

Stuart Rumble Farm at Headford Becomes a Community Playground

Summer has come to Markham Township in Ontario bringing with it some 800 visitors to the Rumble farm. The very thought of such a friendly invasion might appall many farm families — but not Jean and Stewart Rumble. As a mat-

ter of fact, they welcome visitors and have done all they can to provide them with the kind of atmosphere and entertainment — including a swimming pond, playground, picnic tables and even a merry-go-round — to help them forget the soaring temperature.

Several years after Stewart graduated from Ontario Agricultural College he, his wife and their three small children moved from the senior Rumble farm in nearby Vaughan to the present Markham farm. There was no electricity, plumbing or furnace in this house and the grounds were unkempt. But all this has changed.

The house has been redecorated, the grounds cleared and with the help of a full-time man, Stewart operates his dairy farm of twenty milk cows and young stock and his father's farm in the adjoining township of Vaughan where they crop four acres of asparagus. During school vacation, he'll have the help of his sons, David—18, John—17,

while 13-year-old Sharon will share the household duties with her mother.

When the Rumbles first looked over their new land, they found a rough and stubby valley below the house. Through it flowed a quiet stream — quiet until, in a mood of spring madness, it assaulted the hillside and endangered the buildings above. Something had to be done — and this was the first step toward the transformation of the lonely valley into a kind of community playground for their friends, relatives and community.

"Summer holidays away from the farm are not practical for us," says Jean, "and so it seemed a good idea to have a holiday right here on the farm."

"The children had been paddling and splashing in the shallow stream. To provide depth

for swimming, Stewart built two successive dams which were effective only until the spring floods washed them out. When they investigated professional services for dam-building, they found it beyond their means, and in 1957, decided on a by-pass pond. A drag line was used to dig the 200 by 200-foot pond and a bulldozer to level it.

A dam of earth and stones was erected across the stream. Above this was laid an in-flow pipe and lower down-stream, an out-flow pipe to control the level of the pond which, at its deepest end, is 5½ feet.

"The pond has been primarily a pleasure," Stewart said, "because as a family we enjoy skating, swimming and fishing. There are conservation benefits, too. It is a water reservoir, provides fire protection and it could be used for irrigation."

Stewart mowed the grass on the field beside the pond and made a ball diamond that has since resounded to the cheers and boos for home runs and strike-outs made by local teams. Neighboring children were encouraged to come to swim in the pond between two and four o'clock in the afternoon, while Sharon, who has her Red Cross certificate, supervised.

The little valley has been the site of many Headford Sunday School picnics, family reunions, and school parties.

Stewart built picnic tables, boats and a raft to provide pleasure for visitors. A merry-go-round was added for the children and two chicken houses were cleaned up and placed beside the pond as change cabins for the swimmers.

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Laff Of The Week

"And he said I could keep him until he gets housebroken."

In 1959, the Toronto Municipal Metro Conservation Authority stocked the Stewart pond with fifty large-mouthed fingerlings about two to three inches long. Two years later they ran 11 to 14 inches. Young would-be fishermen watched them dream fishing dreams, but this is a control pond and fishing is not open to the public.

As improvements were made, the inevitable happened: visitors from a wider area — many of them strangers — came to enjoy the valley. Some restrictions had to be made, so a sign was placed at the entrance stating: picnic accommodations, swimming and boating from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. adults 25c, children 15c. However, the children of the community have free use of the grounds in the morning. For the community too, picnics and skating are free.

But the Rumbles don't spend all their time working on the farm or at the pond. The boys play football and are active in young people's groups, in the church and 4-H work. The boys play the piano, trombone, trumpet and clarinet and on a quiet summer evening, when a few notes quiver on the air, the neighbors say, "The Rumble boys are on the horn." Jean is organist and choir leader in Headford church and Stewart is Sunday School superintendent and has served on the Public School and High School Boards. "We are always busy," Jean says, "but it is our way of life and we like it. The pond, for example, has provided recreation for the children and we have got to know their friends as we never would have."

Indeed, Jean and Stewart Rumble themselves have made many new friends who will long remember their generosity in sharing the little valley on their farm.

FARM REPORT
(A. A. Wall, Agricultural Representative for York County)

I was a little surprised last week to find a few farmers with hay already cut. The importance of cutting hay early has been preached for several years, and for nutritious feed the early crop is certainly away ahead. Still, when you see hay cut down in May with no bloom on the alfalfa, you wonder if you can get too much of a good thing. Tests have shown that the highest yield from a hay crop comes around the last week of June, sometime after full bloom of both timothy and alfalfa. The digestibility, of course, is just about the opposite of total yield. The best hay is cut around the 1st of June before alfalfa blooms.

The best time to cut hay, then is somewhere in between these two extremes. Tests have shown that this is when timothy is fully headed but has not bloomed, or when alfalfa is about half in bloom. Normally, this happens around June 15th. The right time to cut hay, then, is on June 15th. Practise, of course doesn't permit all hay to be cut at once. The plan should be to cut half the crop before this date and half after the middle

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