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THE JOHN THURMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

QUARTERLY



LOGGING OPERATIONS FIFTY YEARS AGO

By

Mrs. Alice P. Bennett

Logging fifty years ago was a far cry from what it is today. Very little was done with machinery in those days. The logs were sawed with a cross-cut saw by two men. Today one man can do it without effort, except to hold the saw. Men skidded the logs out with horses, one log at a time, to the skidway. There they could be loaded on a two-sleigh rig. Sometimes if they were on a very steep place, the rear sleigh was left off and the logs allowed to drag to retard the speed. Even so, now and then a load was sluiced and a horse could end up with a broken leg.

The logs were then piled on skidways or double headers where they could easily be transferred to two-sleigh rigs and taken to a body of water, called a floe which had been dammed up on the river. Here they were placed in the water to await the spring thaw and high water. This carried them down the river to Glens Falls where they were made into lumber. Each log was stamped on the end with the stamp of the Company to whom it belonged, then sorted at their destination.

Men followed down the river to break up the log jams which sometimes formed. It was a dangerous job for those not accustomed to it. One had to get out in the middle of the river sometimes and the rolling logs could throw one off balance.

When snow wore thin during log-drawing, or the sun began to melt it, the water box was run all night and in many instances the men had to make use of it by drawing logs early and late. At times, most of the night as spring neared.

I guess one could say that my introduction to "shanty keeping" began in this way. During the summer of my seventeenth birthday, 47 years ago, my childhood sweetheart and I were married. He was 23. We were both used to hard work and when one of the camp bosses for a large lumber concern approached us with the request that we keep camp for him. We consented. I agreed with no thought of what might lie ahead; and my new husband with the firm belief that I could do anything.

We would be at least 30 miles from both stores and post office, and with no telephones. When we were once established, nothing but a major catastrophe would warrant a trip out to civilization. We began our work in early summer and since the job would not be finished until log drawing was done the next spring it was necessary to equip ourselves for both summer and winter.

In view of this fact we purchased the largest trunk we could find and filled it to the brim with both light and heavy clothes. We had to take into consideration that things wear out or at least I had to. Men's clothing could be purchased at the camp store. We also had to take along simple remedies for colds and so forth. We were not expected to be subject to anything else in the line of disease.

The first day of our journey took us to the last hotel in the last town at the end of the traveled road. Here we spent the night in the one hotel. The trip so far was uneventful except that one of the horses balked on a long hill and backed us down to the bottom.

The next morning it was raining hard and we had to cross a flow, six miles long. We were piled into a small canoe along with all of our luggage. Whitecaps were rolling all over the place and the wind was blowing a gale. I remember my husband saying to me, "If we tip over, hang onto the boat." Fortunately, we had an expert paddler and reached the landing where we were met by a man driving a pair of horses hitched to a jumper. (A sleigh with wooden runners.) The road took us over mud holes and corduroy roads, which for the information of those who do not know, is built of poles placed cross-wise across the road mile upon mile to keep the heavy loads that must pass over them out of the mud. It was like a roller coaster except that instead of long ups and downs they were very short ones. It could be compared with the "Whip" too.

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Logging Operations Cont'd

By the time we reached camp even my husband's faith in me began to waver and I'm sure he wondered if he had married a weakling after all. It was nearly supper time when we arrived. The cook, Billy Wilson, met us at the door, took one look at me, wet, bedraggled and with every vertebrae out of joint, and said, "You go right to bed, Missey, I'll tend to everything." I accepted, got into some dry clothes and was soon fast asleep.

When I awoke, it was to see 35 men trooping out from their supper. As I looked around, many things ran through my mind. "Would I be able to keep these men filled with food? That would be my main job!" As I helped Billy, who was a Negro, with the dishes, we discussed "ways and means" and he gave me all his recipes, without which I would have really been in trouble, for I discovered there was no milk or eggs to be had.

Billy had taken a sawing job and the next morning I took over on my own. I found that at least a bushel of potatoes must be peeled every day. Huge batches of bread were a daily must, too, as 35 men can put a lot of it out of sight in one day. Salt pork had to be sliced and freshened. Dried apples and peaches must be soaked and cooked and gallons of tea and coffee had to be brewed. Every day, too, pots and pots of beans had to be baked for this was the only vegetable we had except potatoes. Refrigeration was unknown in those days and canned goods were probably too expensive; at any rate canned goods were unknown in lumber camps.

Meat consisted of salt pork, salt codfish and salmon. We had corned beef and in the winter plenty of fresh beef. Fortunately we were on the shore of a lake and the men caught enough trout, beauties, for at least one meal every week. After hunting season opened some of the men kept the camp supplied with venison, which was a welcome change. Pie filling came in large pails, a gooey, sticky mass. All flavors, but hard working men are not too fussy and it went down. My first doughnuts were a sight to behold. As I dropped the first one in the hot fat it spread and spread until it covered the dish but I soon learned that I must add more flour to take the place of eggs and milk. Bushels of cookies went down the "hatch way" along with cake. Butter came in 60-pound tubs and molasses and corn syrup by the barrel. (To be continued in our next issue of the Quarterly.

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WINTER COMES TO HILLTOP

Excerpts from the Diary of Miss Joyce Sanborn, in the early 1930's.

- Sept. 1, Fished the pond and caught 59 Bullheads. Cut out and started a dress. Made pink gingham pyjamas. We picked and canned 13 quarts of black berries this week. Made ice cream in freezer.
- Sept. 7, Corn Roast on lawn. Ten for supper. Joe and Ruth's little boys climbed our young trees and hung 'bottoms up' like monkeys. Played croquet with handicaps.
- Sept. 8, Elderberries are ripe. Picked and pressed some for juice. Walked to Pasco's for fresh buttermilk. Grandma made apple tarts. Gene came by with fish from Garnet.
- Sept. 12, Picked and sold crabapples in Glens Falls. Covered the flowers for early frost. Picked the tomatoes.
- Sept. 13, Canning corn all day. We made 10 pints of succotash, and 22 pints of corn. Ground horseradish. Bootsie, our kitty, was out all night. Thunderstorm.
- Sept. 16th Helped Daddy cut down a maple tree and saw it up for wood. We cut 13 chunks and slabbed it.

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Winter Comes to Hilltop Cont'd

- Sept. 18, Fluffy, the cat was sick. Gave her a bath and a dose of Castor Oil. The Methodist minister came to see us and we had lunch. Transplanted ferns for rock garden.
- Sept. 19, The Baptist minister was here for supper with two children. There was a frost last night. Shelled out our beans.
- Sept. 20, Henry Wescott is tearing down the barn across the pond. Mother is canning plums and making pepper relish. Daddy dug potatoes. Bootsie was out all night, again.
- Sept. 27, Saw a wonderful Aurora Borealis tonight, all over the sky and to the north over Crane Mountain.
- Sept. 28, Mother made three batches of cookies, bread and delicious ripe cucumber pickles.
- Sept. 30, Snow flurry. Sold 'picked up' apples in Glens Falls.
- Oct. 3, Picked the cranberries on pond from beat, and got enough for five pints of sauce. Billy stopped by with Dewey Cameron and stayed to lunch.
- Oct. 5, Gathered apples for cider and had enough for 17 gallon.
- Oct. 10, Made 31 gal. of apple cider to date. Daddy dug the last of the potatoes. Prepared room for winter storage place. Mother made carrot marmalade.
- Oct. 12, First snow. Had three inches. Did not last.
- Oct. 13, Painted green trim on house and kitchen.
- Oct. 17, Collected seeds to plant next year. Mother made mincemeat. Crocheted. Painted a chair for Maude.
- Oct. 20, Helped Dad clean out the well. Mother made chili sauce. Went to Square Dance at Garnet Lake.
- Oct. 25, Partridge for dinner. It was scrumptious.
- Oct. 29, The pond froze over, first time this year. Mended all day.
- Nov. 18, Nine inches of snow fell. Ground is frozen. We weighed Bootsie 11 lb. 12 oz. to date.
- Nov. 20, To Grandma's for Thanksgiving, with dog and Bootsie. We lost Bootsie and advertised. He was away two days. SO GLAD to have him back.
- Nov. 30, We all went skating on the pond. Painting Christmas cards for gift shops and to sell. My own designs.
- Dec. 5, Started Fruit cakes.
- Dec. 6 Finished Fruit cakes.
- Dec. 14, Mother and I made four huge Christmas wreaths from greens gathered in the woods, and evergreen branches.

- Dec. 16, Mother made eight kinds of candy for Christmas gifts. I helped her box and wrap them.
- Dec. 17, Twenty-four degrees below zero, outside. Joe R. came from Glens Falls for two trees for Christmas, from our woods.
- Dec. 25, Merry Christmas! East, West, Home is Best!

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"SIGNS" OF THE TIMES

By Mrs. Armine Gurney

A recent book, borrowed from the Richards Library, proved entertaining to one of a nostalgic turn of mind....its name --"Pop Goes America", by William K. Zinsser. One chapter on advertising brings back memories of early motoring days, when passengers, young and old alike, were edified by the roadside "Burma Shave" signs. Do any of you remember sighting ahead a long string of slim signboards, about 100 yards apart, each carrying one short line?

A PEACH

LOOKS GOOD

WITH LOTS OF FUZZ

BUT MAN'S NO PEACH

AND NEVER WAS.

BURMA SHAVE

I PROPOSED

TO IDA

IDA REFUSED

IDA WON MY IDA

IF IDA USED

BURMA SHAVE

Each sign faced the on-coming traffic so that any series appearing on the left side of the road had to wait for the return trip unless some enterprising passenger would oblige by hanging out the window and catching the message in reverse.

BURMA SHAVE

MOVIE STAR

A FAMOUS

NOW SHE'S

TRIED A JAR

THE BEARDED LADY

Thinking about the plentiful roadside advertising of yesteryear, we are reminded of a game the children on the back seat of the family Ford invented to forestall any incipient boredom during the Sunday Drive. One team owned the left hand side of the road, the other claimed the right. The object was to collect in alphabetic order, trade names of popular products and the first side to succeed (if ever) in reaching Z was the winner. By Common consent we excused ourselves being stymied by X!

Apropos of roadside advertising, fragments of a camp fire ditty of many years ago comes to mind. It went something like this:

"As I was riding down the road, a billboard met my eye.

The advertisements pasted there would make you laugh and cry
The wind and rain had come last night and torn the sign away,
But what was left a-hanging there
Would make that billboard say:

"SIGNS", Cont'd

Come smoke a Coca Cola; Chew catsup cigarettes.
See Lillian Russell wrestle with a box of Oysterettes.
Use Carter's for your chilblains
Try Pinkham's for the croup
Heinz pork and beans will race tonight with a can of Campbell's soup

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THE LAST WORD.....

Dear Readers:-

May I have a last word with you?

We are especially fortunate in the response from our Readers this month and would like to take this opportunity to thank those contributing articles for this Quarterly.

Mrs. Wesley (Alice) Bennett formerly resided at North Creek and has many relatives and friends here. She now resides at Sauquoit. Many of her writings have appeared in well known magazines and newspapers. Thanks for your article this Quarter, Mrs. Bennett.

Our lovely cover was done by Mrs. Joyce Stoddard, ex-president of our society. Mrs. Stoddard now lives in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Miss Joyce Sanborn formerly lived in Thurman and attended the Warrensburg High School. We find these Diary excerpts bring back memories of bygone days.

We are always glad to read Mrs. Gurney's interesting articles since they too, bring back happy reminiscences.

To each one of the above mentioned, a hearty thank you and we hope you will find time to share your writing and artistic abilities with us again in the near future.

Should you enjoy reading these Quarterlies, or should you have any comments or constructive criticism, your Publications Committee would be glad to hear from you. We are relying on you to help us make this a Quarterly which folk will look forward to reading.
Thank you.

Mabel Tucker, Publications Chairman

MORE LAST WORDS....

It's coming "THAT TIME AGAIN"!

Time to

(1) Elect new officers

(2) Plan the June Field Trip

(3) Renew your membership
