

The "Finns" In Waters Township

The Finnish people played a very important role in the development of Waters Township. As our farm histories reveal the late 1800's and early 1900's saw a large number of Finns arriving in Canada and settling in the Sudbury area. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics show that people of Finnish extraction held a commanding position in Waters in 1931, with 71 percent of the population. Initial inhabitants were of British and French origin and remained dominant until 1921. At that time the Finnish held 64 percent of the total.

By 1961 with the increased subdivision activity the British stocks again began to dominate with 39 percent. The Finns did, however, rank second with 29.8 percent of the total. It is expected that in future years the Finnish proportion of the population will continue to decline as new residents inhabit the township.

The sauna is an example of cultural transfer from Finland, ranging from the early simple log saunas, many of which still exists on the old farms, to the more elaborate and often luxurious electric saunas in homes, not only of the Finns but many other nationalities in this area who have adopted this most pleasant Finnish custom. The sauna was, and is, a cause for many a social evening and in the early days Saturday night saw many visits between farmers for the Saturday night sauna with coffee and the delicious Finnish cardamon seed bun being served after. It was considered an honour to be asked to share this event.

Being very versatile and hard workers, the Finns did most of their own labour, whatever the job called for, carpenter, blacksmith, saw-mill operator, etc; the Finns could do it, and with their strong spirit of co-operation formed a very close knit and self-sustaining community.

Mr. Eino Mikkola cited 2 examples of this community effort. First it was stated that either his father or he would drive to Copper

Cliff to pick up anyone available to aid in the potato harvest. Accepted payment for this task was one bag of potatoes per person. To this was added the kind hospitality of the Mikkolas who provided three hardy meals, a refreshing sauna, evening coffee and a return trip of the helpers back home. Second, the Mikkolas and their neighbours the Rautinnens and the Punkaris would each take their turns in delivering the milk produced on each farm to Co-Operative Dairy in Sudbury. The formation of this dairy was another reflection of the impact of the Finnish settlement in the district. In 1927 the Dairy was developed by the Trading Association of Sudbury. It was financially supported by the Finnish Organization of Canada, which was established in 1923. Johnson's and Franssi's General Stores in Copper Cliff formed part of a chain of general stores distributed throughout the Sudbury district, supported and established by the Finns in the Trading Association.

These customs were followed by many of the farmers with some taking their milk to the Copper Cliff Dairy.