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The Elder Transcripts

NOTES ON A TRIP TO DIGBY COUNTY (BRIDGETOWN MONITOR)

On a recent occasion business called us to Digby. Reaching Annapolis by train we transfer our baggage and self to the steamer *Evangeline*, which a little more than an hour after landed us safely at the pier in beautiful Digby - beautiful even in winter. It has been several years since we had the pleasure of visiting this old town of the loyalist's building, and we regret to say that we failed to see that improvement and those signs of progress that ought to have marked the interval referred to. We must, however, in fairness state, that there has been considerable addition to the buildings which afford residence for the inhabitants. Among the buildings which were new to us was the new church, some years ago erected by the adherents to the Reformed Episcopal Church, and which we were told had recently been sold to the Baptists, by whom it has been since occupied. We also observed that the adherents of the Church of England had erected a fine, large, new church since our last previous visit. Besides these, we noticed several new dwellings in various quarters of the town, which seem to indicate a forward movement in its prosperity, but nearly a century ago its foreign trade was more than double what it is now.

Having made a mental note of what has already been stated, we procured a ticket on the W.C. Railway, which carried us to Jordantown station, where we left the train and, Valise in hand, tramped a mile or more to the summits of the Marshalltown hills, to the dwelling of a friend and relative, where we were cordially received and cared for, a day or two. It was while here, and after the weather cleared that we got a first glimpse of the waters of St. Mary's Bay on the one side, and of the waters of the Annapolis Basin on the other, both beautiful visible from the same stand point. It was here, for the first time also, that we beheld the Ancient bed of the Annapolis river, lying between the waters named.

Long before the turbulent waters of the Bay of Fundy had forced their way through the North Mountain and had formed the channel now known as "the gut", the waters of old Taywoapsk quietly flowed in St. Mary's Bay, through the valley which lies between the mountain forming its northern margin, and the hills of Marshalltown. A canal of seven miles would connect those waters again and once more reestablish the ancient course of the river. The hamlet of Marshalltown lies on the northern slope of the hills of that name, and is almost unrivaled in the beauty of its scenery. The rocks of these hills are of micaceous slate, and the district was once covered with dense hard wood. The late Anthony Marshall, a native of Dedham, Massachusetts, who was a grantee of lands in this county, sold them about 1784-1788, and purchased a portion of those at what is now called by his name - Marshalltown - of the late Henry Rutherford, M. P., of the County, then a resident of Digby, and a leading merchant in it. Mr. Marshall had a number of sons and daughters, who had been born in Wilmot before he settled in Digby. These sons, Isaac, Richard, William, and Solomon, then lads, assisted their father in clearing the "forest primeval" from the lands thus acquired, and afterwards made homes for themselves and their families on lots in the neighborhood, and their children and grandchildren still own and occupy homes in the district, and may be fairly ranked among the foremost inhabitants there. While making our headquarters among them, a great-grandson of Anthony, who was also our great-uncle, drove us some miles down St. Mary's Bay, and we hereby thank him for the pleasure we experienced on the occasion. After passing the western boundary of Marshalltown we enter Brighton, a delightful section of Digby County. We were informed that 50 years ago the few people then living along that section of the shore, and who were chiefly fishermen, lived in log huts. Who could have dreamed that so great a change could have been made in so limited a time. Not a log house is now visible, but neat cottages and substantial farmhouses, well painted and in all respects tidy and comfortable, are found on every hand, and some of the more modern cottages are models of beauty and neatness. Near the center of the district is the village of

Brighton, with its commodious wharf, and piles of cordwood, and other timber awaiting shipment by the vessels now safely moored at the pier. Next after passing the west limits of this district we come to Barton, named, we believe, in honor of an old loyalist of that name, who died in Digby nearly a century ago, whose widow - a Miss Brownjohn - with her children, returned to her old home in New York, to settle her children. What we have said of Brighton applies with still greater force to Barton. It, too, has its pier stretching into St. Mary's Bay, with vessels moored beside it, its cordwood, village, and its factory for the manufacture of stove polish. In this section are several churches, neat and well cared for edifices, and well filled with worshippers on each returning Sabbath. The scenery thus far is simply delightful, both in land and water, and in the days of summer these districts, it seems to us, must be most pleasant and agreeable places of resort. So much only, for the present, as our space is exhausted.

A CONTINUATION OF THE TRIP TO DIGBY COUNTY Leaving Marshalltown with regret, after a very pleasant visit we wended our way back to Digby with a view to examine the church records in possession of the worthy rector of the parish, Rev. John Ambrose, D. D. Through his kindness we spent the greater part of the day in making notes from these interesting records from which we gleaned many facts that were of interest to us. The first Christian sermon delivered in Digby was preached by the Rev. Edward Brudnell, of the English Church, Chaplain to the ship of war that brought the United Empire Loyalists to its shores in 1784. The hillside on which Digby was built was then a wilderness, and it was in the midst of this recently broken forest that a number of the new settlers came to listen to this first gospel effort made among them, and it was only a year or two later that the first Sunday School in America was organized by Lieutenant James Foreman, a loyalist immigrant; and we think it but a just tribute to him to say that he was the true founder of Sunday Schools not only in America, but in the world. Raikes, of Bristol, has long had given to him an honor which we believe belongs of right to Mr. Foreman, for it is certain that the latter convened the children of the inhabitants with a view to giving religious instruction only, while the former paid an old woman 25 cents per head for all the urchins she could gather at her home on Sunday to teach them needle work and the elements of reading, etc. Honor to whom honor is due.

Leaving Digby we followed as nearly as we could the track of the Digby and Annapolis railway to Roop's Point and Smith's Cove. We found men, at intervals, all along this section of the line, some being employed in dressing granite to be used in culverts, some in pile driving and others in grinding the roadway. Much work yet remains to be done, but it is not impossible that the road may be opened early in the approaching Autumn. We halted a day or two at Smith's Cove, which lies immediately west of the mouth of Bear River, and which is a delightfully situated village, and very pleasant in the summer season. At this place the Baptists have lately erected a house of worship which reflects great credit upon them. The building is of two stories, with a neat steeple, and the whole well painted. In the basement is a neat and commodious room, which is used as a Sunday School, lecture, and Prayer Meeting room. It is provided with a furnace, which heats the room above, and also a stove which enables them to heat the school room when the upper room is not to be used. The auditorium, or preaching room, in the upper story is neatly finished and seated in hardwood, and is supplied with a good reed organ, which with the aid of a well-trained choir supplies the congregation with excellent music. The Methodists have also a house of worship here, and in a still smaller building the Adventists sometimes meet for worship. While we were at this place we were the guest of Mr. John S. Thomas, whose wife was a Hawkesworth, a great granddaughter of Adam Hawkesworth of Yorkshire, England, who with his wife Elizabeth Wedgewood, migrated thence to this County in 1774. It was here that we were favored in seeing a bible, which was printed in England in the year 1600 - just 11 years before the first edition of our authorized version was printed, and is the oldest English translation we have met with. It contained a record of the Easton and Hawkesworth families, which were connected by the marriage of the father of our immigrant Hawkesworth with a daughter of the Mr. Eaton who once owned this bible. These records were copied by us for future use.

During a call on Edward Potter, esq., who resides in the village, we had our attention called to a new style of coffins manufactured by him, which manufacture he has protected by taking our patent rights. Of these we wish to make mention. These coffins consist of the usual inner casket of wood, and an outer or external covering consisting of a sort of concrete, of which sand and Portland cement are the chief ingredients. This outer covering, which is about an inch in thickness, is impervious to water, and in consequence it seems to us that the bodies of the dead might, if enclosed in such coffins, be preserved intact indefinitely. Besides this merit it has another - that of being cheaper than ordinary wooden caskets. We were informed that Mr. Potter is prepared to sell rights to manufacture these cement caskets to those who may desire to buy. Like most other new inventions it may take considerable time to convince the public of their value, but we believe the time will come, and that ere many years, when the use of value of the coffins will be acknowledged.

The railway bridge over the ravine and brook at Smith's Cove is at present resting in a state of partial completion.

It is of considerable length, and some 40 feet in height. The bents which will sustain the super structure rest on piles, and are constructed of Southern pine. Work will be resumed on this structure as soon as the frost shall leave the ground. A little over a mile's tramp brought us to Bear River, to the point where the new railway bridge is in course of building. Here we spent an hour or two looking over the works being carried on at this point. On the western bank of the stream a very heavy rock cutting is in progress, and at the rate now being made it appears to be doubtful if it can be finished by the time the other sections of the road are railed and ready for work. For nearly half a mile in the direction toward the cove there is some very heavy work to be done in cutting and filling in, and it will require all the resources of the contractors to have it finished before the autumn months.

From this place we proceed up stream to the beautiful town generally known as Bear River of which we will have something to say next week.

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