

Early Farming Conditions in Buchanan

Gerald Nadeau, Transcript

“They cleared some of the roughest land that you could possibly attempt to work with, for some reason. I guess it was because it was close to the river and they didn’t want to go any further away because their workplace was the river. So you had to make your garden behind your house because... and if it meant moving stones that what you’d do—a lot of stones. And most of these little farms only had two cows or three, a pig, and a... in fact, the early people didn’t even keep a dog, because it was a waste of food. And I don’t know if they kept a cat or not; I imagine that they didn’t even have one of those. You needed very little. The little rough patches of cleared land seemed to give them a bare amount of agriculture required to keep a family. And that meant if the man went in to make square timber or hew timber for a lumber company, his wife would have to stay home, feed the cow, or cows, and she would be responsible for looking after whatever gave them milk for their family. I never heard of people having chickens, real early. And they kept a pig, but the pig was only kept in summer because in winter, it was the winter’s food. But those little farms seemed to give enough food for a cow, and enough turnips, and potatoes, for a family to use because everybody seemed to have a root cellar, so that meant that they were growing enough to keep, to have a storage to put it in. But the men who worked in the square timber business seemed to make enough money that the spending of a family might be a hundred dollars in a year, maybe not much more. But it was only the very necessary things that you had to buy, which was probably tea, sugar, cloth or possibly needles, thread, just the most bare things that a household would need. You wouldn’t be putting curtains on windows or things of that nature. And you might buy a pot or pan or two, if you had extra money. Or a pane of glass for your windows. I guess in those days if you had to buy this you’d have to bring it all the way up the river. When the men would return from the rafting, they used to come by canoe. They had an outfit called a stage that used to come overland between one watercourse and another, so that they’d come up through let’s say Fitzroy Harbour, and then they’d have a stage to wherever the next point was. So it would take probably six to ten days to come from Quebec City to the Ottawa Valley. So you’d have to bring, you’d have to carry and canoe the purchases you made, and bring those home. So you couldn’t spend a lot of money because you couldn’t carry home a great deal. The little bit of land along with the work they did was enough to raise a family in those conditions.”