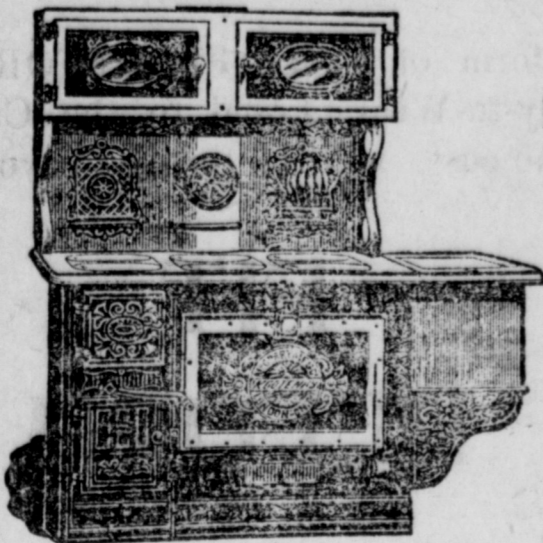


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JACKSONVILLE, N. B.

Being a native of Jacksonville and somewhat interested in its progress, I have obtained the following bits of its early history and description of the mode of life and hardships of its pioneer settlers from some of the older residents, and hope it may be interesting to some others as it is to me.

About the year 1810 a young man by the name of John Jackson left his father's house at what is now known as Upper Woodstock, and after going about two miles through the woods in a northerly direction came to a level piece of hardwood land. Here he decided to clear a farm, and beside the little stream now known as Cole's Brook, on the land now owned by Mr. Jonathan Harding, he felled the first tree that was ever cut in Jacksonville.

At this time his father was the only settler north of the present town of Woodstock. At that place there were a few settlers, perhaps half a dozen, all living about two miles below the mouth of the Meduxnakeag Creek, and it is said that there were two or three settlers near what is now Victoria Corner. But, even if that was a fact, the young man who was about to commence one of the best farming settlements in the Province of New Brunswick, had only one neighbour north of the Meduxnakeag which was his father, and he was two miles away, the only connection between them being a foot path thought the woods.

In a year or two another young man, Henry Sharp, came from what is now Grafton and casting his lot in this wilderness settled on the land now owned by Mr. Edward Loomer. He was soon followed by Mr. John Kearney who cleared a spot of land and built a log house on the farm of Mr. Isaac Slipp. The little settlement which was being opened up was from the first known as Jacksonville, in honor of its first settler, John Jackson.

These three settlers, John Jackson, Henry Sharp and John Kearney, were followed by John Johnson, Charles Burt, Robert Hannah, James Foster and Benjamin Burt, so that in 1820 Jacksontown contained eight settlers, the most northerly one being Mr. Robert Hannah, and forming a settlement two miles in length connected one end with the other by a foot path through the woods.

In 1813 the first child was born in the settlement to the wife of John Kearney, a girl, who was named Nancy.

It seems wonderful to us how these people managed to live and bring up a family. The majority of them came from down the St. John River, and I will give as an example the case of one of these hardy pioneers. He and his wife and two children came up in a canoe which was made by hollowing out a pine tree. With them they had an axe, three or four blankets and perhaps a week's provisions, which was all they had with which to begin clearing a farm and starting housekeeping. They landed near Upper Woodstock and then walked out to Jacksontown carrying their belongings with them and following the foot path as their guide

to the settlement. They generally came up in the spring, but before starting they would go to the Provincial Crown Land Office at Fredericton and draw the lot of land they wished. On his arrival the pioneer would get a chance for his family to live with a neighbor while he spent the summer chopping down a piece of woods to burn the next spring. During the winter he would build a log house. This elaborate structure consisted of one room perhaps 14 feet square, having at most one small window. If the family consisted of more than twelve children a ceiling would have to be made of small poles, and up in this chamber, a loft, as it was called, the children would sleep. For a stairway they usually used a row of pins driven into the wall one above another in such a manner that a person could by their aid scramble up through the hole to bed. The boards for the floor had to be sawed by hand. At one side of the room was a fireplace, built of stone work, and the chimney was made of sticks and clay. His furniture consisted of a few wooden benches and a wide pine slab on legs which he used as a table. Thus equipped the pioneer felt he was ready for almost anything which might overtake him.

In 1820 there was not a horse in Jacksontown and perhaps only five or six yoke of oxen. Therefore a man with a yoke of oxen would often put in his neighbors crop. Or a man would sometimes hoe in his wheat, first sow the grain and then hoe up the ground so as to cover it, having neither team or harrow to do otherwise. A man would put in perhaps an acre of wheat, a few potatoes, some corn, and always some flax, perhaps half an acre, as that was his only means of procuring clothing. Very few oats were grown in the early days of the settlement, as it was food for themselves they wanted most. The staple grain product was perhaps corn. This was grown, husked and carried across the river to where Brighton is now situated to the mill where it was ground into corn meal.

The chief food for the pioneer during the summer was corn cakes, and if he owned a cow, butter. For meat he depended entirely upon game and fish. If he raised a pig in summer he could, of course, have pork in the winter. The few potatoes he raised were all eaten. No one ever thought of having butter in the winter. The last settler to arrive depended largely upon his neighbors who had preceded him and had raised plenty. Some years of course, brought poor crops, and then if he had the means he would take a canoe and go to Fredericton, 65 miles away, and get some corn meal. Two different springs food got so scarce that some of the settlers were obliged to dig up the potato seeds they had planted and eat them to keep from starvation.

In 1822 there were something like a dozen children in the settlement, and the first school was opened. The log house built for the purpose was situated on the Jacksontown road on the hill opposite Mr. George Burt's house. The first teacher was an Irishman by the name of Thomas McGee, and it is said he should have been hanged before he

left Ireland. He was so ugly that the children were afraid of him and could not learn. The only studies were reading, spelling and arithmetic or ciphering, as it was called. For a reader they used the New Testament. The log house contained but one room and Mr. McGee and his wife lived in the same room in which school was held.

To this man McGee also belong the honor of starting a meeting of worship, and the school house was not only used as his home but also as a church, and he, being a preacher as well as a teacher, looked after the spiritual welfare of the settlement.

In this same year, 1822, Jacksontown lost one of its settlers under very sad circumstances. At this time there was a settlement on what is now known as the second tier lots, and some of the people from Jacksontown used to go over there to conference meetings. Mr. Benjamin Churchill was the most northerly settler and a path went from his place through the woods to the St. John river. On Sunday afternoon in the fall five men met at Mr. Churchill's prepared to go over to conference at Wakefield. One of the party was an Irishman by the name of Neales, and, as he was some older than the rest of the party, thought he would walk along slowly and the others would overtake him. This was the last time he was ever seen. When the other four men reached the meeting house it was found that Mr. Neales had not arrived, and on their return home a search was begun. For days the people wandered about through the woods blowing horns and ringing bells but in vain. It is supposed he missed his path and wandered about in the unbroken forest until exhausted. Years afterwards Mr. Henry Caldwell of the Sixth Tier, while harrowing a piece of new land found a piece of earth containing what looked like a bunch of bone. On digging it out somewhat he used it as a dish to sow grass seed for a few hours, having forgotten his pail. In using it some of the dirt crumbled from it and he began to examine it more closely and soon found it a human skull. It is still in possession of the Caldwell family and is believed to be the skull of the unfortunate Irishman.

It is amusing how people farmed in those early days. For the first few years while the country was new a man would clear an acre or more each year. This was plenty of ground for them to raise potatoes on, and they thought potatoes would not grow except on ground just burned over. After a few years they were not so particular about clearing the land, but where were they to raise their potatoes? Well they at length decided to try raising them on sod land, so in the spring they would root over a piece of green sod, (it would be about half plowed) and then try to cross plow it. As can readily be seen this made a complete failure of the job. They had nothing but a wooden harrow to break up the sods and the oxen tramped down more sods than the harrow pulled up. The potato seeds were covered, most of them, with sods turned right side up, and in about two weeks it would be hard to tell the potatoes from a piece of meadow.

Of course there was no grass seed then in the settlement, and to seed down their meadows they took the chaff and hay seed off the barn floor which had collected during the winter and spread it on the land.

It was nearly twenty years after the settlement was begun before there was any sort of a waggon in the neighborhood. But they had more ways than one of hauling in their hay and grain. Some of them used their sleds all summer. Others carried in their hay in what they called hay poles. They were two poles perhaps ten feet long which were placed on the ground about four feet apart, and on them piled perhaps three hundred pounds of hay. Then a man would pick up each end and carry it to the barn or stack. Some would carry the hay off five or six acres in this way and the land then cut more than a quarter of a ton per acre. But perhaps the most novel way of all was twitching it in. Two or three small hardwood trees were secured and the tops fastened together. The oxen were hitched to the but ends and on this vehicle they would pile the hay and twitch it to the barn. The bad part of this was to get it unloaded when in the barn.

These pioneers had misfortunes the same as people do now. One summer while Mr. James Foster was haying he found a hornet's nest in a stump and burned it. Having only a log barn he started a stack of hay, some three or four days later, around this stump. In three days he completed his stack and went to the house to dream of the nice lot of hay he had, when it took fire and burned up. There had been fire smouldering in the stump and it burned through into the hay. It was probable his cattle lived largely on cold weather that winter.

The children of those days did not have the privileges of obtaining an education that there are now. First, in the winter they were

so poorly clad that they could hardly venture out to the school house. Children in some cases have been known to come to school with both hands frozen white. Then the school house was only half a house and the only means of heating it was by a fire place. To keep up a fire each boy in turn went out in the cold and chopped up green wood and carried it in.

In conclusion look back and see what a change has taken place in ninety years. From an unbroken forest it has become a rich agricultural district. Certainly many changes can occur, but will there be as great a change in another ninety years?

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In a certain Continental town there were two newspapers that maintained a bitter rivalry. To the staff of each a professor was attached, who contributed a special forecast of the weather, but neither of these experts was known to the other.

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By dint of inquiry Schmidt ascertained the identity of Schenk, and, further, learnt that he was in the habit of taking his dinner at a certain cafe. Carefully laying his plans, Schmidt contrived to get his dinner in company with Schenk and to open up a most interesting conversation. At last when a favorable opportunity presented itself for introducing the subject which was uppermost in his mind, Schmidt turned to his companion.

'By the way,' said he, 'I hear you are the celebrated weather prophet of the—(naming the paper). I can't tell you how often I have wondered at the manner in which, with wonderful accuracy, you manage to forecast the weather.'

'Well, that's simple enough, I can assure you,' replied Schenk, with a laugh; 'you see, there's a silly old donkey who professes to make predictions for the—(naming Schmidt's paper), which is published a few hours before my paper, and as his forecast is almost invariably wrong, all I have to do is to say just the opposite.'



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8.50 A. MIXED—Week days—for Aroostook Jct. and intermediate points.

11.35 A. EXPRESS—Week days—for Presque Isle, Edmundston, and all points North.

1.35 P. MIXED—Week days—for Perth Jct. M. and intermediate points.

1.45 P. MIXED—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—for Fredericton, etc., via Gibson Branch.

4.45 P. MIXED—Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday—for Fredericton, etc., via Gibson Branch.

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11.35 A. M.—EXPRESS—Week days, from Saint John and East; Fredericton, St. Stephen, Houlton, Boston, Montreal, etc.

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5.38 P. M.—EXPRESS—Week days, from Presque Isle, Caribou, Edmundston, etc.

7.45 P. M.—MIXED—Week days, from Aroostook Jct.

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