

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF AN INTERESTING STORY

or

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO AN ANTIQUE SHOP

On Thursday morning (Oct. 18, 1973), being my day off, I ventured into an antique shop on Hollis Street (owned by Tom Kramer, who is, I was told, Economic Advisor to the Provincial Government). Tom was not in at the time. The young fellow (whose name, I think, was Kenny), the lady and I struck up a conversation, and I asked them if they had anything on the Mary Celeste. They said that they had not (which is what I expected), but we began talking about the Celeste. I told them a lot of what I knew about her, and I happened to mention that the only "original", authentic painting that had been done of her (by a French artist, when the Celeste, then called the Amazon, was in Marseille in 1861) had found its way back to R. Lester Dewis, grandson of Joshua Dewis, builder of the Amazon, and that now, it was supposed to be hanging in the Museum at Fort Beausejour in Aulac, New Brunswick (It was donated to them by Lester Dewis around 1938). I mentioned how both Rhodes Dewis (Lester's son) and I had inquired (at different times) at Beausejour about the painting, and how we both had received similar answers—that they hadn't known it was ever there, that it wasn't there now, and that they had no idea where it was. (Dave Taylor, the present Superintendent, said that he had been there only a few years).

At this point, Kenny said something to the effect that it was odd that I should mention the painting, as there was a fellow in the shop a few weeks previously who claimed to have the original painting of the Amazon, and he wanted to sell it for \$25,000.00 (!!). He told me the guy's name—which I promptly forgot—it was an unusual first name—and that he was a "gangster". He also said that the guy mentioned that he was interested in selling it to the Museum (of Science in Halifax).

This seemed all rather fishy to me, and the conversation shifted back to my interest in the Celeste, and Kenny recommended a shop

(Captain Susan's—Susan Patterson, I think; she lives with Kenny's father, Bruce) on Lower Water Street, where he thought I might be able to pick up some old books on the Celeste. I told him I would come back and show him a picture of this painting, then left, going to Captain Susan's. There was no one in the shop, so I went to Scotia Stamp Studio to inquire about a stamp issued by the Gibraltar Post Office bearing a picture of the Mary Celeste. I returned home and phoned the Science Museum and told Mary Stevens (one of the secretaries, whom I went to school with) the story, and asked her to let me know if anyone approached the Museum offering the painting for sale.

After lunch, I returned to the antique shop with the picture, talked to Kenny awhile, showed the picture to Tom, who came in while I was there, then went to the hospital to pick up my cheque. From there, I went to Scotia Stamp Studio to pick up the stamp with the Celeste on it.

I then returned to Captain Susan's, talked to Susan for a time, and told her the story (she is a friend of Tom Kramer). She asked me several questions, then said that from the story, the mention of "gangster", and the nautical theme of the whole business, there could be only one person to fit the description of the person involved—Vint Lloyd. I immediately recognized the name as the one which Kenny told me in Tom's shop, and told her that was the guy.

She then phoned Neils Jannasch (Curator, Marine Branch, N.S. Museum of Science, also her acquaintance) and, during the conversation, after he had said that that was the second time that day that he had heard about the painting, she told Neils that I was sitting in her office at the time. He told her that he planned on phoning Fort Beausejour to inquire about the whole business. Susan then told me a few stories about Vint Lloyd, who, I gathered, was a well known "con-man" in Halifax.

The following morning, tired from having worked all night, I went to the Museum to talk to Neils about the whole matter. He was waiting for a call from Fort Beausejour when I got there. I talked to him for a short time, then he got a call from Dave Warren at Fort Beau. Dave talked to Neils, myself and a girl, Mary MacKay, who now works at the Museum in Halifax, but who, in the summer of 1969, worked at Beau, and who saw the painting hanging in the Beau at that time.

Warren asked me several questions, which appeared to me, as well as to Neils and Mary, to be aimed at clearing his name, and the name of Beausejour and absolving them from any blame. In answer to Warren's questions, I told him that I had been talking to Dave Taylor in person, about a month ago (Sept. 19, to be exact), and what he had told me about the painting. I told him that Rhodes Dewis, who I knew, was with his father (Lester) when Lester gave the painting to Beau. in 1938. He then wanted to know if the painting had been lent, donated, sold or what, and to whom—the Museum itself or to John Clarence Webster (Founder of the Beau.), which I didn't know. I told him that as far as I knew, the painting was given to the Museum in 1938. He then tried to make out that it was a copy, and not the original painting. He wanted to know where Rhodes lived and other questions, then talked to Mary MacKay and Neils, and that was it from Dave Warren.

Before I left, Neils told me that Vint Lloyd, whom he knew, had made an appointment with him a couple of weeks ago. Lloyd wanted to show Neils a painting of the Mary Celeste, but failed to show up. Neils told me that he had pulled the same stunt with Harold Medjuck, an antique dealer on Hollis St.

Neils then phoned Malcolm Ferguson in the Ottawa Department to find out if their catalogues stated that the painting had indeed been given

to the Beau. He said that he could check it out and let him (Neils) know in a week or so. If the painting was supposed to be there, Neils said that there would be a search instituted at Beausejour, and if it proved not to be there, then the finger would be put on Lloyd.

Neils then phoned Tom Kramer to find out when Vint Lloyd had been in to Tom's shop and made the offer. It was then that Tom told Neils that Vint had not made an offer to him, but had approached Harold Medjuck, asking, I think, the same price (\$25,000), and had pulled his "no show" act with Medjuck.

Neils then thought to phone Vint at his home in Bridgetown (he and his mother own Lloyd's Antiques there) and ask him if he still had the painting, that he (Neils) was still interested in it. Neils found out, however, that Vint was in Florida. Neils said that it was unlikely that Vint was on the lam, as Neils had (legitimately) bought a painting from Vint a few weeks previous, and at that time, Vint mentioned that he was going to Florida (He apparently was going down to sail a schooner back, which was to be refitted).

Mary then tried unsuccessfully to locate some others whom she had worked with at Beau in 1969. We all talked over coffee for a time, then I opted for bed and sleep. Neils thanked me for being in the right place at the right time—a catalyst, as it were. As he said, if I had not got in touch with him, he may have heard the whole thing from Tom, and possibly acted on it, or he may not have. He said he would keep me abreast of further developments, and I left. To bed...

October 22, 1973. Checked with Kenny at Nova Nautical (Tom Kramer's shop). The essence of his conversation was: Lloyd had not been into the shop, and had not offered Tom the painting. I asked him how he had found out about the whole business, and he said that Tom had mentioned it.

He also mentioned to me at that time that Neils was prepared to pay \$25,000 in order to acquire the painting for the Museum (this seemed a bit doubtful to me, but I didn't argue the point).

I then checked with Harold Medjuck, ostensibly looking for old books on the Celeste. In the course of our conversation, he told me (without my mentioning anything about it) that he had a friend, Vint Lloyd, who had what he (Lloyd) claimed was an original painting of the Mary Celeste. He told me (drawing, presumably on what Lloyd told him) that it was originally called the Amazon, and that the painting was not signed (all of which I knew). He said that at present, Lloyd was "down South" (Florida) researching the painting (!!). He told me that it probably wasn't for sale, but Vint was asking an awful lot of money for it. I then told him that I thought there was a painting done by a French Artist when the Amazon was in Marseille in 1861. I said that I would really like to see the painting. He took my name and phone number, but I had my doubts as to whether he would ever call me when Vint got back from Florida.

I then phoned Neils at the Museum in Halifax. He said that he had been in touch with Malcolm Ferguson in Ottawa and Ferguson told him that the catalogues stated the painting was supposed to be in Beausejour and that Beau, at this time, were supposed to be looking for it. I mentioned the fact that Kenny had told me Neils was prepared to pay \$25,000 for the painting. His comment to that ran essentially thus: "Bullshit".

November 10, 1973. I received a letter (on Nov. 7, I think) from the New Brunswick Museum in St. John, dated Nov. 5, 1973. The last paragraph stated:

"Also we recently were notified that the original painting of the "Amazon" has been located at Fort Beausejour."

I then tried to phone Neils at his home, but his wife said that he would be away until Friday.

I phoned him Friday night (Nov. 9) at his home and told him about the letter. He said that he had been talking to Ferguson in Ottawa and that he (Ferguson) had said that the painting had indeed been located at Beausejour. Neils said that the thing to do now would be to wait for Vint Lloyd to return from Florida and see just what he had; as he said, there have been instances where there were two "originals" of a painting (but I hardly think that likely in this case).

November 21, 1973. Drove to the Beausejour Museum at Aulac, N.B. on Nov. 16, to see if the original painting was at the Museum there. I talked with Dave Taylor, saw the painting (which was in color) and took some pictures of it. Taylor mentioned that there had been some inquiries about the painting. He said that he had known that the painting of the Amazon was at the Museum, but he had not been aware that the Mary Celeste and the Amazon were one and the same ship. (That struck me as being a dubious and weak explanation!).

I then drove to Parrsboro, where I had a talk with Harold Puddington, who was Shipping Registrar there for 38 years (he retired in 1969), then went on to Advocate and had a long conversation with Scott Dewis' wife. She loaned me the photocopy of the painting that Lester, Scott's father, had made, in order to get it copied.

Questions arising in my mind at present are: What painting (if any) does Vint Lloyd have? How much more does Harold Medjuck know than he is telling? (He is known not to be above shady deals). How much underhandedness is really involved here? Hopefully, we may find the answers when Vint comes back from Florida.