

Rodgers travel North " AS WRITEN "

John Patrick Rodgers - Place: Denbigh, Ontario.

Year 1901 - Date: June 1st

Place of home known as Snake Crick; 9 miles from Denbigh village which had a Post Office, and so to start.

Henry Thomas and his nephew John H. McCoy, in the fall of 1901 made a trip from Denbigh to a little village on the shore of Lake Timiskaming. Which is well known now as the town of New Liskeard, which was the end of their journey. The crown land office being located there, where you went to locate your homestead or parcel of land, not possible to get any closer to where they decided to locate. Just took a chance on the two farms in Savard Township, which has since turned out to be Rodgers Corners.

Transportation;

A little slower then than now. Being anxious to know how their luck was going to turn out, made another start, (those two men) and hired to go with them Stewart Clarence and John Patrick Rodgers, and pay them top notch wages -- \$1.00 per day.

Making a start on the journey from Snake Crick to Savard Township, lot 1 con.2, making our luggage as small as possible, and take along as much food as four men could carry, and to make our stay as long as possible.

- 1st. Walked to Denbigh, stayed overnight.
- 2nd. Next day, male stage to Dacre---21 miles
Next day, male stage to Renfrew - 28 miles
Stayed overnight till 4 o'clock next morning.
- 3rd Walked to station, making several trips as that was where we had to get all our supplies, such as seabiscuit, rolled oats, rice, bacon, tea, sugar, bread and tin cow.
- 4th E.T.C. arrived at Mattawa. Stayed overnight and all next day so that our train and boat connections would come right at a place called Gorden Crick, at the foot of Lake Timiskaming, overnight, where we changed from railroad to boat - next morning at 7 o'clock for Hailebury, New Liskeard and points farther north.
- 5th Monday - left New Liskeard for North Timiskaming and Tomstown on a small motor boat. Overnight at Tomstown.
- 6th Starting with 2 canoes, which we hired to take us ten more miles to bring us to our line, being six and one half miles east of Savard, one township lying between Marter and Savard known as Chamberlain.
Arriving at this point, carried our supplies up to top of hill on the bank of the White River before our canoe men returned.
Boiled our first pot of tea, and after having lunch with a hearty safe journey both ways. At this 2 boys started back down the river and 4 other boys started west into the thick green bush on a blazen line which the government surveyors had made apparently about 5 years before. It was quite a problem finding the blazes as some of the trees were down and other places across long muskeg there would be no line across deep gullies

The government in the same year started a great number of road jobs and building camps at many places opening roads in all directions. This was a great help for men who wished to come and see the country. Work on the roads was sure as the contractors wanted all the men they could get. Such being the case of lots of work in summer on the roads, and lots of work in the lumbering woods of the north. Also the great clay belt of farming lands lying south of the Height of Land had a great influence to draw both farmers and other business men into the great north.

Methods of Travel:

Transportation was only possible by rail and boat. Railway construction and mining were more great factors for migration to our great north. As railway was under construction from North Bay to Englehart, a great discovery was made at Cobalt, starting a mining boom. Prospectors flocked in by hundreds. Tent towns sprang up prospector's shacks almost overnight. Soon the great smoke of the locomotive came, rolling through the district from North Bay to Englehart. Methods of travel changed from boat to rail, making possible for those who were settlers to get in with live stock along the railway line towns such as Latchford. Temagami, where rivers and railway connected made sawmill operations very convenient as logs could come down rivers and manufacture into lumber and loaded on cars without much road cost. Mining towns grew up quicker along the railway lines for the same reason. Cobalt, Hailebury and New Liskeard then Englehart, the divisional point – making that town the Hub of the North, where the round house for repairs for the great Iron Horse was located. The locomotive received repairs, coal and water for the next run.

Community Life on the Farms:

When we consider the men of that day in sweat and toil chopping down the trees one by one with axe and saw, clearing the land down to the bare earth to sow and reap for their living and sustenance. There were many log homes still standing, hewn out of the wilderness - not mansions, but homes in the true sense of the word, where faith, perseverance and determination withstood all the obstacles they were confronted with in their struggle for existence.

And the women folks of that day are not to be forgotten. They shared the struggles and worked very hard, and did many things that would be considered a hardship today.

In the Spring the sheep were shorn of their heavy fleeces, the wool washed and washed, carded and spun into yarn. Nearly every home had a spinning wheel. The wool was dyed various colours and knit into mitts and socks for the cold winter months.

They made their own soap. All hardwood ashes were kept separate in a sheltered place; all bits of fat were saved until soap- making time, when the community kettle was brought into service.

The women ploughed the fields - they held the plough handles and guided the horses to make a straight furrow across the fields. They did many hard tasks the women of today couldn't commence to do.

Life was slower but steadily year by year communities grew, Poor roads being the big difficulty.

It was quite common to see horses, good ones at that get down in mud so deep that the driver was obliged to get them unhitched and let them free from the load and by putting a long chain on the tongue of the wagon get the load of settlers effects through, where today our largest motor vehicles are driven with ease.

Good co-operation did much to help the growth of the different communities. At barn raisings, it was common to see 50 to 70 men gathered around the piles of timber in the morning of the barn raising. In the evening there would be the large frame barn and then the party. All of which made for better social life and a desire to go ahead. Small frames growing into larger ones and more settlers coming in until it was possible to assess and collect taxes. Then the small schools at the start, and finally giving way to what we have today. Larger and better equipped educational, recreational and a trend to a more social education and a healthier life

This is a copy of notes made by J.P. Rodgers when he spoke to the students of Savard School on the subject of pioneering as requested by Mr. James Kearns – principal at that time.