EIGHT MILE HOUSE

The pioneers who cut out the cross-country road between Milton and Nictaux in the summer of 1798 marked the points on the way by the distance from the head of tidewater at Milton. Hence arose such names as Two Mile Hill, The Five Mile Clear, Seven Mile Lake, Ten Mile Lake, The Twelve Mile, The Sixteen Mile, The Eighteen Mile Meadows, etc. For many years this was the only road reaching from Liverpool to the Annapolis Valley, and it is still the only road to Caledonia and other settlements in the north part of Queens County.

When North Queens was settled in the early 1800's, following the cutting of the road, the settlers came mostly from Milton (then known as The Falls), and later they were joined by people from Liverpool, and migrations of Scots and Irish immigrants. After a time the passing teamsters set up stones to mark the miles, in place of the original figures carved in tree-blazes. Most of the stones have vanished since; but in 1940 one remained on the little hill at Six Mile, a tooth of whin-stone 3 or 4 feet high, with a Roman 6 chiseled in its face. It stood on a short loop of the old road, by-passed by the modern asphalt highway, and hidden in ~~xxxxxx~~ bushes. It was quite close to the new road on the west side.

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When I came to Queens County in 1923 a small farmhouse and barn stood in a field on the west side of the road at Eight Mile. It had been built by a man named Wentzel, from Beach Meadows, or further "up the shore" in Lunenburg County, some time before 1876. It was a lonely spot in a long stretch of woods, and Wentzel must have chosen it because he wanted solitude, for the land was poor and rocky, suited only for Nature's own purpose, the raising of trees. The house was a wooden one of the familiar storey-and-a- half type, of frame and shingle construction, with an ell that ran parallel with the highway, making it a house of three gables.

One gable faced the road, with two small windows in the upper storey; below was the front door and a small window lighting the parlour. The side of the ell that faced the road had a single small window in the middle, and a door at the south-east end. The house was well built, had a stone foundation, and bore traces

of white paint. It stood in the midst of the clearing, about 100 yards from the road, surrounded by old apple trees.

At Eight Mile the highway appears, to the stranger, to be running through dense forest and nothing else. Actually here it passes between two lakes, each within a mile of the house. The lakes were named after the mile-stones which happened to be opposite to the points where the lakes lie closest to the road -- Seven Mile Lake and Ten Mile Lake. (Ten Mile Lake runs 3 miles southward from the point where the pioneer road-cutters skirted it.)

It was such a lonely spot that Wentzel's family left it after his death. For many years the house stood empty, with its doors and windows covered by nailed boards. The woods were creeping up in the old clearing, making it smaller every year. Once, in the early 1920's, a poor family named McKenna moved out there from Milton, tore off the boards, and "squatted" in the house for a few months. They then went back to Milton.

In 1927 the old house had new occupants, a mysterious couple from the State of Maine, middle-aged people of small education. They kept a cow, had a horse and buggy, but made no attempt to cultivate the field. Occasionally they drove in to Milton to buy groceries; but they got no mail and apparently sent none. They were close mouthed, and nobody remembers their name -- if indeed they gave any name at all. Travelers on the highway sometimes saw the man in the clearing. The woman was rarely visible.

The Eight Mile region had long been a favorite hunting ground for men from Liverpool and Milton. They soon had to stop their practice of parking their cars in the Eight Mile Clearing. Strange tales filtered back to Milton and on to Caledonia. If a car or horse team stopped for any reason at Eight Mile, the man would come out of the house armed with a shotgun and order them to move on. Some tried to reason with him, but got nowhere. The man revealed to one or two that he had fled here from the state of Maine to avoid some mysterious persecutors, and he was afraid they might follow him here.

He never revealed how he came to know about the Eight Mile House, and that

it was empty and available to any squatter. From scraps of conversation, conducted under the menace of the gun, which was always in his hands, it was clear that the man was suffering from delusions and in fact was dangerously mad. His wife seemed to be sane, but ready to go along with his whims and keep her mouth shut. They seemed to have a supply of money, not only for food but for repairs to the house.

Suddenly the man declared that his persecutors from Maine had tracked him down, and were lurking day and night in the woods about the clearing. He got boards and shingles from Milton, and with quite skillful carpentry closed up the back door and the door at the end of the ell. This left only one door, the one in the house end facing the road -- in other words the front door.

Then he announced to some passing woodsmen that his enemies were climbing the old apple trees to peer in the upper windows, so he sawed off the upper trunks, leaving stumps about four feet high. He and the woman lived in a state of siege, day and night.

In the autumn of 1927 a party of American timber cruisers came to estimate the Macleod Pulp Company's holdings near Ten Mile Lake. It was part of an extensive job, arranged by the Company's American stockholders, and the cruisers belonged to a professional timber-estimating firm in Bangor. As they naturally had a Maine license plate on their car, and they intended parking it on a short woods-road leading from the highway to the north tip of Ten Mile Lake, the manager of the Milton pulp mills warned them about the madman at Eight Mile. The cruisers merely laughed, pointing out that they carried something better than xx a shotgun -- each of them carried on his belt a .45 calibre automatic pistol, for shooting wildcats, bears, etc., that they might meet on the travels.

Fortunately they did not encounter the tenant of Eight Mile House. But apparently he had seen them, and especially their Maine license plate. His manner was now violent. He would run out with the gun and menace even the casual motorist, out for a drive, who attempted to turn his car at the Eight Mile clearing. Plainly it was only a matter of time before some innocent motorist was shot.

This state of affairs seems strange in modern days, when the country districts

are covered by patrols of the RCMP. But there were no police outside Nova Scotia towns until 1929, when a small force of uniformed provincial police came into being. They were too few to be efficient, and in 1932 the government of N.S. arranged with the federal government for detachments of RCMP. Until that time, law enforcement in country districts was entirely in the hands of local farmers or woodsmen, appointed as "constables" each year, without pay. This system, or lack of system, worked well enough on the whole, because country folk were law abiding and peaceable; but it was incapable of handling such an affair as the one at Eight Mile. The place was isolated, it did not come within the responsibility or even the authority of the village "constables" in Milton and Caledonia, and even if it did these men had no inclination to risk getting their heads blown off "for nothing".

In the country fashion, people had come to accept this peculiar reign of terror at Eight Mile as one of the curiosities of the road. And in 1929 their problem solved itself suddenly and for ever. The mysterious madman and his quiet little woman left the house, presumably at night (for no one saw them go), taking their few sticks of furniture and their other belongings in a wagon, and somehow disposing of the cow. The lone door remaining, at the front of the house, was locked.

Before long, hunters were again parking their cars in the Eight Mile clearing, and some broke into the house and used it as a hunting camp. A year or two later some woodsmen building a logging camp in that region stole all the doors and windows from Eight Mile House. Thus the weather got in. The roof leaked, the floors heaved with damp. Hoboes swarmed over the country during the "Depression" of 1930-1938, and Eight Mile House became a sort of wayside hostel for them. They knocked down the plaster to get laths for kindling their fires. They tore down the barn, board by board, for firewood. Then the interior of the house itself began to go.

I have a snapshot of the house, taken on a motor trip to Caledonia in December 1933. It was still standing and outwardly in good condition, although the doors and windows were gone. A year or two later in a Fall gale the upper storey collapsed, and the rest remained, swaying dangerously.

I went inside one Fall day and found utter ruin. All the plaster had gone, but

for a patch about three feet square over the old parlour mantel, and nearly all of the laths and some of the studding had been ripped out for fuel. On the sole remaining patch of plaster someone had written in pencil THE PEPLE WHO DISTROYED THIS HOUSE WILL SOME DAY COME TO WANT. The power and economy of the words impressed me, like a phrase from one of the more wrathful psalms, as if the ghost of that bygone madman still haunted the place.

Soon after this nothing remained but a heap of wood and plaster dust. I came by one day in 1938 and found that somebody had trucked the wreckage away, presumbly for firewood. Nothing remained but the stone foundation, the small clearing, and the queer polled apple trees.

I have mentioned that Ten Mile Lake lies only a mile west of Eight Mile but extends northward two or three miles. It was so named because its north tip came within one or two hundred yards of the Milton - Caledonia highway at the ten mile mark. There a short road, made and used by loggers, ran from the highway to the lake. (Today -- 1964 -- the provincial government has made a place for campers there, and it is much used for picnics, etc.)

When the Second German War began in September 1939, the chief signals officer on the small staff at the Halifax Dockyard was Lieutenant Finch-Noyes, an Ontario man of 30. He was a big blond fellow, a fine athlete, and highly regarded by his fellow officers. A day or two after war was declared, Finch-Noyes left the Dockyard in his small car and vanished. The naval authorities notified the RCMP, and a day or so later there were discreet little bits in the Halifax papers asking the public to keep an eye for him. The officer in charge at Halifax, Commander Reid, refused to tell the newspaper men anything except "he must be found."

The first valid report of him came from Annapolis, where a man and car of the description given had been seen. And the man had enquired the way to Liverpool. That started an intensive hunt along the Annapolis - Liverpool highway. The RCMP found Finch-Noyes sitting in his car in the woods road at Ten Mile. That afternoon I saw him, or a man of the description given, passing through Liverpool on the way

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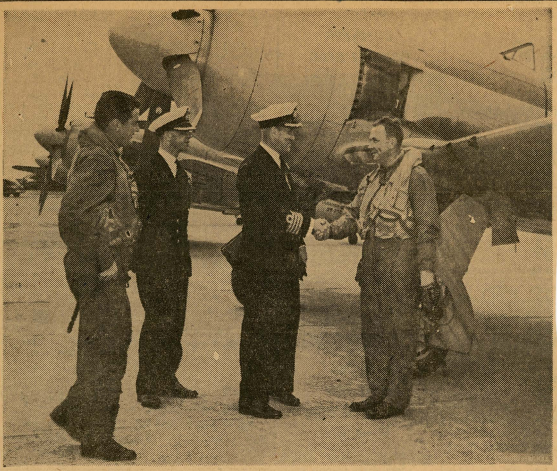

A SAILOR'S FAREWELL — Captain Edward Finch-Noyes, commanding officer at H. M. C. S. Shearwater, shakes hands with Sea Fury pilot Lt. D. M. McLeod, Stellarton, while making the rounds of the Eastern Passage air station yesterday before leaving for Ottawa, where he has been appointed Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel. Looking on are 871 Squadron commander Lt. Bill Munro (left), and Cdr. S. Hook, Commander Air at Shearwater. Planes of the 31 Support Air Group can be seen lined on the tarmc in the background. (R. C. N. Photo).

Flypast Of 39 Aircraft Is Feature Of Farewell

A flypast of 39 aircraft featured a farewell by H. M. C. S. Shearwater at Eastern Passage to its commanding officer, Captain Edward Finch-Noyes, yesterday.

Marching past the saluting base were 750 officers and men of the station. Later they formed for inspection in front of the base while the band played "Till We Meet Again" and "The Very Thought of You."

Captain Finch-Noyes, 42, has been appointed Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel at Ottawa, and will take up his new appointment June 29.

He is being replaced by Commander Duncan Raymond, a Royal Navy officer who has been executive officer on the cruiser Ontario.

Captain Finch-Noyes is from Hamilton and Oakville, Ont. Highlights of his career have been command of the armed merchant cruiser Prince Robert, command of the destroyer Saskatchewan, senior convoy officer for the North Atlantic and Chief of Staff at H.M.C.S. Stadacona in Halifax.

During yesterday's farewell at Shearwater, a special guard of honor composed of chief petty officers was drawn up in front of the saluting base and inspected by Commander David Groos.

- - AND THE NEW CAN FLAG PAC

A NAVAL OFFICER with the "busman's holiday" hobby of yachting, Rear-Admiral Edward W. Finch-Noyes is the new Flag Officer Pacific Coast, having raised his flag at Esquimalt on June 30.

Admiral E. W. Finch-Noyes was born in Hamilton on June 9, 1909, and was living in Oakville, Ontario, when he entered the RCN as a cadet in September 1926.

He trained and served with the Royal Navy, then returned to Canada in June 1931 and spent two years in the destroyer *Champlain*. After a further period with the RN, he came back to Canada in January 1936 and served in the destroyers *Saguenay* and *Vancouver*, and at Naval Headquarters, Ottawa.

During the Second World War he served at Naval Headquarters, in east coast establishments, as executive officer of the auxiliary cruiser *Prince Henry* and in command of her sister-ship, the *Prince Robert*.

He also commanded the destroyer *Saskatchewan* and, from May 1944 to June 1945, was senior officer of C-4 convoy escort group, composed of Canadian frigates and corvettes, in the North Atlantic.

In the three years following the war he commanded the destroyer *Iroquois*, served as executive officer of the cruiser *Uganda* and of *Stadacona*, and attended staff and tactical courses in the United Kingdom.

He became Chief of Staff to the Flag Officer Atlanic Coast in October 1948 and a year later was appointed in command of the RCN air station, *Shearwater*. From there he went to Headquarters as Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel in August 1951.

REAR-ADMIRAL E. W. FINCH-NOYES, CD

Admiral Finch-Noyes took command of HMCS *Quebec* on September 11, 1953, and became Commodore RCN Barracks, Halifax, in August 1955. He took up the appointment of Commanding Officer Naval Divisions with headquarters at Hamilton, Ont., on April 2, 1958.

Admiral Finch-Noyes was the first chairman of the Royal Canadian Naval Sailing Association, which was formed to foster sailing, cruising and seamanship in the RCN.

As the son of an enthusiastic yachtsman, he was taken sailing on Burlington Bay, Hamilton, at the age of two months. When he was 16, Admiral Finch-Noyes became a member of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club in Toronto and was for a time a crew member of the late Commodore N. G. Gooderham's yacht *Yolandi*.

While training and serving with the Royal Navy he sailed in European waters.

In 1949, Admiral Finch-Noyes skippered the RCN yacht *Grilse* in the Marblehead race, winning the Oland trophy for being the first Canadian yacht on corrected time.

from "The Crowsnest" official RCN magazine July 1960

towards Halifax. The car was driven by a naval officer in uniform, and Finch-Noyes was in the back seat between another naval officer and a constable of the RCMP. At Halifax it was given out that Finch-Noyes had been found and returned to naval care; that he appeared "dazed and ill", that he had been over-working for days and nights on end owing to the outbreak of war, and that he was suffering from amnesia. Later it was given out at Halifax that he had gone to his home in Ontario on leave, for a rest and treatment. This was to silence wild rumors that Finch-Noyes was a spy, and that he had been tried summarily and shot. Nothing more was heard of the incident.

I was told later by someone in a position to know, that Finch-Noyes had left the Dockyard on Sep.2nd or 3rd, taking with him some highly secret and important code books. Finch-Noyes recovered completely, was restored to his post at Halifax, and married a girl from Chester N.S. in 1940. He was in active service all through the war, and after the war he rose steadily in rank. By 1950 he was Captain Edward Finch-Noyes, commanding officer, HMCS Shearwater, Dartmouth. In 1951 he went to Ottawa as Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel. In 1960 he was a Rear-Admiral, and raised his flag at Esquimalt as Flag Officer, Pacific Coast.

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J. H. R.