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"Thespians in Arcady":
An Actors' Colony
in Prince Edward Island

by LINDA M. PEAKE

On the eastern coast of King's County, Prince Edward Island, a cape of sandstone cliffs and pine trees juts from the mouth of a river into Bay Fortune. Here, at Abell's Cape, legends abound. There are stories of murder, ghosts, buried treasure, and there is scandal. Plays were written here and plays were written about this quiet, pastoral setting.

Abell's Cape is still a grim reminder of the feudal-like land system derived to populate the province with British settlers. The island was divided into sixty-seven lots. In 1767 these lots were drawn, by ballot, by persons who had done military and other service for the Crown. Settlers on this land had to pay an annual quit rent in pounds sterling. In 1811, a number of Irish immigrants arrived at Bay Fortune aboard Captain Marryat's British man-of-war, Aeolus.

The land agent for the vicinity, Edward Abell, lived in a cottage on the Cape. In 1819, while attempting to claim a thoroughbred horse for nonpayment of rent, Abell was murdered by Patrick Pearce. Mrs. Abell had coveted the horse. Failing in her attempt to purchase it, she persuaded her husband to demand immediate payment of rent from Pearce. Pearce offered money which was subsequently refused by Abell because some of it was in local currency. Although the fee was not high—one shilling per acre—payment in pounds sterling, a currency in short supply on the island at the time, was almost impossible.

Pearce, infuriated by the injustice of the act, killed Abell in an effort to repossess his horse, the value of which far exceeded the rent. Pearce was never apprehended. Reportedly, he was hidden throughout the winter by neighbours, and escaped in the spring on board a vessel from the nearby port of Annandale. For some time the Cape remained abandoned; the cottage believed haunted.

Thus were the historical beginnings of Abell's Cape. Of equal interest is the legend of buried treasure. It is in one of the high sandstone cliffs that Captain Kidd is supposed to have buried his treasure chests. Many a story reports digging by moonlight, the appearance of Kidd's ghost and his phantom ship. Only foolhardy treasure seekers walked the cliffs of the Cape. That is, treasure seekers and a colony of actors who transformed the Cape into a Thespian camping ground, consequently adding spice to local history and legend. During the

1. Prince Edward Island Register, 8 September 1819.
2. Adele Townshend, "Drama at Abell's Cape," The Island Magazine, No. 6 (Spring-Summer 1979), p. 35.
1890's and the first part of this century, Abell's Cape became the summer residence of a number of American actors who sought peace and solitude after a busy theatrical season.

Charles P. Flockton (fig. 1) was first introduced to the area by Charles Francis Coghlan, the first actor to visit Bay Fortune. Flockton writes of his own attraction to the Cape:

At the close of a long theatrical season we actors welcome the opportunity to betake ourselves to remote places for long draughts of fresh air and immunity from rehearsals. . . . We seek a spot whose environment shall allay the feverish unrest of the season's work, and where, with pipe and recreation of individual freedom of selection we can dream and refresh and expand our ideals.  

Flockton refers to the murder of Abell as he continues:

But, however much we may desire, we cannot get away from the dramatic side of life.

As I gaze, dreamily, through the half open door of my rugged old cottage or lie idly upon the deck of my weather schooner "The Stroller," and allow my eyes to roam over the length of the lovely coast line which stretches far away into the gray distance, fanciful dreams of by-gone days and long-forgotten dwellers on this old Island steal o'er me.  

Flockton and other members of the colony were intrigued by the stories about their adopted home.

Charles Coghlan first came to Prince Edward Island early in the 1890's. According to C. H. Dingwell of Fortune, Coghlan learned of the island through a leaflet and a Prince Edward Island Railway schedule designed to attract summer tourists, and distributed by the railway to major U.S. hotels and railway stations. Having closed a successful season, and looking for a quiet place to rest and recuperate, Coghlan booked transportation for himself, his wife, and daughter from New York to Prince Edward Island. Dingwell met the actor at Souris, a seaport a few miles from Bay Fortune, and took Coghlan fishing on the Fortune River. Coghlan was enamoured with the area and, after hearing the story of Abell's murder, rented, and later purchased, the old farmhouse on the Cape.  

Coghlan and his family returned annually to their summer home. In his wildest fantasies, Coghlan could never have imagined that his name, in time, would be connected with a legend as prominent as that of Abell's murder or Kidd's treasure.

Charles Coghlan was a prominent young actor in London when Lester Wallack brought him to New York. He had performed with Ellen Terry, the Bancrofts, and the Kendals. He made his American debut, 13 September 1876, as Alfred Evelyn in Bulwer-Lytton's Money at Wallack's Fifth Avenue Theatre. During the 1876–1877 season at Wallack's, Coghlan played opposite Fanny Davenport in As You Like It and The School for Scandal. The following season he joined A. M. Palmer's Union Square Theatre, where he starred with James O'Neill and Agnes Booth. 

Coghlan went on to become Lillie Langtry's leading man, a position he re-
Fig. 1. C. P. Flockton (Flockie). Public Archives of Prince Edward Island.
tained, with only short intervals, for thirteen years. In 1884 he was again acting on the London stage when the drama critic Clement Scott brought him to the attention of Lillie Langtry. She hired Coghlan, and with her own company opened a season at the Prince of Wales Theatre. The staples of her repertory were Coghlan’s adaptation of Alexander Dumas’ *Princess George*, and *The School for Scandal* with Coghlan playing Charles Surface and Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Joseph Surface. A third play in the repertory was Clement Scott’s translation of Sardou’s *Peril*, which Langtry had produced on Broadway in 1883 as *A Wife’s Peril*, at Coghlan’s suggestion.

Coghlan proved invaluable to Langtry during their association. He gave her the experience he had acquired as leading man to Ellen Terry and others, and bolstered her repertory by writing and adapting plays best suited to her talents. In 1886–1887 Langtry launched an American tour, presenting Coghlan’s own play *Enemies*, Tom Taylor’s *Lady Clancarty*, and *The Lady of Lyons* with Coghlan as Claude Melnotte to Langtry’s Pauline. In 1889 Langtry plunged into her most ambitious play, *Macbeth*. Coghlan not only directed but starred opposite her. During August of that year, Langtry returned to England, without Coghlan, and presented *As You Like It*. But in October 1890, Coghlan joined her at London’s St. James Theatre to direct and play opposite her in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

At the same theatre, in March 1891, Langtry and Coghlan appeared in *Lady Barter*, another of Coghlan’s comedies. In her autobiography, *The Days I Knew*, Lillie Langtry writes of her leading man:

It is, I believe, generally conceded by reviewers of the drama that he was one of the foremost and most intellectual players of his day. I think he told me that he had first studied acting in Paris, and had even played small parts at the Théâtre Français, where he had developed an artistic restraint which later caused him to become the apostle of “reserved force” on the British Stage. For this quality he was praised to the skies by that band of fine critics headed by Clement Scott, and including Moy Thomas, Joseph Knight, and other educators of the theatrical taste of London playgoers at the time.

Coghlan was an exceedingly “brainy” actor, but an equally temperamental one, giving at times a great performance, and at others a purely mechanical one. Inferior artists passed him in the race for fame, and became stars and managers, for he seemed deficient in certain characteristics that help to make a star. Perhaps he lacked magnetism, for, although audiences appreciated his scholarly and eminently natural playing, I do not think he established that electrical contact with them which is so vital for a public favorite.

When he joined me he must have been about forty. An Irishman by birth and disposition, he had lived much on the Continent, and spoke several languages fluently, besides being unusually proficient in his own. He was also author of several successful plays, among them *Lady Barter* and *A Quiet Rubber*. The latter was included in Sir John Hare’s repertory to the last. Rehearsals and preparation seemed more congenial to him than the actual performance, for he hated and railed against the actor’s make-up, deemed necessary before facing the footlights, urging that, though it was natural for a woman to resort to art to display herself to advantage it was infinitely degrading to a man.  

After leaving Lillie Langtry’s company, Charles Coghlan frequently performed with his sister Rose, whose fame far exceeded his own. Rose Coghlan

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first came to America in 1872, making her debut at Wallack's. She returned to play in London and the provinces after a year. In 1880 she came back to Wallack's, where she remained until 1888. She was best known for her Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*, as Countess Zicka, a role she created in the American production of Sardou's *Diplomacy*, and was acclaimed for her Peg Woffington.

Rose Coghlan performed with such notable actors as Edwin Booth, James A. Herne, James O'Neill, and Dion Boucicault. She performed under the management of Augustus Pitou who, during his career, managed the Grand Opera House in Toronto and the Fifth Avenue and Booth Theatres in New York. She later worked with her husband, the actor-manager John T. Sullivan. Rose Coghlan is known to have visited her brother's summer home, at least once, in 1897.

Rose and Charles Coghlan performed together in *Diplomacy*, and presented the American premiere of Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance* in 1894. Together they presented some of Charles Coghlan's plays, including *Lady Barter, Joselyn*, and *Madame*. At the time of his death, Coghlan had completed four acts of a dramatization of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, which he intended as a vehicle for his daughter.

Charles Coghlan spent much of his time writing during his summers at Abell's Cape, and remained one winter to write a play for his sister. Coghlan, with his wife and daughter, arrived in Bay Fortune in May 1898. He did not return to New York until September 1899. As an actor, Coghlan never achieved the same heights as his sister, Langtry, or the other great stars with whom he performed. As a playwright, he achieved moderate success, particularly in England where, during his career, nine of his plays opened in London theatres. The play which gave him recognition in America was *The Royal Box*, based on a play by Alexander Dumas, about the life of Edmund Kean. Coghlan acquired instant success as both actor and playwright, during a sort of Indian Summer of his professional career, when *The Royal Box* opened at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, 21 December 1897. He was still performing the play at the time of his death, two years later.

Coghlan had the potential to become a great actor. His brilliance was praised by his contemporaries—actors and critics alike. But perhaps, as Lillie Langtry suggests, he lacked the temperament. Perhaps also, he became caught in the shadow of great actresses such as his sister, Ellen Terry, and Lillie Langtry. Furthermore, Coghlan had a weakness, which at times interfered with his professional life. He frequently lived beyond his means, and had a fondness for champagne and women. Although he would swear off champagne during rehearsals and performances, his fondness for women was the cause of scandal as far reaching as New York and Bay Fortune.8

George C. Tyler, an enterprising, if not always quite honest, theatrical man-

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ager, produced *The Royal Box*. He remembers the tour and the three week engagement at the Fifth Avenue Theatre as a time of feast and famine. After a financially disastrous tour, the New York engagement promised to bail the company out of debt. But famine struck once again when a deputy sheriff attached the box office receipts "for a board bill of Coghlan's that dated back to the year before when he'd eloped with and married a young girl by the name of Kuhne Beveridge." In *Whatever Goes Up*, Tyler recalls Coghlan's lack of money sense:

He always did things with royal gestures whether he was giving a supper party for some of his brilliant friends or drawing a couple of hundred twice a week for pocket-money or lying in a supply of cigars—one way or another it all went on the hotel bill and when the bill appeared, Coghlan, with a regal wave of his hand that brooked no denial, would instruct the treasurer to pay it. It usually cost us seven or eight hundred dollars one way or another to get him out of town.  

Coghlan's marriage to Kuhne Beveridge created widespread scandal and confusion surrounding his marital status. In October 1893, at the age of fifty-two, he married the nineteen-year-old granddaughter of the ex-Mayor of Cleveland. Kuhne Beveridge was an actress and a noted sculptor. Sarah Bernhardt's personal interest in Miss Beveridge took her to Paris to study acting. Upon her return to the United States, her fame as a sculptor spread rapidly and she abandoned acting to continue her work as a sculptor. After her marriage she returned to the stage with Charles and Rose Coghlan, playing ingenue roles in *Diplomacy, Lady Barter, and Money*. Marital difficulties arose, and, less than a year after their marriage, she secured a divorce. At that time Coghlan was starring, with his sister, in *A Woman of No Importance*. When the newspapers became too inquisitive, Coghlan had to leave the cast. His replacement was Maurice Barrymore.

Coghlan, allegedly, had a wife in Prince Edward Island. The Charlottetown *Examiner* in May 1894 reports: "the muchly married Charles Coghlan has disappeared, and it was reported in New York last week that he has fled to the Prince Edward Island farm of wife No. 1, who is still on deck." The identity of wife No. 1 is bewildering. It cannot be certain that she was a native of Bay Fortune. Coghlan had been married to an actress before immigrating to the United States. On his first visit to Prince Edward Island, Coghlan was accompanied by a wife and daughter. Gertrude, his daughter, had been born in England in 1879. At the time of his marriage to Kuhne Beveridge, his daughter would have been fourteen years old.

About 1898, Gertrude Coghlan married Rex Cameron, an islander. Added to the scandal created by her father's brief marriage, one can speculate about the disapproval of the local residents of Bay Fortune when Gertrude divorced

10. Tyler, p. 139.
13. Tyler, p. 137.
Cameron, the son of a pastor from Souris. Later she married Augustus Pitou, and they continued to visit Prince Edward Island with their three children: Dorothy (by Gertrude's first marriage), Peggy, and Gus Pitou.

Nevertheless, it is not the scandal, but an incident following Coghlan's death, which gives him a prominent place in local legend. Following his departure from Abell's Cape in September 1899, Coghlan began a theatrical tour that ended fatally in Galveston, Texas, on 27 November. He was performing with his daughter in *The Royal Box* when he died. He was buried in Galveston. Many newspapers paid tribute to the actor. One notice, in particular, refers to his love for his summer home: "He was never so happy probably as when, each spring, the 'seasons' trying work o'er, he quitted the painted throng and the madding glare of the critics to seek quiet and literary leisure among the sweet pastoral scenes of P.E.I. He never tired of telling his friends what an Arcadia of summer joys it was."¹⁶

Gaining as much coverage perhaps as the tributes was the fate of his coffin. It was swept out to sea during the great Galveston Flood that virtually destroyed the city in September 1900. According to legend, the coffin drifted with the Gulf Stream fifteen hundred miles to the north, along the coast of Nova Scotia, around Cape Breton Island into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where it came to rest on the shore of Abell's Cape. Lillie Langtry, referring to the event, remarks: "his remains were not allowed to rest in peace, for the tidal wave that later demolished that town invaded the cemetery and swept many of the coffins (including that of Charles Coghlan) out to sea, which singular happening to his remains was predicted for him by a crystal-gazer while still a young man."¹⁷

Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson also relates the story in his book, *A Player Under Three Reigns*. The bizarre happening found its way into Ripley's "Believe It Or Not." *Fate Magazine* called it a case of psychic phenomenon and *The Theatre* expands the story by adding: "On his last departure from the Island, Coghlan said: 'I will return come hell and high water.' And he kept his word."¹⁸ Charles Coghlan will forever retain his place in the folklore of Abell's Cape.

During the early 1890's, Coghlan introduced a friend and fellow actor to Abell's Cape. Charles P. Flockton purchased the Cape in 1894 from Mrs. William Conahan of East Boston for the sum of fifteen hundred dollars. Mrs. Conahan was the daughter of Alexander and Mary Dingwell of Bay Fortune.¹⁹

Mr. C. P. Flockton who recently bought Abel's [sic] Cape, has made improvements there—with its broad verandas—which gives the place quite an Indian look, and other additions, the old house is scarcely recognized. Mr. W. B. Royston, who is the "Pythias" to Mr. Flockton's "Damon," is

still at the Cape, and now “Dame Rumor” has it that a prominent English actor and his wife have bought land and intend to build a house on the river. The solitude and beauty of the country evidently have charms for the disciple of the “Soc and Buskin.”

The English actor referred to is probably Charles Kent, who built a bungalow across the river from Abell’s Cape the following year.

Abell’s Cape was an idyllic spot for Flockton, who was an expert sailor and avid fisherman. The rugged life had a strong appeal to him and suited his character well. He is described by Edward H. Sothern, in whose company he played for twenty years:

Always conscientious, indefatigable, kind, gentle, serene; a dear friend, a good comrade. His personality was extremely striking—a quite remarkable face: aquiline, gaunt, strongly marked, saturnine, Quixotic; a very mysterious man, not of many friends, secretive, proud, a flashing eye, independent, intolerant of wrong, obstinate in right, even to his undoing, a great humorist, a very anchorite; abstemious in all ways, never touching strong drink and able to live on bread and milk; a perfect gypsy, preferring a camp-bedstead or rug on the floor; always cheerful, always kind.

Flockton was a man of ambition and adventure. During the summer of 1899, Coghlan’s last summer at the Cape, Flockton, or “Flockie” to his friends, arrived with an entire company ready to tour the province under the name of the C. P. Flockton Comedy and Vaudeville Company. The Examiner records this as the best event since the settling of the Cape: “Abel’s Cape is being enlivened by a visit of a company of New York actors, the greatest event in the history of the Cape since the sojourn there (nearly a hundred years ago) of the officers of the warship in which Captain Marryat sailed.” The company perhaps thought otherwise.

A travel-weary company arrived at Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, aboard the S.S. Halifax, one morning early in June 1899. From this port some of the company travelled aboard the thirty foot schooner, The Stroller, to their final destination, Abell’s Cape. C. P. Flockton’s schooner brought to his summer home “a galaxy of fame and beauty known as the C. P. Flockton Comedy Company,” according to Reginald Carrington, whose previous experience at sea made him think better of crossing on The Stroller. Carrington, the stage name of Reginald Short, owned a house at Bay Fortune. He recorded the hardships of the company in “Thespians in Arcady,” the only surviving chapter of his autobiography. According to Floyd MacKenzie, who now lives in Carrington’s house, Mrs. (Short) Carrington destroyed the other chapters because, she claimed, they recorded all her husband’s earlier romances.

Carrington and Henry Warwick, also the owner of a summer home, had as young men been sent as remittance men to work on an onion farm in Ontario. From there they found their way to Australia, via the New York stage. The journey in Flockton’s schooner reminded Carrington of that experience: “mem-

22. Charlottetown Examiner, 19 June 1899.
ory transported me back to western Australia, where comparatively recently, I had spent some pretty thin hours aboard schooners large and schooners small. In fact never since have I thoroughly enjoyed mouldy biscuits; brackish water; stuffy cabins; cockroaches and 'creeping things innumerable.'"26

Carrington and his friend Harry K. gallantly accompanied the women of the company at their own expense, and completed the journey to Charlottetown aboard the S.S. *Halifax*. The next day they continued, by train and team, the fifty miles to Abell's Cape. Two days passed before *The Stroller* and its dishevelled company docked at Bay Fortune. They had been becalmed for forty hours during which time the scanty food supplies became exhausted. Supplies on shore proved no more plentiful. Flockton's credit at the local store was exhausted. The fishermen of the company provided meagre meals of sea trout and flounder until Flockton's credit was mysteriously restored. Once meals occurred at almost regular intervals, a universal feeling of relief and contentment became apparent.27

The C. P. Flockton Comedy Company was in high spirits as it began its tour, opening in Souris to a capacity house:

the little town agog with curiosity and excitement awaited the arrival of the C. P. Flockton Comedy Company with feverish impatience. . . . Everyone knew Flockie. They had journeyed from far and near in every style of conveyance known to the Island, to do him reverence. It was scarcely surprising therefore that the curtain rose to a capacity house. A few brief but well chosen remarks from our impresario opened the proceedings, and what an array of talent was disclosed. . . . Cornet solos; banjo duets; sketches; songs; monologues and last, but by no means least, a new contraption, styled cinematograph. This, like the wine of biblical fame had been kept till the last part of the programme; shall we say fortunately? It was our piece de resistance. Unfortunately, whether owing to the unskilled manipulation of our ex-barber, or some imperfection in its innards who shall say? but at any rate after a brief but showy exhibition of temperament it decided to call it a performance and sank into oblivion, and that was that.28

The second night at Souris proved almost as successful but, "four one night stands, all unprofitable, brought us to Charlottetown, the capital and Waterloo!"29 The company played three nights in Charlottetown's Opera House, Monday through Wednesday, 26–29 June. The first night's performance realized thirty dollars. Carrington recalls:

The audience did enjoy one good hearty laugh. Again the cinematograph rose to the occasion aided and abetted by the ex-barber. A train projected on the screen dashed on in great style, indeed it would have been perfect had the picture not been upside down. Oh, yes, it got a laugh, but also I fear, was instrumental in handing the coup de grace to the Flockton Comedy Company. Yet in spite of this fiasco, nine optimists or philanthropists paid admission the following evening. Then we touched bottom, not even a stray dog in front of the house. It was curtains for the Flockton Comedy Company.30

Flockton's financial situation, precarious from the beginning, was now totally depleted. A return engagement to Souris and a mortgage on his summer

27. Carrington, p. 28.
28. Carrington, pp. 31-32.
29. Carrington, p. 32.
home were required to purchase steamer tickets to return the company to the United States. The tickets, however, had not included meals, and had it not been “for the kindness of the S.S. Halijax’s stewards our returning Thespians would have been without food during the entire journey.”

Again Carrington and Harry K. avoided such hardships. They remained the rest of the summer at Bay Fortune. Carrington boarded at a local farm house; Harry K. lived in his small cottage on his acre of land. A cottage, not more than five hundred yards away, was the permanent home of the retired actor, Cuthbert Cooper. Carrington describes him:

Coopie, as we used to call him, looked for all the world like a typical village dominie. But he was a superannuated old actor, whose occupation, like Othello’s, was gone. In very truth innocuous desuetude had claimed him as its own. Perhaps life, robbed of all illusions and revealing itself in its utter futility, had crushed him as beneath the wheels of a Juggernaut, and perhaps also, he had partaken too freely of the waters of Lethe... And so he had failed by the wayside; but that he had come out of great tribulation was obvious.

A few winters later, Cooper was found by a farmer, frozen in a snowdrift. In the United Church cemetery, Bay Fortune, a stone marks Cooper’s grave and its inscription reads: “Cuthbert Cooper/actor/Flockton’s friend/died/November 17, 1905.”

Cooper and Flockton had been close friends for many years. When Cooper announced his intentions of settling on Prince Edward Island, Flockton placed at his disposal, for the rest of his life, a small cottage and a weekly allowance. E. H. Sothem, in The Melancholy Tales of “Me,” speaks of Flockton’s unyielding generosity: “The things he so strenuously denied himself he conferred with lavish hand on those about him less fortunate than he. Strange mysterious meetings he had with poor vagrants, which always ended with ‘Flock’s’ hand going into ‘Flock’s’ pocket, and then seeking the hand of the oppressed one.”

Flockton’s generous and fun loving spirit was enjoyed by his friends and the local residents of Bay Fortune. Although the days of the C. P. Flockton Comedy Company were lean, the actor Charles Kent remembers more prosperous times at Abell’s Cape:

Last week Flockton put his place at the disposal of the church for their annual picnic. He owns about one hundred and sixty-five acres. Think of the paper and scraps he had to pick up the next day!

He himself assumed his favorite character, a witch, and was seated for the day, mind you, in a black wigwam, telling fortunes at five cents per “tell.” He was wonderfully successful and drew good houses, but he had forgotten to leave a hole in the top of the teepee, and the day being the hottest we have had, he almost suffocated. The fortunes he told, though, gave great comfort and satisfaction—until the next day, when I hear people began to exchange notes and found out they had all been told the same fortune. Herbert Millward controlled the “Aunt Sally,” an English sport, consisting of a wooden colored lady, with a pipe in her mouth, at which the crowd threw sticks at one cent a stick. The gent making, or rather, breaking, the most pipes, was rewarded by a beautiful album, the gift of C. P. Flockton. Millward cleared over five dollars. Cooper was the general showman of the place, dressed in his best, did the attractions, even to riding a merry-go-

32. Carrington, pp. 35-36.
33. Sothem, p. 320.
round and consuming a twenty-five cent supper, with sundry other refreshments in the shape of 
soft drinks and flirtations with the youth and beauty of the surrounding country, who came in by 
buggy, buck-board and wagon, from all parts of the country within a radius of twenty miles. All 
pronounced it a grand success, winding up as it did with a dance in the barn, that the clergymen 
of the very church denounced on the following Sunday as highly improper. Anyway Flockton 
made a big hit and is solid with the church, for it cleared nearly two hundred dollars. For myself, 
hating crowds and reckless tea drinking, I went up the river and broke my best rod on a trout 
(which I lost), that persisted in climbing a tree.34

Flockton continued to return to his beloved summer home until his death, 
while performing in San Francisco, in 1904. His ashes were brought back to 
Abell's Cape as he had wished. E. H. Sothern recalls:

At Prince Edward Island on the sea "Flock" had bought a lot of land and a modest house. Here 
he had intended to spend his last days, but it was not to be.

"Spread my ashes to the four winds," said "Flock," when his time came, and so it was. Some 
friends took a journey to Prince Edward Island, and the mortal remains of old "Flock" were wafted 
to the breeze.35

At the point of Abell's Cape stands a monument to Charles P. Flockton, 
constructed of sandstone from its cliffs, atop which is set a sundial bearing this 
inscription: "THE PASSING SHADOW MARKS ANOTHER HOUR OF 
ABSENCE / Erected in memory of a loyal friend and faithful servant by Mrs. 
Leslie Carter and David Belasco."

In Myself and Others, Jessie Millward remembers appearing, in 1885, in 
Called Back, with Robert Mantell, Daniel Frohman, and C. P. Flockton. The 
stage manager was David Belasco. She describes "Flocky" as "a dear old 
Englishman who bore the most extraordinary likeness to Irving. Indeed he al­
ways vowed that he had been compelled to leave England because Irving was 
so like him."36 E. H. Sothern also comments on Flockton's good natured 
response to his resemblance to Irving:

"You imitate Henry Irving," said a critic one day. 
"Nonsense!" said "Flock," "Irving imitates me!"37

Jessie Millward, the wife of John Glendinning, a frequent visitor to Abell's 
Cape, tells of Flockton's ashes being returned to the Cape by her brother, Her­
bert Millward, and Charles Stevenson, and that "the natives always vowed that 
the dead actor's ghost 'walked.' If it did, I'm sure it would never have harmed 
anybody."38

Charles A. Stevenson (fig. 2) had purchased one of Flockton's cottages dur­
ing the 1890's and spent his summers at the Cape. Stevenson was married to 
Kate Claxton in 1878, and they jointly produced plays. Claxton acquired fame 
in The Two Orphans, having originated the role of the blind girl at A. M. Palm­
er's Theatre in 1894. She acquired exclusive rights to the play and starred, 
with Stevenson, in her own company's production. Before her retirement from

35. Sothern, p. 314.
37. Sothern, p. 314.
38. Millward, p. 103.
Fig. 2. Charles Stevenson on board C. P. Flockton's schooner, *The Stroller*.
the stage, Kate Claxton made a famous tour of the United States and Canada in 1903. During that tour she presented *The Two Orphans* at the Charlottetown Opera House on 2 July.

Stevenson and Claxton were divorced, and two years afterwards, by the time he was starring in *The Gambler*, about 1910, Stevenson remarried (Marie?) Frances Reilly, believed to be from the Bay Fortune area. While living in Boston with the second Mrs. Stevenson, his divorce from Kate Claxton was declared illegal. But Stevenson decided not to abide by that decision.

The marital troubles of Charles Stevenson, added to the bigamy scandal of Charles Coghlan, and his daughter's divorce from Rex Cameron, left the local residents of Bay Fortune somewhat apprehensive of these eccentric, bohemian summer visitors.

Another actor, Charles Kent (fig. 3), began summering at Bay Fortune in the late 1890's. He continued to visit regularly for well over a decade. It is reported that Kent's common law wife, Betty Rhinehart, ran off with Bill Haskell, the eldest son from a neighbouring cottage. She sold their cottage, which was in her name, and left Kent with very little. He later died in poverty in New York.39

During his prime as an actor, Kent appeared in some notable productions. He played Claudius to Edwin Booth's Hamlet in the Boston Museum Company's performance at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York. In May, 1886, he played at A. M. Palmer's Madison Square Theatre, in *Prince Karl*, with Richard Mansfield, who had brought the company from Boston. By 1910, Charles Kent was the Vice President of the American Vitagraph Company. Kent was the inexperienced operator of the cinematograph, the "ex-barber," with the C. P. Flockton Comedy and Vaudeville Company.

Kent has left an account of summer activities at Bay Fortune. In his letter to the New York *Mirror*, reprinted in the *Prince Edward Island Magazine*, Kent describes the colony:

> At present this end of the Island is harbouring and sustaining a number of actors, all good ones. At three points on an acute angle, actors have homes. The apex is the home of the late Charles Coghlan's family; the southern point Charles Flockton owns; at the eastern point, I, another Charles, am doing the dolce far niente. Still further west of the Coghlan house is Harry Warwick, late of the Amelia Bingham's company, who built himself a pretty cottage on the bluff overlooking both river and bay. He calls his place "Freidheim" that I understand is Swedish for "Happy Home." We, of course, call it Fried Ham. Anyway, his wife, who emanates from Sweden, named it, and she ought to know. With C. P. Flockton are Herbert Millward, Harry Roberts, both of Mrs. Leslie Carter's company, and Cuthbert Cooper, a genuine Bohemian.40

On the social affairs of the group, Kent writes:

> Our social life is one of even placidity varied by the exchange of impromptu lunches and dinners. It's impossible to get a guest for breakfast—we still stick to our old habits. The boss cook is Mrs. Warwick, and Roberts comes a good second. curries and blanc-mange being his specialties; though nobody can compare to Flockton for suet or beefsteak pudding. Millward and myself can both boil an egg, but we both hate to wash dishes.41

39. George Leard files, Prince Edward Island Archives.
41. Kent, p. 274.
Fig. 3. Charles Kent.
Obviously these are more prosperous days in the thespian camping ground than those described by Carrington. And their entertainments are serene and idyllic compared to the summer of the C. P. Flockton Comedy Company:

The arts are not neglected, either, and an evening "at home" is a sight worthy of Dickens (I always feel like Ham Pegotty). But to see Warwick with his banjo accompanying Roberts on the tin whistle—that he plays beautifully—relieved by Flockton on the zither, Millward and myself playing pipes—loaded with queer Island tobacco—all dressed in sweaters and rubber boots or slip-sloped slippers, while the logs crackle in the open fireplaces—it's a sight that would delight the late James A. Herne.

Charles Kent enjoyed the idyllic, pastoral setting of his summer home. He was fond of fishing, equally fond of fisherman's tall tales, and responded imaginatively to the folklore of Abell's Cape. In the Prince Edward Island Magazine Kent writes of a fishing excursion when, climbing the cliff of Abell's Cape to escape the incoming tide, he discovered an ancient, rotting wooden chest filled with gold coins, jewelry, and precious gems. He had accidentally discovered Captain Kidd's treasure. Unfortunately, in his attempt to gather up the treasure, its weight, and his unsafe footing, caused him to lose his grip and be "hurled like a bullet to the bottom of the foaming sea":

... the heavy gold held me still, but I had to free myself or drown. The moment I did so, my body was at the mercy of the waves, I shot to the surface and madly tried to swim. Useless. They were punishing me for my presumption, and hurled me about with glee as they washed the precious contents from the chest. Suddenly all was black. My struggles were over, my danger and my fortune alike forgotten.

Early the following morning I came to myself, stretched upon a flat rock, stiff and bruised, my head matted with coagulated blood, the placid waters rippling on the beach yards below me. I was carried home by an early seaweed gatherer, and for two weeks remained in bed, my attendants attributing my story to delirious fancies.

Kent also wrote a short play, The Ghost, about the appearance of Captain Kidd's ghost. It was probably written solely for the amusement of the characters involved. This note precedes the play: "All 'bit' no star parts. Centre stage open to all comers. No souvenirs will be presented after the one hundredth performance of this tragedy." The setting is Flockie's "Den" at Abell's Cape; its characters include Kent, Billie Royston, Herbert Millward, Flockie, and Flockton's caretaker, John Davidson. It depicts a prank in which Davidson poses as Kidd's ghost, an action truly within the character of the Islander. A local resident of Bay Fortune, John Davidson, was known for his mischievous pranks. Carrington also attributes to Flockton's skipper and caretaker the responsibility for the ghost that haunts Abell's house—now owned by Flockton:

So efficacious became his ghostly impersonations that no native would venture near the house after nighttime under any considerations.

John, having a good job and being well aware of the fact, had been at considerable pains in developing an efficient technique calculated to discourage potential pretenders to his little kingdom of Abel's [sic] Cape.

42. Kent, p. 275.
Abell's Cape, its setting and its folklore, provided the fuel that fired the imaginations of its summer visitors. It was Arcady to those who sought rest and solitude after a long theatrical season. It was home at the end of long tours and one night stands. It was a place to fish, sail, retire, and dream. For Charles Coghlan it was a quiet retreat to which he could escape and write. It was a social retreat for C. P. Flockton; a place to bring his friends and an opportunity to combine sailing and theatre. His schooner, The Stroller, piled high with scenery and actors had provided transportation for the C. P. Flockton Comedy and Vaudeville Company. For Charles Kent, Bay Fortune was an idyllic spot to relax, fish, and let his mind wander.

But the colony did not die with these men. A second generation of actors inhabited Bay Fortune. Gertrude Coghlan and her family continued to visit. It was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Carrington. Henry Warwick and his wife, Elsa, made "Freidheim" their permanent home. Mrs. Warwick had been a model for Charles Dana Gibson's famous Gibson Girls. The Warwicks lived the remainder of their lives at Bay Fortune and are buried in Souris, where a stone reads simply: "Henry Warwick-Kelvey / 1870–1942 / His Wife / Elsa D. Warwick-Kelvey / 1882–1955." Next door to the Warwick's lived Neville Heber Percy, author of Springtime for Henry. The summer guest lists included the frequent visits of Fairfax Bergher, Rita Davies, William Galloway, Margaret Osmond, Sam Myers, and Joseph Wagner.

About 1915 Elmer Harris began spending his summers at Bay Fortune, where he conceived and wrote the play Johnny Belinda. Some of the members of the colony would have been familiar with the real Belinda. Her father, Black McDonald, operated the grist mill near which Charles Stevenson lived. In 1948 Jane Wyman won an academy award for her portrayal of Belinda. The musical adaptation of Johnny Belinda enjoys repeated success, second only perhaps to Anne of Green Gables, in the repertory of the Charlottetown Summer Festival.

Abell's Cape and Bay Fortune have changed little since it was inhabited by these colourful men and women of the theatre. Most of the original cottages and homes are still in use. For over a decade, Elmer Harris' home has been the property of the actress Colleen Dewhurst. This pastoral setting has appealed to actors and writers for almost a century. Only a few miles from Bay Fortune the playwright David French wrote Leaving Home.

There are still local people who remember the summers of the Thespian camping ground with a fond curiosity and awe. Like the legends of Abell's murder, Kidd's treasure, and Coghlan's floating coffin, the spirit of the colony lives on even though the sundial on Flockton's monument continues to mark the passage of time.

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