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# PIONEER DAYS

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## Remembering pioneer times

If you ask most youngsters about pioneer times they mumble something about covered wagons, Indians and an assortment of similar topics gleaned from television. They often add something about their grandparents having grown up during pioneer times if you press them. Jim Mann also mentions his grandfather when he talks of pioneer times only in his case the connection is accurate.

Mr. Mann turned 86 last month and has lived in Brampton since he sold the family farm in 1951, but he has plenty of memories of his early days in Esqueping Township. To start with there was Hancockburn school on the corner of the Fourth Line and Highway 7. Howard Orm was the teacher he remembers best and Mr. Orm wouldn't be flattered by the reason for the memories. His nickname was cow-teeth and the older boys favorite sport was trying to lure him into a football game to see who could kick him in the shins Mr. Mann recalls.

Mr. Mann guesses at the date of his memories being around 1905. There were 42 students in the one-room red brick school house and it was heated by a box stove when Mr. Mann first attended it. During his years at school the trustees dug out a hole big enough to become a basement of sorts and installed a furnace. Once again Mr. Orm joins the reason for the memories.

It was part of the daily routine for every boy on his way out for recess to go and get a block of wood and carry it down to the furnace room for storage before he went to play. Mr. Orm always went to supervise the chore so that no one forgot to do his share.

"We left our block in the basement and came upstairs," Mr. Mann recalls with a chuckle "and just beside the register Sandy Mann a cousin jumped on the floor with all his might. There was only one layer of boards on the floor and if that had made a terrible racket. It was right over my head. Sandy saw out the door and I was right behind him. Orm raced up the stairs and out the door after a demanding to know who had done that. He went around the yard asking everyone but no one would tell him anything. Finally he came back and made an all out effort to get the block out. He was so out of breath he couldn't talk. He was so out of breath he couldn't talk. He was so out of breath he couldn't talk."

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milking the cattle or cooking Sunday's meals could be allowed."

The family walked to Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton for morning service, then walked home, then walked back in for evening service, too.

The children had to be at Sunday School at two o'clock as well as attending the regular services with their parents. What with all those services and all that walking it isn't much wonder if they didn't have time for much in the way of Sunday visiting, although he presumes town residents may have done more of that than farm families did.

Mr. Mann also remembers when Highway 7 became a provincial highway. It was graded in 1924 although it was not paved at that time.

"The surveyors wanted four feet graded off the hill west of our gate and four feet taken off the hill at Morrison's near the Fifth Line," he says.

"It was to be put down in the hollow at the bridge to raise it. The contractor only took two feet off each hill but nobody said anything and he got paid for the whole job."

Mr. Mann also remembers how residents along the highway got mail delivery at their gate. "Originally families went in to Acton to get their mail. Then a rural route was started that came out along the highway, up the Fifth Line and back down the Third Line into town. People on the Fourth Line began squawking because they had to go either to the corner at the highway or the corner on the town line to get their mail. So we lost our delivery for a while and everyone went to a box at the nearest corner."

The return happened after an election although he can't remember the candidate's name or the year.

"Mr. Clarridge always voted U.F.O. or Conservative but he was invited to a political party supper in Acton to meet the candidate," Mr. Mann says. "I think he was from Burlington but I'm not sure."

"Anyway when Clarridge was introduced to him he told the candidate he'd vote Liberal if the man could get mail delivery at the end of the laneway re-established. He promised he would do that."

He won the federal election but nothing happened about our mail. Finally Clarridge was invited back to another party dinner to meet the candidate again. Everyone forgot they had already met and they were introduced again. Clarridge told him he had forgotten his promise. The man apologized and suggested that he write him a letter stating his request so that he wouldn't forget it. Mr. Clarridge did and we got our mail delivered to the door again.

Mr. Mann's memories also include stories his parents told him about Esqueping as his grandparents saw it when they arrived from Scotland in 1816. They took the land from the Crown and cleared it. There were a lot of rocks and they had to use a stone wagon

to get them out. The back wheels of the wagon were about six feet high and a big drum was hung between them to act as a pulley. Ropes hung down from the drum and a pair of tongs. The tongs would be fastened into the stone. It often required two teams to turn the drum and haul the stone up into it. Then the wagon was driven to wherever the stones were being piled and the stone was rolled out of the drum into the pile. Often the stones had to be blasted before they could be moved with the stone wagon.

The Mann family had one of the first threshing machines in Halton and did custom work as far away as Norval and Ashgrove as well as in the Hancockburn area. It was run by a team of horses. Steam threshers came later. Mr. Mann says. His father bought one in the 1880s. Mr. Mann remembers loading it on a sleigh to take it through the snowdrifts to barn thresh at the Lindsay farm in the early 1900s.



Resting at a wood bee

Wood bees were usually conducted in the early spring to cut fuel for the family fires. This photo taken in the early 1900s by Robert Armstrong showing Jack Lindsay, Jimmy Combs, Herb Allen, William Hiltcock, Jerry and Al Kenner and Sandy Binnie and his son in the Binnie bush just north of the Peacock school. The circular saw was owned and operated by Tom Hobson and powered by an upright steam engine. Photo courtesy of Ella Harding.

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