



The Old Train Station News

Newsletter # 101

March 2018

Dear friends,

There was a time when almost every farm in the county had a small flock of sheep. They were considered essential for meat and their wool was the basis for keeping warm and clothed. Wool is known for keeping you warm in winter and cool in summer. Sheep never found it necessary to shed their coats in summer in fact, shedding their wool is a sign they are not healthy. When my grand-aunt died we loaded up her two Guernsey and one Jersey cow to add to our herd of Holsteins. The Jersey didn't last too long as it was shot by a careless hunter, thinking it was a deer. We also brought along her chickens and a pig to add to our farm. But her flock of eight sheep were sold. I was disappointed and asked why we couldn't keep them. In the area where we dairy-farmed the rule was that sheep and cows don't mix. I was told, "The sheep would eat all the grass and the cows would starve."

The raising of sheep goes back to ancient times in Europe and Africa. The first reference to sheep in Canadian history appears to be of the arrival of two sheep aboard DeMont's ship at Port Mouton, in May of 1604 and by 1671, Nova Scotia had 407 sheep. The Scots and Irish had no need to bring sheep with them when they landed here in the late 1700s. However, it was necessary to quickly acquire animals; cows, sheep, pigs and chickens for food and clothing and oxen and later horses to help clear the land.

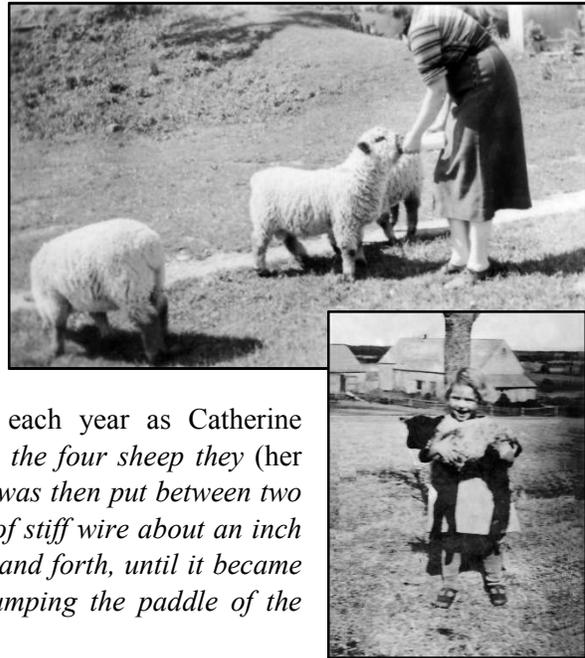
Cows and sometimes, sheep were given to a woman as her dowry and the single woman living at home often received the same upon the death of her father. That was also true for his wife. One lucky widow in the county received a cow, a sheep and the back bedroom of the house but if she "misbehaved" her son could take the animals as his own, if she continued to misbehave, he could put her out of the house. That one gave me pause for thought! While the giving of an animal seems to indicate lack of worth for women, it was an effort to give her a means of support. With work she could establish a herd and exchange her produce for cash or barter and contribute to the household.



To my surprise I discovered that there have been sheep on the islands along the Southwest shore of Nova Scotia for as long as anyone can remember. It is thought that the early European fishermen who came there to fish for the summer brought sheep with them on their boats and pastured them on the islands, beginning the tradition of raising sheep in this manner. The sheep graze year-round on these islands, feeding on grass in the summer and seaweed in the winter months. The sheep roam the islands in large flocks, and once a year they are gathered, and shorn, and culled. Each household has a distinctive earmark for its own sheep, so they are easily identified. The sheep have become an important part of the ecology of the island that they graze. Several islands have lost their sheep flocks.

When this happens, within a couple of years the islands grow up in an impenetrable web of bushes and raspberries, changing the landscape dramatically. Once this happens the locals say the island “lost its sheep”.

Well, here in Antigonish County it seems we have pretty much lost our sheep but some recall with great fondness the pleasure and the work keeping sheep entailed. Anna Josephine (MacDonald) MacLachlin, who was born in 1900 in Lanark recalled, *“When there were lambs born . . . my mother would wake one of us girls to go to the barn with her. It was usually at night and she would have the lantern ready. The winters were so cold, my mother made little woolen jackets for the small lambs . . . some of them were so delicate so we had to feed them on bottles, then they became pets.”* Once grown the real work began each year as Catherine McCallum remembered around 1916, *“The wool from the four sheep they (her grand-parents) kept, had to be washed thoroughly and was then put between two carding sticks. The two sticks with handles had rows of stiff wire about an inch high, that the wool was put between and worked back and forth, until it became fluffy. This was called carding. As Gramma sat pumping the paddle of the spinning wheel, I’d pass her the wool.”*



Now rams, on the other hand, were less warm and cuddly. Anna told this story about heading off to school with her brother around 1908, *“My brother used to tease the ram when he was out loose. I was scared of him and he knew it. One day, my brother and I started for school. The ram was out with the sheep, so they could drink at a trough in the barnyard. When he saw me on the road, he ran after me. My brother, who walked faster than I, was some distance ahead of me. There was a snowbank between him and I, and I knew if I ran from the ram, I would get stuck in the snow, and he would be sure to catch me. I began screaming. I looked for my brother, but when he heard me and saw the ram after me, he only laughed and kept on to school. I decided to get over the fence and run for the barn, where my grandfather was. I opened the door and closed it after me just in time to hear the ram butting against the door. My grandfather came and kept him away, so I could get to school. When I arrived, I was a half an hour late. I went to give my teacher an excuse for being late, but she said, “It’s OK Mary, we all know what happened.” All the class was laughing at me. Of course, my brother told them all what happened!”*

Perhaps someone out there knows what breed of sheep were raised around Antigonish and we would love to know. Most answers have been “just sheep.” Perhaps the breed was unimportant as long as they produced the needed wool and meat for the family. Sheep were an important part of the economic activity and wool was in high demand through both world wars. The number of sheep in Canada reached its peak in 1931 at 3.6 million and fell to its present level by the mid-1970s. Wool was selling for about \$1 a pound during World War I but had dropped to about 75 cents by 1918 and picked up again during World War II.

The Epistolarian

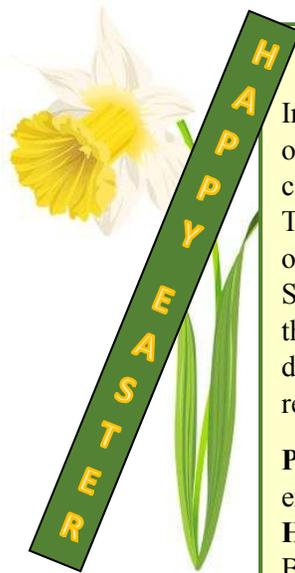


Would anyone be interested in a “Writing Your Story” group? If so, contact Jocelyn.

Attention Students!

We are looking for expressions of interest by students interested in summer employment at the Antigonish Heritage Museum

Yon canny Highland
crofters keep,
A flock of crease-
resistant sheep.
They weave wee
woollen shirts
and slacks
And flog 'em to the
Sassenachs.
Wool keeps its shape,
it's bound
to please,
Ye nae seen sheep wi'
baggy knees
At birth bairns learn
the Golden Rule,
There's nae
substitute for wool.



Easter or Holy Week

In the Christian tradition, Holy Week occurs just before Easter and is celebrated with special observances. The main celebration is the Triduum observed on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Among Christian churches the form these observances take will differ, but the meaning behind them remains the same.

Palm or Passion Sunday – Jesus entry into Jerusalem (palm branches)

Holy Monday – Jesus anointing at Bethany

Holy Tuesday – Prediction of Jesus death

Holy or Spy Wednesday – Betrayal by the High priests

Tenebrae – Eve of Thursday – means shadows or darkness

Holy or Maudy Thursday – Jesus Last Supper (Seder), foot-washing, Pascha (Passover)

Good Friday – Jesus crucifixion and death – Stations of the Cross

Holy or Black Saturday – meditation on Jesus passion and death – no decorations or celebration

Easter Vigil – can last 3-4 hours and begins after sun-down on Saturday outside the church

1. Service of Light – candles lit and procession into church

2. Liturgy of the Word – several readings

3. Liturgy of Baptism – new members baptized and confirmed, renewal for members

4. Holy Eucharist

Easter Sunday – Feast day – celebration of Jesus resurrection

Our Thanks to the Patrons of the Antigonish Heritage Association

Memorial Donations:

Walter Gillie

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- Nancy & Frank Layden

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- Delia McChesney
- Betty Grant & Donna Grant, Dartmouth
- Anonymous
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- Alane Smith, Calgary

A generous donation from **Stephen & Barbara Tillet**, Colorado whose family--the Stewarts and the Murrays originated in the Lochaber district of Antigonish County and who traveled West in the 1890s to seek their fortunes in the mines of Colorado.

in 1914. His vision led to the spread of wool cooperatives across the province and the country. The **Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers Ltd.** was established in 1918 by the sheep industry as a national system of collecting and marketing its members' wool on a co-operative basis. "This meant that regardless of the size of the wool clip, the time of year received or distance from the market, each member was paid the same price for the same grade of wool. Being merely an instrument of the growers, the company operates quite simply. It collects, grades, measures, and markets the producer's wool and after deducting the cost of operations returns the entire difference to the growers."

Upcoming Events:

March 3 – April 2: Opening display of

Friday Mar 2nd 2pm

April 3 – May 1: "Mourning in Antigonish"

May: Gaelic Awareness TBA



Canadian Co-Operative Wool Growers Limited

Led by Rev. Dr. Hugh MacPherson "Little Doc Hugh" (1872-1960), who was born in the St. Andrews area, the first local wool co-operative was established

Support Your Own Service Organization!

Sheep Breeders' and Wool Growers' Associations throughout Canada in all the Provinces, with the Canadian Co-operative, combine to make—the Sales Department of Canada's Wool Growing Industry—Every Growers' Wool clip is solicited; make shipment by freight to your local Association.



**CANADIAN CO-OPERATIVE
WOOL GROWERS Limited**

217 BAY STREET - - - - - TORONTO 2.

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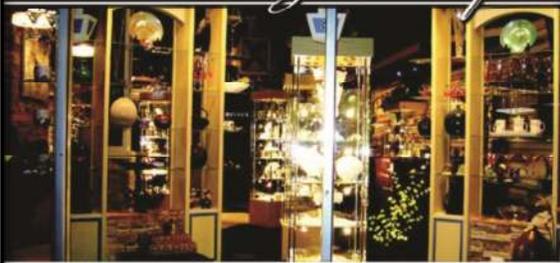
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