

The Failing Land That The Settlers Lost

Gerald Nadeau, Transcript

“You would notice a cow path on the outside of the fences, not on the inside. It didn’t seem strange then because none of us ever knew that you had to feed cows in summertime. In summer they were supposed to find the food themselves. And they weren’t to get that in the field. The field was used to grow winter food for them. So that the fences were put around the field, and the cattle being hungry, they would look at the field and want to go in, so they’d have a path around the fence. And every farmer seemed to have that same way of thinking. Because you didn’t have enough land to grow and to pasture as well.

And this Alec Arbour was one of the people who lived at the... near the Atomic Plant [where it is located today], and he was a very serious man. He was a very honest person and he looked at things in a serious fashion. And he had a son who went to work for the railroad and became a section man in Westmeath. And one day his son came up and got him to take him down for a visit and when they got below Pembroke near Westmeath the cattle were inside the fences. And they were in fields that looked like hayfields. But in Westmeath they were pasture fields! So he insisted to his son to stop his car. He said ‘I got to go in and tell that farmer that his cows are in his hay.’ And the son said ‘Dad, that’s not a hayfield. That’s a pasture.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘where I come from,’ he said, ‘that’s a *hay* field!’ And his son said ‘Well, don’t go in there and tell him that his cattle are in there, ‘cause he’ll laugh. Because,’ he said, ‘that’s what it’s like down here. We have fields of summer feed for cattle.’

But there’s an awful difference in the way that people who have can live, and people who have not can. It’s that simple. You make due with what you don’t have. And even the cattle had to... had their shortages. Because they were expected to eat leaves and grasses along the paths and places, but... We know today that you can’t keep animals in that condition. And as I look at that now, I see that our animals were the worst ones off, because they had to do with much less than they should have. That’s dogs, cats, horses, and cattle. Every one. I look back today and I feel sorry that conditions were that bad for anything. And the reasons were that people didn’t have the necessary feed for them or the money to buy it. So maybe in that sense, everybody might be better off. Animals included.”