

[Page 5 - Old Tales of Sorcery Remembered](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 30](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1981/12/1

Marie Deveau: And then there were some others, another man who would put a sort on the cattle. Like with my father-in-law, it was on a cow. That man, he was a tinsmith. We used to call him "The Canadian." He was not Acadian. He came to Cheticamp, him and his wife, and he had a couple of sons, I think--and he was going from one house to the other. He was asking them if they had any pans that needed mending--he was fixing them. He was a good man for that. And here, my father-in-law, he wasn't scared of the sorcerers--he wasn't scared at all. He used to tell them, "If you put a sort on me, if ever I can open my eyes, I'll kill you." He wasn't scared of it, not at all. "Well," he said, "Lubin"--my father-in-law's name was Lubin--"Lubin, I can put a spell in a cow's footprint." Lubin said, "If you do, if I ever find out--you're going to get it." So, some time went by. One morning, my father-in-law went to the barn, went to milk the cow. The cow--its tongue out of its mouth. She was kicking and she was in her manger, but she was going on the floor. They couldn't make her get up. Then when she was up, she wasn't a bit steady at all--she couldn't keep still. And she wasn't eating any hay. And she wouldn't drink. They tried to milk her but they couldn't milk her. And they couldn't put the milk with the other cows' milk. There was maybe something in it. It wasn't good milk. So my father-in-law said to my mother-in-law, he said, "Maybe it's some kind of sorcery. I'm going down in Cheticamp and see." There was a George LeBrun here. He was a Jersey. Some Jersey were good to throw a sort, but some Jersey didn't do that--but they would make the cattle well, they could break that. George LeBrun, of course, he was a good man. He had a little store, selling like thread and needles and all knickknacks. He said, "Buy a package of new needles and go home, and go to the barn and get some of the cow's urine and," he said, "you put it in a bottle with some needles in it and then put a stopper on the bottle, tight, and put it in a place where there isn't much space, make it tight--put it in a place where the stopper cannot come out easily." He wanted to make the fellow--the sorcerer--dance. So my father-in-law came home. My mother-in-law said, "He came home. He was going upstairs. He had a bottle. He didn't tell me what he was going to do." They were saying that it wasn't nice to tell. You had to keep that a secret, what you were doing. If you told--it might work and it might not. So Grandpa--I call him Grandpa--was going to the barn. He was trying to get some urine from the cow, And then the cow wasn't doing it. He'd be going to the barn and she'd be just starting and he'd go with the bottle--she'd stop. He said he had to wait the whole day at the barn, until the cow was so full of it she had to let go. She was bound to let go sometime. But she was trying her best. It took her almost a day. And he stayed there. And as soon as she--he got the bottle there. So he came in the house and he made his remedy--I don't know how he made that--and he went upstairs. He went and put it under some kind of rafter--tight. Grandma said she could hear him--but she would not talk to him. So my father-in-law, he was making sail (And back to Charlie Romeril's grave....) At that time the spring was a lot later than it is now. Now, we don't have any weather. But at that time we had some winters. It



started in November., I remember the old people used to haul all their wood in November, Sometimes it was in June before the ice was gone. So you can figure, the winter was a lot longer than it is now. And they didn't put something that wasn't true on his grave. What they put on his grave, you can go by that. (And you can go by that: February 21, 1877. But Marie Deveau told us that thaws came often, in January and in February. And Mary Fraser, head of the Cape Breton Regional Library, found evidence of an extraordinary change of weather, two days before Charlie Romeril died. She found it in the diary of Robert Elmsley. He was Postmaster in Baddeck. He had received the gift of a thermometer, and delighted in taking the temperature. In his diary for 1877, we see that the weather had been cool all along. And then on the 19th of February, a south wind comes up after 10 a.m. It was 45 degrees F, at 2 p.m. on the 19th. On the 20th, at 8 a.m. it is cold again--30 degrees. By 2 p.m., 20, At 9 p.m., 16. And on the 21st, at midnight, it is -10 degrees. It stays cold from then on.)