

An Old Fashioned Sleigh Ride

One last (?) look back at winter before we paint the town green!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Occasional Herald contributor Bette Stokes of RR3 Georgetown recently spent one of those idyllic winter evenings in the country that make Canadians appreciate their heritage as well as their climate. In the accompanying account, she shares a personal perspective on the family gathering that turned a chilly day into a memorable occasion.



It was the last night in February, and it marked the occasion of one of our Sunday family get-togethers.

After the afternoon activities of fun, games, music and laughter, a hearty meal was enjoyed by all, followed by the usual rattling of dishes, squeaking cupboard doors, bits of laughter and diverse conversation, the idea of a winter sleigh ride was suggested, much to the excitement and approval of the younger adults, and some of us older kids too.

An hour later, 12 of us arrived at Mr. Brown's farm over on the Fourth Line. Mr. Brown was already waiting with the team of horses and a real honest-to-goodness open sleigh loaded with baled and loose hay. Midst shouts of laughter we piled on, snuggled up, and with a dash of sleigh bells we were away.

It was a night I will long remember and somehow I felt that we had touched a link to the past that crisp February night. Mr. Brown told us stories of winter evenings long ago when they would hitch up the team and sleigh and make the rounds to nearby farms to pick up friends and neighbors on the way to the community dance.

I could hear the echo of laughter ringing across the fields and forest as the team trotted across the glistening snow, steam rising from their powerful bodies and tails waving to the rhythm of the harness bells. I think that they enjoyed it as much as we did (probably

in anticipation of the forthcoming ration of oats).

Mr. Brown's border Collie bounced along beside the sleigh, barking now and then and teasing at the horses' feet as if to say "Come on, let's play!"

Over the fields and through the

woods the sleigh glided with ease, under the power of the well-handled team. It was a perfect night, crisp and clear with a million stars twinkling overhead in time with the old familiar songs we sang. Jingle bells, Row, Row, Row Your Boat, Put on your Old Grey

Bonnet, On Top of Old Smoky and many others.

Now and then a tussle would relieve the sleigh of one or two riders and there was a roar of laughter as the victims scurried through the deep snow to catch up and jump on again.

By the time we cleared the last bend and headed up the lane towards the barn, there were some pretty cold feet and noses, but a kind of special warmth and happiness that would last for a very long time, for me... probably a lifetime. One of those very special memories that you tuck into your heart and warm your soul with on other winter evenings when you sit by a fire and remember.

An Old Fashioned Sleigh Ride...but more than that, a link from the past that assured me that fun and love would always be around, even in such simplicity, and perhaps that is where love always belonged...in the joy of little simple moments to be shared and remembered.

Park offers a place to escape during coming spring break

Herald Special

Looking for a spot where the family can wear off a little steam during school break week?

This year from March 22 to 26, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Orangeville Reservoir Conservation Area offers 820 acres of lake, open meadow and maple bush to assist the har-

ried parent.

cross country ski or build a snowman. The Maple Leaf Trail, with its self guiding pamphlet, leads through the bush where the trees are tapped to the exhibits of Indian and Pioneer methods of syrup making. Then on to the sugar shack where staff can explain the modern evaporator and let you taste the freshly made syrup.

Animals in their natural habitat will enthrall the child-

ren as they warm up by the open fire in the Interpretive Centre. Adults can plan their future entertainment around conservation area displays. An exhibit of Authority programs and projects, an audio-visual display and maple products to take home will add to the day in the outdoors.

During the school break week there is no charge for entry. If groups wish to book a staff interpreter, there is a per-

son fee of \$30 (or 75 cents per person).

The Orangeville Reservoir Conservation Area is located east of Highway 10 at Orangeville and will be well signed during maple syrup time.

Information regarding the school break week program can be obtained by contacting the Information Officer at the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, Meadowvale, Ontario, L0J 1K0 or call 451-1815.



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