

METIS

The Boule Rock Hotel: it was about half this size when I first knew it in 1910. Boule Rock in the background. The Hotel was demolished circa 1970-1975



Lighthouse Point; from the Cascade Hotel, where I spent a few later brief holidays, circa 1927-30?

METIS

Over a period of some 65 years one or more of the Merretts spent a summer holiday in Metis Beach, starting in the Boule Rock Hotel before I was born until 1973 when Helen paid her last visit, with Ernest, to the Boule Rock the year before it was demolished. <sup>1</sup> Starting at 10 months old, I spent two summers in the hotel. The third year Dad rented a newly built frame house, practically on the rocky "beach", which remained our summer home for about 15 years. <sup>1</sup> It was the second to last house at the east end, before the village of Les Boules.

The house had six or seven bedrooms & one bathroom, and a huge attic full of trunks, cobwebs and dead blue-bottles. The attic was a good place on rainy days, or they could be spent endlessly by riding my tricycle - later my bicycle - up and down the long L-shaped verandah, or on bread-making days in the kitchen baking surnut by-products from surplus dough. On Sundays after church I cranked the ice-cream freezer on the back porch. There was a period when I would bat a tennis ball by the hour against the drum-like siding of the house until mother & sisters must have been driven crazy, but as always they put up with a lot from the youngest and I don't remember them screaming.

Our landlord was one of the numerous Astle family who owned two of the four hotels and numerous rental houses as well as the general store. We relied on the Astles to stock the woodshed and ice house, and for all transportation to and from the station or for afternoon "drives" - first in fringed carriage, then a model T Ford with brass radiator and leather windshield braces, and then McLaughlin or Chevrolet or Overland touring cars.

<sup>1</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> year we broke away and spent a few weeks at Bon Echo in Ontario, but were back at Metis the next year, at the Cascade Hotel.

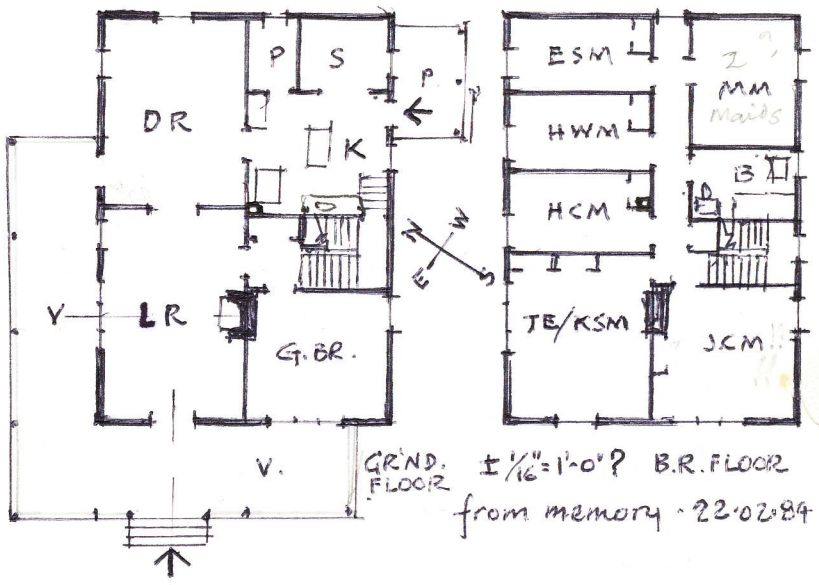


The Boule Rock Hotel Cat: 1911.

← Lower garment I called "nompers" as in "do up my..."



Our Metis House, 1912-1926±



.... black slaty rocks ..  
... a great place to play

Um METIS 1911-1914 ±



our dog "Tyke"



I never afterward minded cold water



horse drawn carts, dirt roads...  
(me from my bedroom window)

The house was so close to the shore that sometimes at an unusually high tide we could throw a stone into the surf from the verandah. At low tide there was, beyond the sand and stone "beach" littered with drift-wood and seaweed, a stretch of black slaty rocks with occasional "erratics" and lots of seaweedy pools full of tiny shrimps, snails, mussels and things. It was a great place to play but not really good for bathing - by most people's standards - the water temperature rarely above 60° F. We all bathed in it and I liked it and never afterward minded cold water, but I never learned to swim properly at Metis, in spite of all the family efforts to teach me! In spite of that I had a punt in which I was allowed to cruise along the shore on calm days, and with Hilda or Dad I learned to paddle our Peterborough.

I played golf and tennis at the Cascade G. & T. Club



which was the centre of all social life. I preferred tennis and actually gave up golf with a spectacular gesture when, in a family foursome, having been denied a birdie on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole due

to some (I thought) unfair technicality I scored another clean birdie 2 on the 9<sup>th</sup> hole and, having made my point, I walked off to the clubhouse in a pet and played no more golf for some 20 years.

\* [Except a preponderance of cocktail parties]

About once a summer there was a family excursion to picnic and fish at the Tordigou River, or perhaps Fleet's Lake,<sup>2</sup> several miles and concession roads inland, up a series of very steep hills which involved disembarking, in the early days, first from a carriage to give the horse a chance, and later on from a great green Daimler touring car (rented out and driven by M. Thibault the blacksmith) which overcame the hills only in reverse.

its owner

\* stalling?

reverse.

METTS ± DOWN RIVER FROM HUNTERS!



water temperature ± 55° F ..we all bathed in it.

J.C. & K.S.M. after tennis practise, no screams.



annual bonfire - sand & stone beach, blackrock, driftwood and seaweed.

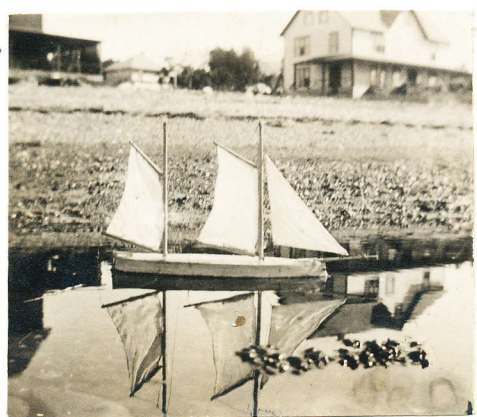


Peter-cat (CNR special dispensation)



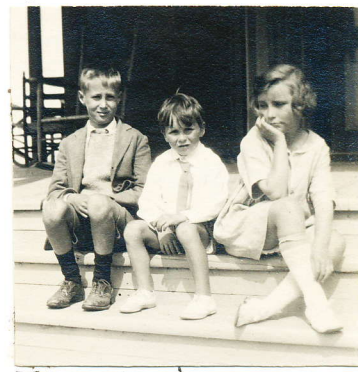
private, no admission --

our red → house



white house was a mirror image of our red one.

J.C.M. - built schooner -



Torontonians - a Boulton and two Oslers.



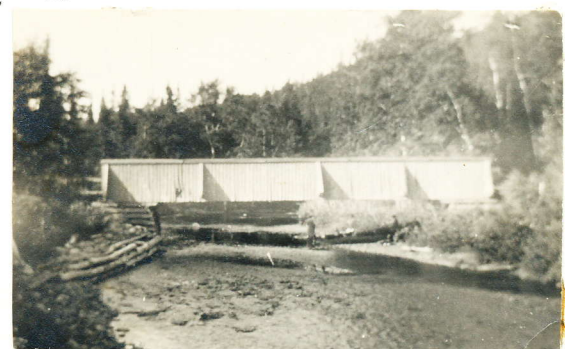
.. my yacht "Roamer"...



Molsons' yacht "Edamena" 26.1



and my town roadster



Red bridge at the Tordigou River.

Other annual treats included half-day excursions, again in horse-drawn carriages, to have tea and ice cream at Miss Blue's tearoom some 5 miles away, once stopping en route at Lighthouse Point to climb the tower and inspect the lantern, and below the machinery that produced the baleful wail of the fog horn. Later on this sort of en famille activity gave way to dashing up and down the country side in one's wealthier friends' roadsters, as far from families as possible; but before that we all (except Mother & Dad) had bicycles and I did a lot of tripping about apart from such routine runs as collecting the mail and the "Star" at the post office - a regular noon meeting place. Since neither Dad nor anyone else in our family ever owned a car in those days, the girls and Stuart relied on their friends for transportation to and from the Club. Again, most of these cars were McLaughlin touring cars.



..... This one belonged to a Molson  
(Louis &)

In the early years the journey to Metis from town, toward the end of June, (and home again after Harbour Day) was by Grand Trunk (later C.N.) Railway to Petit Métis - the "over station", on the Halifax main line, and thence by horse and buggy some 8 miles to the "Beach". It took two, sometimes three, such vehicles to carry the family, a cook and a maid, and our hand luggage, with the trunks - at least six - following on an open cart or buckboard. Later the C.N.R. found that it paid well to provide the "St. Lawrence Special" direct to Metis Beach using the Canada & Gulf Terminal right-of-way from Mont Joli junction. This train would carry the families - mostly from Montreal with a few from Quebec and Toronto - to their various summer cottages and hotels in the

Matia Beach



Sunday evening ritual at the station.



Petercat had special privileges.



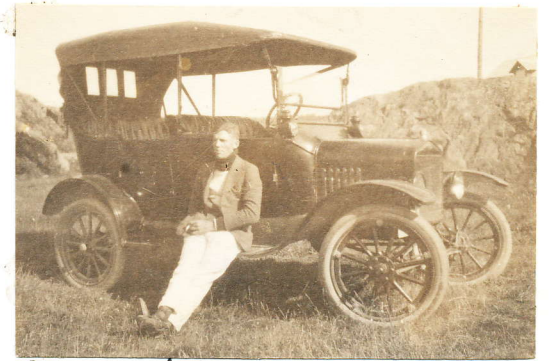
The C.N.R.'s St. Lawrence Special and Locomotive #5256



The Canada & Gulf Terminal Ry. ran from Mont Joli to Matane



The Lighthouse



Stuart's friend Bill Sutherland and Ford, at our house.



St. George's Church.



We broke away one summer and went to Bon Echo, Ont.

Photos by J.C.M. (except Sutherland)

little enclaves dotted along the river between the French villages from Kambouraska to Les Boules. The train operated three days a week each way, and throughout the summer every Friday evening the breadwinners, and the working sons, would leave their city offices and board the Special for the weekend with their families, usually bringing hamper of victuals from Dionné's to augment the simpler supplies available in the resorts. And at Metis every Sunday evening after supper a ritualistic social gathering occurred at the station to see them off to the city again.

It was against Railway policy to allow pet animals, summering with their owners, to travel anywhere but in the baggage car, caged or on leash, but for many years our family took a drawing room on the train (as well as a couple of sections) in order to transport first the dog Tyke and later the cat Peter, in concealed comfort and companionship with us. The family suffered agonies of suspense lest a bark or whine, or a feline wail, from the washroom should occur just as the conductor eukered for tickets or the porter to make up berths. Whether considerations were involved I don't know, but I do know that Mr. Mitchell, the perennial and jovial conductor and Coleman, the comedian negro porter, were both fully aware and never batted an eye except as a conspiratorial wink.

The train trip was something I looked forward to for months. I would spend most of the night in my berth, peeking out at the dark landscape floating by and absorbing the train noises, the doppler rise and fall of crossup bells, occasionally another train clattering by, and the subdued french jabber at the platforms where we stopped. At dawn I would dress and navigate between the swinging humping curtains of the Pullmans back to the rear observation.



platform and there sit until my hair and eyes were full of cinders, or until I felt sick or mesmerized by the clickety-clack and the swiftly receding rails and ties - all resulting in a deathly appearance and parental reprimand.

The first time I ever travelled between Metis and Montreal by automobile was with Stuart and Dick Dawes in Dick's Hudson Super Six, practically all the way on dirt road. It meant leaving after an early breakfast and arriving late for dinner. Another friend of Stuart's, Bill Sutherland, had a Wills-St. Claire with a twin-four engine: it had twin exhausts and corresponding muffler cut-outs, and sitting in the middle between Stuart and Bill I could step on the two cut-out pedals simultaneously thus producing a roar like a large fire-engine - great fun for me but annoyed embarrassment maker for the others. We once drove the dirt road from Metis to Monk Joli, 17 miles, in 15 minutes flat (or was it 15 miles in 17 minutes? - anyway not bad going in about 1920).

Stuart was part of a Metis crowd whose life style resembled that of Scott Fitzgerald's contemporary characters - all in line with the post-war society of the 'twenties - complete with blazers, white flannels or plus fours, two tone shoes and even boaters (or for the girls cloche hats along with low waists and short skirts). Helen and <sup>perhaps</sup> even Hilda were not in the thick of it, and I was 14 years too young to see more than glimpses of it. Although many of the gang had lots of money to throw around, most of them also had businesses or jobs to mind, and the whoopee was also tempered by lots of healthy sports. Two Molson families shared a series of power yachts (named "Curlaw" or "Edamena") which brought them and their friends down the river from town to park inside Boule Rocks for a couple of days of parties,

Correction: rather think not.

Correction - I am sure Hilda played her part in the fun.

1

then take them across to fish salmon at the Godbout River on the north shore.

Each year there was a baseball game between the girls and the boys, the latter handicapped in skirts and various accoutrements which never seemed to stay in place and got in the way of their batting.

Nearly everyone attended <sup>or other</sup> one of the three churches - C. of E., Presbyterian and Methodist (in that order of congregation size, the last being mainly the original \* Scottish settlers). After church some, walking home at our end, would stop off at the Boule Rock Hotel's swimming pool to watch the "boys" do an "Australian Splash" off the dressing-house roof, calculated to drench the assembled gallery. It was all good clean fun!!

I saw it without being part of it. My contemporaries who lived near us were, oddly, all Torontonians who, <sup>1</sup> except for the Oslers, came and went, renting a house for a summer or two. My Montreal friends in Metis all lived at the opposite end and only occasionally did I join up with them. Thus I spent most of my time, at least before teenage, playing in our immediate vicinity, including the beach and the fields, inland to the railway track, where we regularly picked strawberries, raspberries & blueberries in their seasons, but extending also into the adjacent French village of Les Boules.

The permanent residents of Metis were descendants of original Scottish immigrants - MacNiders, Turiffs, Crawford's, Campbells - who in our day owned land, hotels, houses and the only two shops, and built the cottages for the summer visitors. I can <sup>??</sup> remember no French name among either the "locals" or the visitors. The French lived in Les Boules and on down the coast eastward to Sandy Bay <sup>1</sup> where their

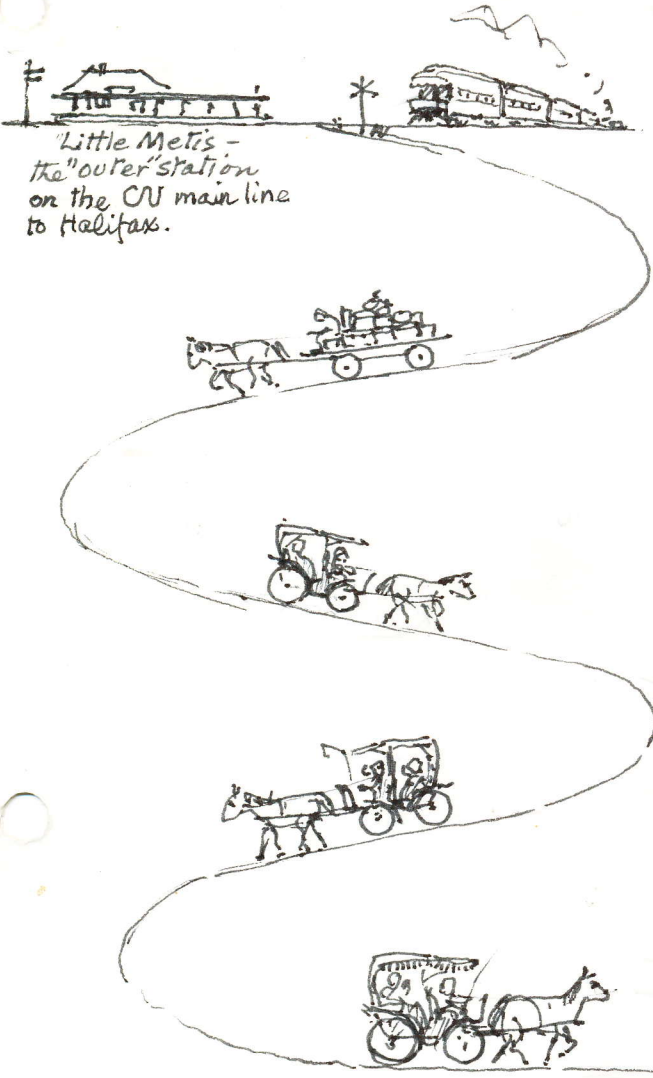
<sup>1</sup> There was no sand at Sandy Bay (Baie des Sables): for origins of names and detailed history of the Metis region see "Metis - Wee Scotland in the Gaspé"!!

\* Evidently some religious disagreement caused a rift, many of the original families switched from the Kirk of Scotland to the Methodist persuasion.

Catholic church stood, and on to Matane and beyond. Our relationship with the French inhabitants was basically through the various tradespeople and farmers who sold us our everyday fresh foods. One such was the butcher St. Laurent who sold meat from door to door and used to horrify me by gobbling up the raw scraps left over in his cart. But I made friends in the village, such as Moses Roi the garage owner, the Duperrés - father and son, who owned and operated the woodworking factory, and some of the golf-club caddies. Needless and sad to say, they all of course talked English to me. I spent hours in the factory watching the machines producing furniture and windows and things, and collecting useful scraps for carpentry at home. Old Duperré père had lost three fingers on one hand which he would warningly wave at me any time I came too close to a planer or band-saw. Another garage man, Otis, I always understood to have been the originator of the snow-mobile idea; I certainly remember seeing his old jalopy to which he had attached some sort of caterpillar tracks and front runners.

When the summer was over, usually right after Labour Day, there was a great exodus from Metis. The St. Lawrence Special would have 20 pullmans on, and space had been reserved months ahead. We would arrive back in the ancient Bonaventure Station with its open wooden platforms, to be met by Father and driven home to Ontario Avenue, perhaps in the Bank's huge 7-seater Packard touring car, requisitioned for the occasion, or failing that in a couple of calèches - those now preserved to carry tourists onto the Mountain. An express company delivered the many trunks later in the day.

Merrett's descend on Metis  
circa 1910-14



Little Metis -  
the "outer" station  
on the CN main line  
to Halifax.



MERRETT'S AT METIS, 1950 (MacDermot House)  
Stuart. Helen (Patricia) Hilda, Campbell  
Brian. Katie. Ned. Timothy

The presence of the  
first and only two  
grandsons, together  
with all the rest of the  
family - save Audrey -  
presented a unique  
family photo oppor-  
tunity - the only one  
I can remember  
(Add four spouses) →



Bonaventure Station, with calèches  
(St. James St. opposite bottom of Windsor.)



K.S.M.,

Petercat and the Porter