

is perhaps the best example of all this variety and interest that can be found anywhere in New England. So strong has the Fair Association now become that it can afford to bring within its gates a multitude of attractions which cost a big sum in the aggregate. In this respect, without in the least disparaging its competitors in the County, which are each of them progressing, and each of them giving the public very handsome exhibitions, the Northern Maine stands alone.

Elsewhere in this work the reader may find a cut of a scene on the Fair Grounds taken some thirty years ago, and a companion picture of a scene taken in connection with the Fair of 1921. In the old-time picture one notes a very few score of horse and buggy turnouts—fine, and possibly as some of their owners and occupants fancied, quite swell and aristocratic, but the whole of them not representing in value the cost of a half dozen of the hundreds of sumptuous cars which throng the Northern Maine Fair Grounds nowadays.

The Northern Maine Fair brings into Aroostook so many scores of thousands of visitors from outside the County, who derive their impressions of its wealth and productiveness through this annual visit, and what they see is so widely disseminated by the reports they give to others, that the Fair is probably the greatest advertising asset we have. It has other great advantages but it is to be doubted if Aroostook reaps any other benefit so important through the Fair as that of the favorable publicity it gets through this medium.

Such, briefly pictured, is the great Northern Maine Fair, a really great farmer institution of Aroostook, and a thing which cannot be overlooked is a series of sketches like these.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### *Some Of The Great Farms Of Aroostook And What Some Farmers Have Accomplished*

There are so many great farms in Aroostook, and so many farmers have achieved remarkable results, that one is embarrassed in choosing from the list. Nowhere else in the country, perhaps, has there been so many individual instances where men have grown, not only independent, but rich, in tilling the soil. What has rewarded their toil has been the specialty which Aroostook farmers have followed for over forty years—the raising of potatoes.

In speaking of the remarkable history of some Aroostook farms, probably no farm in the County has had a more interesting history, or a record more strikingly illustrative of the marked changes which have taken place in Aroostook farming conditions in the past forty years, and the possibilities of profit and wealth accumulation, than what is known as the Greenlaw farm in Maysville. The original owner of this farm was "Squire" John Allen, of whom we have spoken elsewhere in connection with this series. Mr. Allen took up this farm from the forest, cleared quite a large tract upon it, farmed it very successfully in the old fashioned way of farming, and after having accumulated what was in those days quite a fortune, in 1867 sold it to Holman Currier, the purchase price being \$5,000 all of which was paid down. Included in this purchase price was one of the best plants of farm buildings in the County at that time, the farm being in a fine state of cultivation when Mr. Currier acquired it.

Notwithstanding the low price which Mr. Currier paid for the farm, and the enormous tract of land which he acquired, his purchase proved to be a losing venture, as he steadily went behind, and after having kept the farm for eighteen years, lost it by foreclosure proceedings, the property falling into the hands of the late T. H. Phair.

This was in 1885, after the advent of the potato industry, which was then being conducted in the operation of starch factories, but the business had not assumed such proportions or given promise of such golden profit, as to enlighten the mind, even of as far-seeing a business man as Mr. Phair in regard to the prospective value of this great farm. Evidently he did not appreciate the possibilities connected with the property, for he negotiated a sale of it to S. C. Greenlaw for \$7,000, the purchaser to have the privilege of paying for the farm in potatoes delivered at the starch factory, at twenty-five cents a bushel. Many of Mr. Greenlaw's acquaintances and friends thought he had assumed a load which would be too heavy for him, and that he would meet with the same fate as Mr. Currier. In this they were mistaken, however, as he paid off the debt he had contracted in the course of three years.

He later sold one hundred acres off the north side to J. B. Long, which was added to what is known as the Long farm, the purchase price in this case being \$2000. Still later, another 100 acres was sold to Mr. Walter Christie, who paid considerably less than Mr. Long, on account of the fact that the hundred acres he got was largely unimproved land. About the year 1920 the re-

mainder of the farm, from which the buildings had been burned, was sold to Mr. C. E. Hussey at the price of \$175 per acre.

Mr. Christie, who bought the south one hundred acres, had recently come to Aroostook from New Brunswick, arriving in this County empty-handed. All that he had to invest in the purchase he made of Mr. Greenlaw, was what he had saved out of his employment by him for several years as a farm hand. His purchase was made on the eve of the hard times which prevailed between 1893 and 1900, and he had a very hard struggle even to meet the interest on his notes. Indeed, one year, it looked so hopeless that he was on the point of giving up, but was persuaded by his friends to keep on and try another year. The next year he had a large acreage of potatoes which he sold for a good price, and thereafter he made rapid progress in wiping off his indebtedness to Mr. Greenlaw. Mr. Christie not only paid for the farm, but has since added adjoining land to it, until at the present time he has a tract of about five hundred acres in one of the best farming neighborhoods in the County or in New England. He has, in fact, since the time he came from New Brunswick and invested in the hundred acre tract purchased of Mr. Greenlaw, risen from poverty to affluence, being rated today as one of the wealthy men of the County, and as one of its best and most substantial citizens. He has been characterized in his business career by enterprise, progressive methods and by far sightedness. Among other things which stand to his credit as a farmer, is the interest he has taken in the breeding of thoroughbred horses, his Percheron stock having taken many prizes and his initiative in this direction having been of great benefit to the County in improving its horse stock.

From the foregoing statement in connection with this Greenlaw farm one can very readily gain an idea of what it has been possible to accomplish in Aroostook farming. This is perhaps something more than an average example of the profits made, but the case is not an exceptional one.

Some of Mr. Greenlaw's reminiscences in connection with his experience on this farm are of interest. It appears that prior to his taking hold of it there was a time when the experiment was tried of raising hops, and for a few years some of the farmers who made this experiment realized quite handsome profits. But for some reason or other, possibly on account of the crops proving uncertain, the business was abandoned. On the farms where hop-raising was tried, however, the vines remained, and Mr. Greenlaw says that on the farm he purchased of Mr. Phair

there was quite a large tract in hops, which had got so solidly rooted in the ground that to rid the soil of them was very much like getting out a thick growth of hazel bushes.

Mr. Greenlaw says that Mr. Long was the first farmer to plant as large an acreage of potatoes as twenty acres in that neighborhood. These were raised without any fertilizer, and the crop amounted to about 5000 bushels. In this early farming the work was done with light teams, the potato seed was dropped and covered by hand and dug by hand, so that the labor involved was more than is now expended in raising a crop three times as large.

Not far from the farm last described, on the same road, is the Hayford farm. Until the time that M. B. Hayford, who now operates it, took over its management, this farm was owned and operated by Hon. Columbus Hayford, who at the ripe age of eighty-six years, is still hale and vigorous, and one of the most deservedly honored citizens of the County.

The Hayford farm comprises 500 acres, and the tract embraced in it in the pioneer days, is still held intact, and is one of the most productive farms of the County. Not only does this farm represent a salable value at the present time of well above \$50,000, but during its history it would be a conservative estimate if one placed the value of the farm crops and the forest products which have been taken from its soil at half a million dollars. Mr. M. B. Hayford, its present manager, is a farmer of much energy and experience, level headed, sound in judgment, and an excellent example of the hustling and successful young farmers of Aroostook.

Going northward to Caribou, and about a mile south of Caribou village, one comes to the farm of Mr. John McIlwain. The noticeable thing about Mr. McIlwain's farm to the passer-by is its fine residence, a cut of which is given in connection with this series of sketches.

Mr. McIlwain, who is now 43 years of age, migrated to Aroostook from Carleton County, N. B., twenty years ago. He brought with him very little money, his chief capital being a good share of the habits of industry, good judgment, energy and sober thrift which characterize so many of the good people who have crossed the Provincial boundary line to help enrich our County with their contribution of good citizenship.

He bought the farm on which he now lives for \$8,000, paying \$2,000 down, and it was to the good fortune of thus acquiring such a wonderfully fine tract of potato land as the McIlwain

farm embraces, that much of his subsequent rise to wealth can be attributed. Mr. McIlwain is a good worker, a good planner, and an all-round conservative and careful manager of his farm affairs, but the big crops the rich soil of his farm yielded went far toward making him the thriving farmer citizen he is today.

His average plant has been from fifty to seventy-five acres of potatoes. He has generally harvested maximum crops, and has been fortunate in getting in on the ground floor, as the saying is, in many of the bonanza price years which Aroostook has enjoyed. In this way, and through the great enhancement in value of his fine farm, he has become wealthy, and after having acquired wealth, having the taste, he decided to surround himself with all the appliances of comfort and refinement which are betokened by the handsome home he has built. The cost of this fine residence, one of the most attractive in the County or State, would not be far from \$30,000 if built today, and it is one of the show places of the County. The value of the McIlwain farm, which for salable purposes has not probably been very much enhanced by the elaborate house which has been built upon it, would not fall short of \$75,000, so that what Mr. John McIlwain has accomplished in twenty years is a striking illustration of what Aroostook has offered and still holds out to energetic and ambitious young men.

Over in the town of Limestone may be found in the case of Mr. Howard Nichols, another remarkable example of what has been accomplished by straight farming, unmixed with other lines of business. Limestone, which is a great potato town, is full of prosperous farmers, but Mr. Nichols affords the most striking example of the rapid and almost sensational rise many hundreds of Aroostook farmers have made from the bottom to the top of the ladder of prosperity.

Mr. Nichols, who is now perhaps fifty years of age, like Mr. McIlwain, came from that prolific nursery of thrifty farming folks, Carleton County, New Brunswick. He migrated from New Brunswick to Aroostook about twenty-eight years ago, bringing with him only a few thousand dollars. The Nichols farm, which now consists of 365 acres, with the exception of fifteen acres all cleared and under cultivation, and for the most part fine potato land, is the result of successive additions of adjoining land, after the original lot was purchased.

After he got into his stride raising potatoes, Mr. Nichols's average plant was about eighty acres. He has as a rule, raised his crops at a profit, but his rise to affluence has been chiefly

due to the clean-ups of several big years, notably the one of the year 1919—1920, when he raised 9,000 barrels of potatoes from a plant of between 75 and 80 acres, and sold quite a percentage of them at the rate of ten dollars a barrel. This made him a rich man, and having a hobby in that direction, he set about providing himself such a house and barn as would satisfy his ambition.

The house, which was built in 1914, contains 32 rooms, including three bath rooms, and is finished from top to bottom in the most elaborate style, and fitted up with every possible appointment of comfort and luxury. The barn, now in process of construction, bids fair to eclipse the house. Including the main barn, 60x120, the ell 44x60, and a shed addition, 10 feet wide and 76 feet long, the structure covers 10,600 square feet. The great basement has a cement bottom, cement walls 16 feet high, and there were used in building it, 800 barrels of cement and 3,000 barrels of gravel, besides large quantities of rocks. The height from the floor of the basement to the peak will be in the neighborhood of 75 feet. Above the basement storage will be afforded for hundreds of tons of hay and grain, while the basement, if used for that purpose, would accommodate 33,000 barrels of potatoes. The cost of the big barn will approximate \$80,000, a big financial stunt for most farmers, but Mr. Nichols is not exactly of the average farmer class financially, as he had within convenient reach when he started on his barn building enterprise, something over \$70,000 in cash.

Mr. Nichols is a hard-headed man, of seeming practical business turn, whimsical and full of dry humor, and withal a fine fellow. There are only himself and wife, the latter a most estimable woman, who to some extent fills the void caused by lack of children through being able to tip the scales at about 250 pounds, and by being in a general way a very pleasant and companionable woman.

A whole book of itself, and a fairly interesting one, might be written giving the facts of the remarkable rise scores and hundreds of Aroostook farmers have made from poverty to riches through farming, and when one says farming, in Aroostook it means potato farming.

There comes to mind, among the other individual cases we are now citing showing the possibilities of Aroostook farming, that of Mr. Walter Carmichael, a man of about forty-five, who lives on what is called the "back road" from Presque Isle to Caribou. Somewhere around twenty years ago Mr. Carmichael

bought a farm on that road of Mr. Athill Irving. The farm Mr. Carmichael bought contained 120 acres. The purchase price was \$8,000, and Mr. Carmichael paid \$200 down, Mr. Irving taking a chance for the balance on the faith he had in Mr. Carmichael's grit, energy and honesty. These latter assets panned out well, for Mr. Carmichael not only made good and paid for this original purchase, but later added to it another 100 acre, \$10,000 farm adjoining, then bought still another, and at last accounts had bought a forty thousand dollar farm which had drifted from its moorings by some default of management on the part of its owner, and was floating about in the market, offered at what Mr. Carmichael thought a very low price for so desirable a property.

In Presque Isle the big scale on which farming is conducted and the enormous advance in farm values are everywhere evident. Examples of big farming, not equalled in any farm community in the East, are afforded by such men as C. E. Hussey, F. T. Kierstead, Weston Hardy, T. M. Hoyt, and scores of others. The latter combines the business of growing potatoes on a big scale with the business of shipping his product to all the seed markets of the country, his trade covering practically every section of the South where potatoes are raised. The present season (1922), he has a plant of 600 acres on four different farms, which he either owns or operates on lease. He hopes to raise a crop of 90,000 barrels, practically all seed stock of the finest quality. In planting this great acreage he used 900 tons of fertilizer and 6,000 barrels of seed. By the first of July, when, if a hill of the millions in his plant had been pulled up, nothing but baby tubers of the size of marbles would have been found, he had already made an investment in the crop of nearly \$75,000. This would seem to be taking long chances, considering the different enemies which lie in ambush for the potato crop, but Mr. Hoyt has been taking such chances for a long time, after starting life with no capital except his ability and energy, and his courage and unbounded faith in the soil of Aroostook have been abundantly rewarded financially.

One of the greatest farms in the County was owned by Mr. Hoyt in partnership with Mr. F. C. Wheeler for a considerable period. This farm, on what is known as the Reach Road, was originally the homestead farms of Joel and Ozias Bean. Acquired and consolidated into one farm by Hoyt and Wheeler, it made a compact tract of about 400 acres, practically all with an even, smooth slope toward the Aroostook River, and almost every

acre tillable for potatoes. With the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad running along its front, and with its own storehouses located on sidings on that line, with splendid buildings and with ample equipment to meet every requirement, this so-called Hoyt & Wheeler farm was for years and is today the biggest business proposition in farming within the limits of the County.

At the present time it is owned by Phillips Company, a big potato concern with headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia, an active figure in which business is Mr. D. W. Corey, long located in the potato buying and shipping business in Presque Isle, and one of the most active and capable men who have been associated with the potato growing and shipping interests of Aroostook. The active management of the big farm is in the capable hands of Mr. Wheeler, who was formerly associated with Mr. Hoyt in the ownership of the farm. Since coming into the hands of Phillips Company the farm has been increased in size by the purchase of an adjoining farm, and now comprises in the neighborhood of 500 acres. Located on the same road as the State Sanatorium, the institution and the farm are features of special interest on that road, the farm especially being one of the show places of the northern part of the County.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### *The Scenic Attractions Of Aroostook, Its Forests And Fish And Game, Its Roads And Its Automobiles.*

In a series of sketches of this sort the claims of Aroostook on the score of scenic beauty should not be overlooked. Aroostook is attractive in many ways, but not the least so in the summer season, by reason of its almost unrivalled summer climate, and its scenery. Its summer season is brief, beginning about the first of June, and ending, somewhat too abruptly, in the latter part of September, which is often a very beautiful month in Northern Maine. But while it lasts Aroostook basks in such soft sunshine and balmy air, it has such a wealth of wonderful cloud and sunset effects, such coloring in the masses of verdure in the fields and forests, there is such a tonic in breathing the clear and invigorating air, and such joy in living as are found nowhere else.

In its hills and valleys, and its smooth, wide roads, which everywhere, winding through charming rural neighborhoods, appeal to the eye through their beauty, and what equally cheers and satisfies, their many evidences of human thrift and