

The Old Staging Days

St. Andrews Herald

Dec. 25, 1821

The public are respectfully informed, that a sleigh will run between here and Saint John during the winter season, to commence tomorrow. Passengers will be taken on reasonable terms, and every exertion made to give general satisfaction.

- Kelleher and Rankin

Beacon

Oct. 24, 1907

In the Old Staging Days

When the Coach Ran from Saint John to St. Andrews

St. John Globe, Old-Time Sketches

The mail to St. Andrews commenced operations on Monday, 20th of November 1837. There were twenty horses on the line, making five teams for distance of sixty-two miles. A very handsome new coach, called "The Victoria" was exhibited in the city and the editor says of it: "If we are rightly informed, this was the first appearance of the mail coach-and-four in the city of Saint John. The coach ran from St. Andrews on Monday, Wednesday and Friday leaving at 6 o'clock, and from Saint John on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, leaving at 7 o'clock. Fare each way 25 s. Way fares: St. Andrews to Magaguadavic 7 s. The line connected with the U. S. mail at Robbinston, from which a stage started every morning for the west at 9 o'clock. L. L. Copeland was agent of the proprietors. Directors of the company: Hon. James Allanshaw, Harris Hatch, James Campbell, of St. Andrews; Charles Loring, St. George, Cyrus Stockwell, Edmund Kaye and Moses H. Perley, Saint John."

Communication**Eastport, January 3rd, 1838****Mr. Editor of *St. Andrews Standard***

Sir,

A few days ago I was a passenger in the new Mail Stage which runs between St. Andrews and the City of St. John, and as in your paper favourable mention is made of the carefulness of the driver, superiority of the carriages, horses, etc., I am anxious to add my testimony that every word is true to the letter. The carriages are capital, the horses are first-rate, the drivers are careful, and the accommodations on the road comfortable. To the passenger I would say one word - when you pass through the pleasant village of Magaguadavic, fail not to call upon the travellers' friend Tyler P. Shaw, under whose roof you will find that which cheers the heart - plenty ministered kindly and cheerfully. I have a word more to say to travelers - we have a first-rate team on this line. Mr. Copeland, the Agent, is in every way fitted for his station; success attend him and the company with which he is concerned; they surely deserve patronage. Just look how you get your mails six times a week on the lines, and, by the running of the New Stages, they get the great western mails three times a week at Saint John and everywhere else in your Provinces. Was that ever done before so regular? Before, the Magaguadavic people (or as they call them, the Magadaviers) had to thank fortune if they saw a courier once a week. Let the New Mail Stages go ahead then.

- A Yankee

Standard**Nov. 24, 1836****Progress of the Province**

From Fredericton, ten years ago, there was not one carriage road in a tolerable state of repair to any point of the province. From Fredericton to Canada, the mail was carried in every variety of form that ingenuity could suggest, and we believe the journey occupied a fortnight. From Headquarters [Fredericton] to Miramichi there was an occasional cow path, a military blaze across the portage, almost perpendicular to the river, and bewildering tracks through

the intervalles. The road to Halifax by the Washadernook and Sussex could only be partly travelled on horseback and from Westmoreland to the east of the Province there was no road at all.

A road had been opened from Fredericton to St. Andrews, but its absolute impracticability made it to be avoided, and it has long ago been abandoned. Communication from the seat of Government to Saint John was principally carried on by sloops until the “odious monopoly” of the steamboat was introduced, and in winter stages could sometimes be hired for a passage on the ice. From Saint John to Westmorland there was no proper road, and through Sussex Vale and Petitcodiac it had to be undertaken at personal risk and enormous expense. There was no road from the city to St. Andrews, but a tortuous path over heaths and hills and in some places so indistinct as almost to puzzle the eye of the Indian. These we believe were all the means of communication that this province could boast of ten years ago, for the crossroads were - we may say still are - so inconsiderable as scarcely to deserve notice.

Let us now turn to the present state of our highways and to the accommodations to be found from the St. Croix to the Restigouche and from Camouraska to St. John. Formerly there was not the smallest essay at anything like a hotel on the roads, but at every stage there was a log hut dignified by the name of Tavern, because its bar was generally surrounded by noisy loungers busily occupied in chewing tobacco and swilling potations of execrable rum. Should one of these cabanes be furnished with a boarded floor, an arrival was always distinguished by the application of the mop and scrubbing brush until the apartment was rendered as uncomfortable as it could possibly be made. Every meal was served up with tea, and the deafening biz-biz of the frying pan uniformly gave notice of eggs and bacon- the unvaried dish of every table. Those who remained for the night had to select the smoothest board, the luxury of a bed never being a matter of any consideration.

The communication between Saint John and Fredericton in summer is by means of three steamboats, and sloops by the river, and Bradley’s post wagon by the Nerepsis Road; in winter by numerous Stages both on the ice and by the road. Larry Stivers and Austin have established a line between these important points, departing

from each place three times a week. Stages were run last winter to Woodstock, and we understand that conveyance may be now had much higher up the river. The Stagecoach Company of Saint John affords great convenience to those travelling to Nova Scotia or the Eastern part of this province; passing through the beautiful scenery through Sussex Vale to Petitcodiac, a traveller may proceed to Nova Scotia or turn off the Miramichi and even Bathurst by public conveyances. From Miramichi the Swims run stages to Fredericton, and in the winter session the same route is accommodated by numerous vehicles.

From Saint John to St. Andrews there is a land conveyance summer and winter, and for most part of the year, steamboats ply three times a week. The old road between St. Andrews and Headquarters is nearly all grown up, and the intended [railroad] line, we hope, will this winter receive due consideration in the public appropriations by the House of Assembly. Great alterations and improvements have been made in the line from St. Andrews to Saint John, and its completion will no doubt be speedily accomplished under its present supervisor. From St. Andrews to St. Stephen, a constant communication is maintained most part of the year by the Steamers and Armstrong's packet and in winter by sleighs.

It may now be seen what immense improvements have been made in the mode on conveyance throughout the province within a few years, and we trust that this evidence of internal prosperity will duly appreciated and cherished by those who possess the power of directing or controlling it.

[A Two-day Trip to Fredericton]

Standard

Jan. 29, 1841

(From our Fredericton Correspondent)

Fredericton, Jan. 22, 1841

Mr. Editor,

I'm much obliged to you for printing my letters which I wrote to you last winter when I was here and am encouraged thereby to write again.

I started from Waweig a few days since in company with Mr. Ward, of the [*Eastport*] *Sentinel*; Messrs. Brown, and Boyd - two of our County Members - and two gentlemen of your town, all bound for this place, to see the Lions and to pay a little attention to the sayings and doings of our New Brunswick's "Collective Wisdom." Comfortably stowed away in Vail's commodious stage, we glided along through the Parish of St. Patrick, Mr. Ward in his own sleigh following closely in our rear. When we came to the residence of neighbor David Hopkins, we spied a painted board "Heezed on Hie" showing in large letters the word "Entertainment." Here we halted, but David had the dooryard so completely blocked up with ship timber and old fences, that we found some trouble in getting into the house. We however scrambled over the obstructions and found a good comfortable farmhouse and substantial fare. David told us of his intended improvements and boasted that he would soon equal his brother Daniel at the mouth of the Restook.

Having spliced the "main brace" and "corned the horses," we pulled on towards Brockway's over a very level line of road, turnpiked the most of the way and the travelling good. Brockway keeps a good house for the entertainment of travellers and has an excellent barn and stabling for horses. Here we were overtaken by a storm full equal to that which was so bravely faced by honest Tam O'Shanter, "as he frae Ayr ae night did canter." After an excellent supper, and seated by Brockway's fireside, we "didna value storms a whistle," but forgetting the war of elements, listened to a debate between Mr. Ward and our two M. P. P.'s on the comparative advantages of farming and lumbering. In the morning, we found the snow "all gone" in the cleared land, and in the woods so soft that the horses feet sunk through it clear to the ground.

Passing the Magaguadavic, we came to that part of the road which had only been cleared wide enough for winter traveling, and the knolls leveled a little. Every hollow was filled with mud and water and all the snow melted. Here we plunged, tumbled and wallowed, and every mile was worse than the previous one. Some blamed the supervisors of the road; others found fault with the weather, and others again laid it all to ill luck. At length the Editor, who has far more skill in driving a quill than a horse, lost his balance, upset his

fine sleigh, and went headlong into the mire. He contrived, however, to get on his legs again, and seating himself flat on his sleigh bottom by way of ballast, succeeded in keeping on an even keel the rest of the day. At last we came to the Harvey Settlement where the road being turnpiked was very good - here we got a good dinner, changed horses, and running at the rate of seven miles an hour reached Fredericton a little after dark.

In the morning, we found the streets coated with ice, the Saint John swollen and the ice separated from the banks, and were told that for 80 miles from the Grand Falls downwards, the ice on the river was entirely broken up. I strolled about the Town until the opening of the Session, which took place in the usual manner on Wednesday last. The Council Chamber is finished off as fine as a new fiddle. The broad table on each side of which the members formerly sat has been thrown out, and two rows of beautiful desks set down in place of it. The room, however, is too large for the voice of any speaker, and although Sir John Harvey is a very distinct and loud reader, I could not, where I stood in the crowd, hear what he said. On returning to the gallery of the House of Assembly, I heard the Clerk read Sir John's Speech to the House. It mentioned the health of the Queen - the birth of the Princess Royal, commerce, agriculture, roads, mails, fisheries, education, geology, militia, revenue, and the Boundary Line [dispute with Maine]. Saturday next was appointed to take it into full consideration in the House, and three of the members were at once named to write an answer to it. A number of committees were then raised for the consideration of Roads, Expiring Laws, Accounts, Privileges, Trade, Finance, etc. Of our Charlotte men, Owen was put on Lighthouses; Hill, on Privileges; Brown, on Roads and Finance; and Boyd on Accounts. Bye the bye, Owen and Hill and the three Honourables are not here yet. Boyd presented a number of Petitions and brought in a Bill to pay Jurors. Brown reported an answer to the Governor's Speech, and read a Petition from Mr. Walton about land.

- Jack Robinson

St. Croix Courier

Dec. 28, 1939

"Shiretown Items"

Echoes from the Glamorous Past

Before the days of the railroads there was a regular stage route from Boston to Halifax. Passengers and mail were brought to Robbinston, and from there were brought across to Joe's Point on a ferry operated by the father of John Friar, who will be remembered by older residents. From this point another "coach-and-four" sped over narrow and rocky roads on its way to Halifax. As the entire distance was covered at top speed it was necessary to stop frequently to change horses. This old building in Bocabec was one of the regular stops and to this day is called the "Old Exchange." It is about eight miles from St. Andrews and is now the home of Louis Holt. Railroad building began in New Brunswick in the year 1857, [sic] the first line running from St. Andrews to Watt Junction, but it was not until about 1880 that a system connecting the most important towns of the province had been established. In the meantime the stages continued to carry the mail and most of the passengers. In 1876, W. E. Mallory got the contract for carrying mail between the towns of St. Stephen, St. Andrews and St. George. He operated a livery stable in St. Andrews and made daily round trips to these neighboring towns. By this time, however, the driving of the stage had lost all its glamour and romance. It was simply a daily drive over the same route, tiresome and uneventful, the trip being made in a light express wagon with one or two horses as the load required. Mr. Mallory's contract expired in 1880, and being again put up to tender, was awarded to W. H. Whitlock of St. Stephen. The latter continued to carry on until the carrying of mails was taken over by the railroads in 1882.