

THE EVENING TIMES-STAR, ST. JOHN'S, N. B., TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 1923

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## OLD PICNICS AT TORRYBURN ARE TOLD OF ON DAY OF OUTING OF 1923

### Story of the Crinoline and Lightning Storm One Incident.

The Bishop's Picnic is an institution. It was founded about sixty-five years ago, when Bishop (afterwards Archbishop) Connolly held a picnic on what was later known as the Barker estate near Lily Lake. Later picnics were held at Torryburn, on the property of Henry McCullough, just across the fence from the present Bishop's Grounds, where there was also a race-track in the old days. For more than half a century, however, the picnic has been held on the present grounds, under the three Bishops—Sweeney, Casey and Le Blanc.

Great changes have occurred, but the Bishop's Picnic never grows old. Throughout the years it remains as young as childhood and joy. To the child of today it is the inspiration of happy dreams, just as it was to the little ones of more than sixty years ago, of whom those still living recall the old delights as they watch the long procession march, as they themselves marched, through the streets to the train en route to Torryburn.

Missed One in Half Century.  
The writer is indebted to James Connolly for some interesting reminiscences of the Bishop's Picnic, from which he (Mr. Connolly) has been absent but once in more than fifty years. He recalls especially the bands that played. There was a Teachers' Band, about 1864. Hon. R. J. Ritchie, then a law student, was the secretary of this band, and imported its instruments from Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston. There was another band composed of P. Atkins and others, and still another organized by Michael Madigan. Mr. Connolly remembers that in 1862 or 1863 a military band played at the picnic. Mr. Connolly attended the picnic with the Christian Brothers' Band in 1872. The Home of the Christian Brothers was where the Mater Misericordiae Home, in Sydney street, now stands, and their school where St. Joseph's school is now located. They left the city about 1873 or 1874. The band had been succeeded by the Father Matthew Band, which was also short-lived, and in 1874 sold its instruments to the City Cornet Band. The latter still flourishes and is today completing its 49th year in attendance at the Bishop's Picnic. Of its original members only four survive—James Con-

nolly, William O'Leary and his brother, Florence, of this city, and W. E. Walsh of Brockton, Mass.

### They Rode on Flat Cars.

In the earlier years of the picnic at Torryburn the procession of children marched from St. Malachi's Hall in Sydney street, to the old railway station at the foot of Dorchester street. The attendance was much larger than it is today. Hon. R. J. Ritchie recalls one with an attendance of about six thousand people. In those days, and until twenty-five or thirty years ago passenger cars were not available. A railing was placed around the ordinary flat cars and benches provided. Thus the passengers got the benefit of the wind and an unobstructed view of the landscape—and of soaking when it rained. Tears were not a sign of either grief or joy, but of a cinder in the eye. One can imagine the climbing, the jostling, the laughter and confusion in getting on and off the cars, whose passengers also received such bumps as a flat car of those days could administer as it jolted over the flattened joints of the rails. But to happy childhood all this was an adventure. In later years the cars were covered, and in due time came the real passenger cars. Mr. Connolly remembers to have seen as many as thirty-five flat cars in use on picnic-day. There were always three trains in and out for the picnickers.

### When Hoop-skirts Were Shod.

Of course the weather was always a consideration. In the early days there was no shelter on the grounds, any more than on the cars, and a heavy shower meant a soaking. So eager were the people to enjoy the picnic that many would remain up till a late hour the night before, if the weather threatened, to see if it would not clear and ensure a fine day. The parade was always a feature, and the weather was generally favorable, but Mr. Connolly recalls that in 1871 the picnic had to be postponed for a week, although the parade formed up three successive mornings and marched to the station. One wet picnic, however, has never been forgotten by those who were there. A terrible rain and thunderstorm came up suddenly. Those were the days of crinolines, or hoop-skirts. Some wagish person suggested that these contrivances would attract the lightning. A near-panic ensued. Women and girls are said to have raced to the woods or other place of momentary concealment, shed their crinolines, and then raced again through the rain and mud in search of shelter. The dresses clinging to their limbs and producing an effect quite startling in comparison with the staid preciseness of the hoop-skirt. It is said that a more thoroughly soaked and bedraggled crowd of people had never been seen in these parts.

Those who were able to appreciate the humorous side are said to have found rare enjoyment in the spectacle. Also there were crinolines on every bush long afterward. Heavy rain drove a great crowd into a barn that was with hay. Their weight caused the door to sink more than a foot, and had the building collapsed many must have been killed or injured. Fortunately the open doors were wide, and the crowd rushed out even more rapidly than it entered. Hon. R. J. Ritchie remembers with gloe a Bishop's Picnic of his early youth. He was arrayed in white pants which were much worn by boys at that time. His mother wore a green dress. Heavy showers of rain fell, with the calamitous result that on arrival home the mother's dress was completely spoiled, and the son was arrayed in green pants. The "fast" dyes of that day sometimes demonstrated their speed by running, and the embryo statesman and judge was a victim.

The Sports of Those Days.  
One of the great attractions at the picnic a quarter of a century or more ago was archery, both for men and

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women. Large numbers of both sexes were expert with the bow and arrow, and competition was very keen, for prizes which sometimes were articles of much value. Foot-races were also an annual event with many competitors, and anticipated from year to year with great interest. The late James McDade of Mill street was many times a winner in these events. Mr. Connolly remembers that among those who took an active part in the

picnic for years were John, Allen, Thomas Kickham, P. Gleeson, P. McHale, T. W. Foley, John T. Kelly, and T. H. Haley. An old-time picnic of any sort seldom occurred without some disorder. Those were the days when saloons were everywhere, and the drinking habit very common. Those, too, were the days when the harbor was full of ships, and other ships were building in the yards. Such an event as the

Bishop's Picnic was certain to attract groups of the rougher sort, who were apt to procure a fresh supply of liquor in a house at Torryburn. It is within the memory of many that on one occasion, when the police were summoned from the city to quiet a fighting crowd around a bar-room, the participants having never gone to the picnic at all, the arrival of an unpopular policeman made matters worse and resulted in several officers being badly beaten. Efforts to have this place closed on picnic-day had always failed, and it always detracted to some extent from the pleasures of the day, despite the fact that disorder on the grounds among the children was rigidly prevented. The picnics of those days were subject to the conditions of social life then existing, but the children were made happy, and revelled in pleasures as they do today. There were two great St. John picnics in the earlier period under review. One was the Bishop's Picnic, and the other "Dr. Bennett's Picnic," and Hon. Mr. Ritchie says it was the habit of everybody at patronise both. Most of those who enjoyed them have passed away, but each year the recurrence of the Bishop's Picnic stirs a pleasant memory for any who survive.

### MORNING NEWS OVER THE WIRES

Governor-General Lord Byng and party arrived in Yarmouth yesterday and were given a great reception. Civic officials met the vice-regal party at the station and a reception was tendered them in the rotunda of the Grand Hotel. Teixeira Gomes, Minister to Great Britain, was yesterday elected President of Portugal. No trace has yet been found of Ralph Simpson of Stellarton who disappeared from his home a week ago today. A dam near where he was last seen has been drained and the East River will be drained. The authorities still hold out the hope that he may be found alive. Lieut.-Col. James P. Mason, general manager of the Home Bank of Canada since 1918 died yesterday in Toronto after four months' illness.

Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen spoke yesterday in Moncton before the Rotary Club at a luncheon. His address was

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terday in Moncton before the Rotary Club at a luncheon. His address was

non-partisan. In the evening he spoke in Shediac. Today he went to Kent County. Four children of Mr. and Mrs. Du-gald McCathern of Fredericton were taken sick yesterday and ptomaine poisoning was suspected. For several hours their condition caused considerable anxiety but at last reports they were out of danger.

### DON'T LIKE IT.

Suburban residents of the Parish of Lancaster are up in arms over their tax bills recently received, and criticize the wide divergence between the values placed on the farms and those on the summer cottages. The tax for police protection is also coming in for considerable opposition, and it is understood a movement is on foot to have this legislation rescinded, on the ground that all the year round residents have the benefit of the protection but are not assessed anything to pay for the officer.

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This contest is open freely to all (employees of The Fleischmann Company excepted). There are no restrictions—no obligations on your part. Simply say: Send me the Fleischmann Health Contest Folder at once. THE FLEISCHMANN COMPANY, P.O. Box 1251, City Hall Station, New York City.



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