bases and this line will probably be again altered as we understand is about to be the case at Kouchibouguac when a more enlightened and judicious policy shall prevail.

After leaving Decantlins and passing the mill establishment of Mr. McLaggin who not only attends to that department of industry, but has a large part of his property under cultivation, there is another ferry to cross. The scow which is used for the purpose of passing being out of repair, the horses were taken out and the wheels of the wagon being placed in two canoes brought abreast of each other were carried safely across, the horse swimming over, urged by Mr. Swim, and the mail and luggage being transported in another canoe. Three miles from Newcastle is a fourth ferry, at which there is at present a scow; but we observed a good sized horseboat lying at anchor which will supersede that dangerous and uncomfortable mode of conveyance.

Mr. Swim was the stage coach driver and his name would seem appropriate for some of the tasks of the journey.

In this paragraph there is more work for the local historian. Just where was Decantlins and the Mc-

Laggin mill? Write to the Editor of the Mail and add your bit of information.

The two canoes used for transporting the stage coach were probably the long dugouts made from pine logs, the "Pirogues" still seen on the Miramichi.

Horseboats were used on the St. John river in early times. They were paddle wheel boats with a stout horse on the back furnishing the motive power.

Newcastle in 1838

"When arrived in Newcastle the traveller finds a neat and well built little town which was formerly a place where considerable business was transacted. But the Great Fire which ran over that province in 1825, was fatal to its increase, and the town of Chatham which escaped the conflagration, and was urged forward by an enterprising and liberal mercantile establishment, has become a prosperous and successful rival. Three miles below Newcastle is a neat village called Douglastown, where the house of Messrs. Gilman and Rankin carry on business and whence a large quantity of lumber is annually shipped to the British Market. Between Newcastle and Chatham, there are stages running in the forenoon and afternoon on each side of the river; and one of them calling at Douglastown on its way up or down.

"It is about two years since we before visited Newcastle, when we formed a Temperance Society there which has considerably increased in number and we believe in usefulness; and it affords us no small gratification to find that another society which we then formed on the South West Branch has been the means of reclaiming one or two individuals, who upon that occasion subscribed to the pledge of total abstinence and have thus under providence been brought back to usefulness and the enjoyment of domestic happiness and prosperity. There is a church and Wesleyan Meeting House at Newcastle and an excellent hotel kept by Mr. Hamell, a branch of the Commercial Bank is also established there and a stranger may pass his time very pleasantly among a kind and hospitable people. On the North West branch of the river there is a large and flourishing settlement called Northesk, we presume after the admiral of that name, who was third in command at the battle of Trafalgar, but which time would not permit us to visit.

"After remaining two days at Newcastle we crossed to Chatham, which is five miles lower down on the opposite side of the river and is a busy and thriving place. It is here that Messrs. Cunard have a large establishment and here are their saw and grist mills worked by steam power. Arrangements are making to light these with gas and which probably

will be extended to the houses throughout the town. The drive on that side of the river is extremely pleasant, passing several gentlemen's country seats and everywhere exhibiting much neatness and comfort. About seven miles above Chatham there is a steam saw mill, the property of Mr. Fraser.

"The rising town of Chatham bids fair to be a place of considerable commercial importance; and in addition to the extensive business which is at present carried on, upwards of a hundred vessels having already arrived and departed during the present summer, the inhabitants are turning their attention to agriculture; that certain and permanent source of national wealth. It has much increased in size since we last visited it and the business of the place seems to have advanced in a similar ratio. An elegant ship had recently been launched from the shipyard of Messrs. Cunards, said to be the most complete vessel which was ever fitted up in the province, and there are others on the stocks of superior size and qualities."

Come More Questions

Douglastown is at present opposite Chatham but in 1839 the centre would seem to have been at the mill site nearer Newcastle. Come, local historians, let us have a story of the Gilman and Rankin mill and the development of Douglastown. And please do not forget to write about the Fraser mill of 1839? A much older history mentions Beaubear's Island as Fraser's Island. Who can tell the story? It is local history likely to be forgotten. Write it down so others can read.

While you are about it just try writing about the Cunard mill and shipyard. From the shipyard where the "most complete vessel in the province" was launched in 1839 to the great Cunard line ships of the modern ocean routes should be quite a story. Gas lighting for Chatham also should furnish a text for a good story of olden times.

The next installment will deal with the journey of Mr. Ward to Moncton.

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