

Page 50 - From Breton Cove and Boston: Conversations with Josie Matheson Bredbury Part 2 ISSUE : Issue 57 Published by Ronald Caplan on 1991/6/1

mother was over at the stove and she was laugh? ing. Oh, dear. Of course, I made for the outdoors, probably didn't show up all the rest of the day.... (Papa,) he used to go (to the barn)--when the crowd was around, you know--he couldn't pray in the house by himself. And he'd go to the barn. And he used to forget that he was pray? ing. And we could hear him at the house, he'd be praying so loud. We didn't think anything of it, you know, because we heard him. And we heard the prayers so many times. (He did that every night?) Oh, yeah. (He'd go up to The Norman K. the barn, every night, and pray?) Yeah. We often--well, the 3 of us girls, we used to talk guite a bit up in the States. We could even stop, and we could hear him. (When you were in the States.) Yeah, you know, we heard it so many times, you know, that it was in our.... I don't know. Anyway, maybe in the afternoon we'd be sitting talking. And we'd say something. Matheson home at Breton Cove, Josie's family home. "A bheil thu cluint e?"--"Are you hearing him?" we'd say. And we'd look at one an? other, you know. And you could stop there and you could almost hear him. END Our thanks to Rhoda Deltwas, Josie's daughter, and to Josie's niece, Belle MacIntyre, for their help with this article. And to Christine MacInnes for the photograph of her family on page 43. Readers will want to see Part 1 of Josie Matheson Bredbury's stories from Breton Cove and Boston, in Issue 56. 2 Great Shipwreck Narratives in 1 Great Book! who has identified several of the Acadians who cared for Burrows and his companions. Micmac Indians and Irish also played a role in their survival. Samuel Burrows' story was almost lost forever. Although it is a Cape Bre? ton story, it probably only saw circulation in Burrows' home town in Eng? land, where it was printed to earn a little money for the sailors who had lost limbs in the shipwreck and would never work again. This is its first printing in a book in 165 years! It is exciting reading and a deeply moving story. CASTAWAY ON Cape Breton Castaway on Cape Breton is two books in one • the words of survivors. It is first of all the story of Ensign Prenties, who wrecked at present- day Margaree Har? bour in December 1780. With his com-1 panions, he headed north in winter, rounding the tip of Cape Breton Island. They eventually lived on tallow and kelp, their frozen bodies bloating. After suffering and death, even cannibalism among those left behind, the survivors were finally saved by Micmac Indians at St. Ann's Bay. Prenties later wrote a narrative of the entire journey. That is the first part of Castaway on Cape Breton. Then, more than forty years later, Samuel Burrows and his mates were ship? wrecked around Fishing Cove, also in northern Cape Breton. These were seamen hauling cargo between Canada and England. They ran ashore in a storm. Some of them died right away. The survivors went on in search of help. They crawled over steep mountains, "pulling ourselves up by the trees," their hands and feet frozen like stumps. This was winter, 1823. Burrows fmally made it to Cheticamp and the rough shelter of sheds and pi? oneer Acadian homes. Cheticamp had been founded only about 30 years be? fore. Burrows' account in Castaway on Cape Breton is a shocking testa? ment to the reality of the beginnings of settlement



on Cape Breton • how little these people had to share in their attempts to aid and comfort these sur? vivors. It is also a document of tenderness and great humanity. Added to the Burrows are notes by Cheticamp genealogist Charles D. Roach The original 1968 edition of Casta? way on Cape Breton was edited by Dr. G. G. Campbell, who was princi? pal of Sydney Academy for 35 years. This new edition is published by Bre? ton Books in memory of G. G. Camp? bell and in honour of Sydney Acade? my's 150th Anniversary. G. G. Campbell really sets the scene. His notes and writings are worth the price of the book. Dr. Campbell was a terrific local historian, devoted to Cape Breton. He left his desk and went looking for the places Prenties stopped. Campbell tells the distances, names headlands and the hills, de? scribes the impact of a diet of tallow and kelp on the human body, and tells 'r. G. G. Campbell of the Micmac Indians who saved the ones who fmally made it to St. Ann's Bay. Castaway on Cape Breton makes you want to hike the Cabot Trail, locate places Burrows and Prenties landed, with this book in your hand. The stories of Ensign Prenties and Samuel Burrows, with the additional work of G. G. Campbell and Charles D. Roach, make Castaway on Cape Breton an important publication. It's Cape Breton's two greatest shipwreck narratives together in one very readable book. These are stories no reader will forgeL Castaway on Cape Breton is available in bookstores and gift shops, or from Cape Breton's Magazine, in a guality paperback. 120 pages. \$11.25. 50