

the Provincial farmers, on account of the United States duty of twenty-five cents a bushel on foreign potatoes, were shut out of the American markets, and with just as good a soil as the Aroostook farmers, were forced to farm on a small margin of profit, and to look across the line and see the tillers of the soil in our County getting forehanded, and in many cases accumulating wealth. The result was that farms remained stationary or went down in value in New Brunswick, and a rapid enhancement of values took place in Aroostook. During this process which began about 1900, there was a great drift of Provincial farmers into Aroostook, particularly North Aroostook, and this went on until values rose to practically prohibitive prices. During that period New Brunswick contributed to Aroostook many hundreds of her best and most substantial farmers. They brought with them cash to buy our best farms, and what was more important, they brought every essential quality that goes to make up a clean, sober, industrious and highly desirable community. These good men and women from across the border, and there is no better class in the world than the best that New Brunswick has raised on her farms, came to us with narrower ideas of saving and living than prevailed in Aroostook, and with habits of smaller and snigger methods of farming, but they were not slow to conform to the standards they found here, both as to farming and the general fashion of living and doing things. The result is today that the Provincial farmers who have come to us, while they have lost none of their distinctly good traits as citizens, have fully adopted the broad-gauged ideas of Aroostook.

CHAPTER II.

Conditions Of Life In Pioneer Days.

It is almost impossible to realize today the conditions of life which prevailed in Aroostook in the really primitive days of the County's history. What surrounded people then and the environment now, the habits and customs of life then and the habits and customs of life now, are in almost unbelievable contrast. Yet there are a few, a very few of course, still active today who were active participants in Aroostook pioneer life.

In the pre-Civil War period of Aroostook history, practically the only turnpiked highway was the Military Road from Houlton, built at the time of the Aroostook War, with the extension northward to Presque Isle and Ashland, which was made

later on. Over this thoroughfare flowed, back and forth, all the traffic the County had with the outside world. In fact, the term "outside" came into common use, and remained so practically up to the coming of the railroad, as a designation of what lay beyond the southern limit of Aroostook. To reach this "outside" community whose nearest outpost was the City of Bangor, it required for the four and six horse teams which hauled Aroostook products out of the county and brought merchandise back into it, a ten days' journey from Presque Isle, or a round-trip pilgrimage of about twenty days. These four and six horse teams, more often in the pioneer days on the outward trip loaded with shaved cedar shingles than any other commodity, generally went in processions, literally in caravans. In this way the long journey on the road was relieved of some of its loneliness and monotony, and when the hauling was hard, either on account of mud and deep ruts in the summer, or clogged with snowdrifts in winter, the teams gave one another a lift through the mud sloughs or drifts, or up the sharp pitches of the long, steep hills. From this gregarious habit it followed that the taverns where these caravans of pioneer teamsters took dinner, and where they were fed and lodged, had crowds in them at the



HUGH JAMIESON

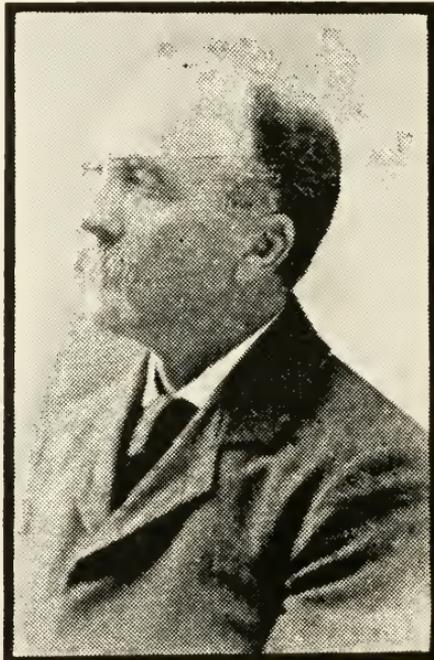
A Pioneer Farmer, and Famous as a Six-Horse
Teamster in the Early Days

noon hour and over night of a type of rough and ready hilarity peculiar to the social atmosphere of that primitive time. This teamster and lumber-jack element, with which a traveller on the old Aroostook road was mostly brought in contact sixty or seventy years ago, had its counterpart in a degree at least in the early life of the West. Both the teamsters of the fifties and sixties between Aroostook and Bangor, and the plainsmen, were the genuine and unadulterated product of nature, though the teamsters lacked the awe-inspiring toggery of cartridge belts and revolvers, which adorned the rough riders of the West.

Fully as marked a type as the teamsters, and more picturesque, were the stage-drivers of the early days. As a class they stood a notch higher than even the most famous of the old time six-horse teamsters. They had the right of way on the road; humble and deferential hostlers took charge of their four-in-hand outfits when they pulled up in front of the taverns; their coming and going was always the chief event all along the line of their journey back and forth, and they were looked upon, all in all, as the most distinguished figures in the social life of those days.

All of us whose memories go back to the times in which they flourished, can recall nothing in our experience more proud or handsome than the figure they cut when they pulled up before the taverns. No matter how tamely the horses hitched to the big swaying coaches in summer, or to long, covered pungs in winter, plodded along between stops, they were trained as nicely as a trick horse in a circus in the habit of getting away from or fetching up in front of a tavern with great dash and spirit. That was the part of the stage driver's life that gave him distinction. But if a traveller took passage with him at Bangor en route for Presque Isle, especially if it was in the winter time, the glamour of the thing very soon gave way to a realization of the exposure and severe hardship involved in the three days' pilgrimage. Fur coats in those early days were unknown, and the stages generally afforded the traveller only cramped and narrow accommodations. On the way from Bangor toward far-off Aroostook, one of the overnight stops was at Winn, and from that point the start in the morning, no matter if the temperature was far below zero, had to be made at four o'clock, and there was a ride of fourteen miles to the famous inn at Moulunkus, kept by Reed. There have never been before or since such breakfasts as the frozen and famished wayfarers got at Reed's, but between these smoking feasts at the different tav-

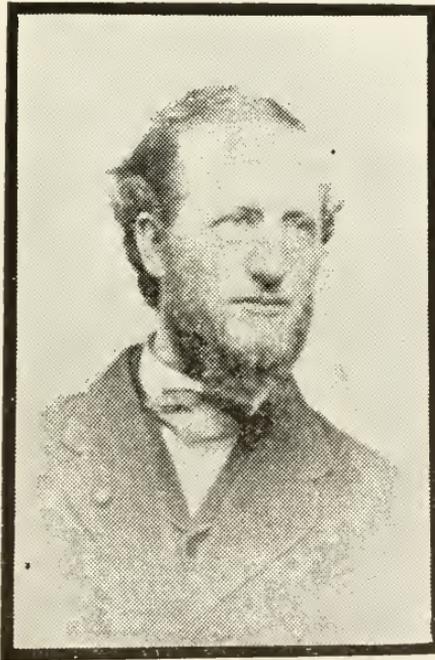
erns, there was cold and wretchedness enough to make up with compound interest. Strange to say the old stage drivers, whose everyday experience was in making these long and tedious trips, in winter time filled with all the exposure of an Arctic expedition, thrived on their hard jobs. One of them, Mr. Hiram B. Forbes, is still living in Presque Isle at this writing (1922). A famous stage driver on the old Aroostook road some sixty odd years ago, up to a few years ago Mr. Forbes was hale and hearty. He is an interesting landmark of the pioneer days, and as he is clear in his faculties, an interesting man to talk to.



HIRAM FORBES
One of the Old-Time Stage Drivers

It is pertinent to this narrative, in part the history and in part, more correctly described as the story of Aroostook, to give a hasty, and as needs must be, imperfect picture of life as it was lived in the primitive days. There was then no tangible thing in the County, or within reach of its people, which justified them in looking forward to any brilliant future for this great Northern region of Maine. There was no railroad, nor any

reasonable prospect of one. There was neither telegraph nor telephone. There was no starch factory, and nothing to lead any citizen, no matter how far-seeing he might be, to single out any special line of farming as likely to be one on which the County could build up a great prosperity. The people were poor—many of them extremely poor. There were no banks, and practically no money in circulation. The little that found its way into the County was generally Provincial money, disbursed by the lumber operators for labor and supplies. In Presque Isle and surrounding towns in the period between the close of the Civil War and the memorable panic of 1873, notes issued by a large lumber firm of St. John, known as "Jewett & Pitcher" money, were in wide circulation. With the advent of the panic



GEORGE GOSLIN

A Famous Driver of the Pioneer State Teams

this firm failed, and to the general conditions of stringency which prevailed, the collapse of this concern, which rendered its notes worthless, was an added disaster in the area within which this substitute money circulated. The farmers affected by

the disaster suddenly found the little money in their possession of no more value than so much Confederate "scrip."

Business was done on an interminable system of "trusting," and naturally on big margins of profit on goods. The latter was, indeed, a necessary incident of the endless drag of credit. As a further consequence, owing to the poverty of the people, the dearth of money, or any means of getting money accommodation through organized channels such as we know today, people were the prey of extortionate money lenders, who were sometimes veritable Shylocks. As a result the community was ruled over in a sense by the old-time traders and the old-time money-lending barons. Of the two the old-time merchants deserve the kinder mention. They were almost without exception strong, positive characters, such as one would naturally expect to find in business leaders under pioneer conditions. But under a rough exterior they often had kind hearts. While they did not season any of their good deeds with soft words or sentiment, some of them kept many a poor fellow on his feet, and many a family from suffering in times of bitter poverty and struggle.



HON. DAVID DUDLEY
One of the Pioneer Business Men
of North Aroostook

Just how barren of pleasure, satisfaction and convenience, as we measure the blessings of life today, were the homes of

the early pioneers, it is hard for us to conceive. Their chief aim and object in life, in the absence of the variety of occupations and pastimes that distract our modern attention, and dissipate our minds, seemed to be to concentrate all their energies on making farms and raising children. How great a success they made of both these lines of endeavor, the wealth of Aroostook today in broad and fertile farms, and in the splendid people who have descended from these simple, sturdy ancestors, abundantly testifies.



PRESQUE ISLE'S FIRST HOTEL
The Old Reed Tavern

In reviewing the pioneer days, one can better imagine the conditions of life then existing, by calling to mind some of the things the pioneer folk totally lacked, and the paucity and simplicity of the elementary things then which go to make up home and community life. To all intents and purposes they were without money, and in place of money there was a system of barter of the few things they produced for the few things they must necessarily have in order, not to live in the sense we understand living, but merely to exist. Nothing was bought for cash, and when the rare exception occurred that a thing was not obtained on credit, it was paid for either in labor or in some such product of labor as came from the forest, such as shaved cedar shingles, or from the soil, usually in the shape of buckwheat or livestock. The houses which sheltered the pioneer

families, and the barns which housed their stock, were log cabins and hovels, as they were called, chinked with moss. The furniture, of the simplest and rudest kind, was fashioned mostly by the axe, the draw-shave, the saw and hammer. The clothing of everyone, from the skin out, was home knit and home woven, and from the wool on the sheeps' backs to the garments on the backs of the family, the labor, except for the process that the carding mill had a part in, was done by the hands of the settlers themselves. In like manner, their food came from the new farm, the woods and the rivers and streams. They could not ordinarily have lacked a substantial and nourishing bill-of-fare, for they had pork and poultry of their own raising, the youngsters of the usually large family broods, contributed fish occasionally, there was venison in, and probably out of season, buck-wheat bread and pancakes, butter and molasses in abundance.

They had few books, no newspapers, must needs have been almost wholly unacquainted with what was going on outside the great wilderness their homes were buried in, their world was a sparsely settled neighborhood bounded by a few miles, at first school privileges were of the crudest and most limited kind, and they were ministered to spiritually only by the itinerant preachers who came and went on uncertain rounds from neighborhood to neighborhood. They conquered the forest with the axe, and the axe was the one indispensable implement which preceded all other agencies of progress and development. With it they felled the trees and junked up their big trunks in preparation for the piling bees and "frolics." When the time came to make the great transition from the log cabin to a frame house, the axe shaped all the timbers of the structure out of the rough logs. When the barn framer had done his work, and the great event of a "raising" took place, after the bents were raised into an erect position by "shores," the boldest and best men climbed the unsteady skeleton, axes in hand. Up went the pioneer athletes from one piece of timber to another, balancing themselves on the small girts and the big beams, while they caught the wooden pins tossed up to them from those on the ground. Then with swinging axe blows they drove the pins through the tenants in the morticed timbers, one after another, up to the "top plate" timber, the dizziest perch of all in a barn raising job. One of the pioneer barns was not a modern skyscraper in stature, but a fall from the "purline plate" would have been no joke, and it was only the picked men of the neighborhood who could walk about on the small cross timbers and

the beams at such a height, as unconcerned as if on the ground, driving pins and spikes into place.

There is nothing in modern city or village building that duplicates a big barn raising, and even farm barn raisings have ceased in these modern days to be thrilling and spectacular, as it has got to be the fashion to put them up in a tame, piecemeal way, after the manner of most building construction work.

The pleasantest recollection of the pioneer days was the spirit and habit of neighborhood co-operation and mutual helpfulness. This applied to all the heavy tasks of clearing the land and other stages of pioneer development. It was in evidence in all emergencies of sickness and need, indoors and out, and under the pressure of their peculiar necessities the early settlers were, by common consent, in their different neighborhoods, so many mutual aid societies. Everything in the shape of service and commodities for farm, home and household use, was cheerfully exchanged and swapped about. This even went so far as to include the ailments of different neighborhoods. If there was measles in one neighborhood and chicken pox in another, any danger of a settlement getting a monopoly of either was averted by visiting and carrying these and other complaints back and forth.

If it was impossible in outside-the-home tasks to work alone in such jobs as barn raisings, it would have been harder within the home to raise the big families, without leaning on kind-hearted neighbors for aid. With a whole neighborhood of solicitous maternity helpers, children were ushered into the world, so that that wrinkle in pioneer home life was easily and smoothly ironed out, without any of the painful and insolvency threatening complications of the present time. If it had been the rule to mulct the pioneer family in case of every birth with the innumerable financial burdens and exactions which surround maternity today, Aroostook would have been nipped in the bud in its pioneer stage of development, and would simply have gotten nowhere.

They had few doctors, no trained nurses, and most fortunately of all, no specialists. Appendicitis, which lies in ambush at every turn in the present degenerate days, was unknown in the pioneer community. We are now so far removed from the actual conditions and experiences of that long-past period in our County's history that we can not exactly tell how much wastage there was in the prolific families of the early days. It may be claimed that the early settlements were so fruitful of offspring

that marked increase of population was maintained in spite of a greater relative mortality than is the rule today. We do not believe, however, that this is a true statement of the case. In all probability, they thrived, and were to a greater extent immune from modern ills, because their habits of life were more simple and natural. Like the wild animal life around them, they lived closer to and more in accord with nature, and were in harmony with their simple, fresh and invigorating environment.

So far as their farming was concerned, while it was necessarily crude, and sometimes unintelligently carried on, there was always in that, as in other things, a gradual progress and improvement to a higher level. The pioneer followed impulses, sometimes far stronger and purer for being simple of mind and heart than ours, and they led up to better and higher things. Few there are who have not seen this reflected in the faces and the words and acts of the oldtime fathers and mothers, who were refined and ennobled by their lives of honest toil, their humble devotion and their consecration to various duties, as they were called upon to perform them, in their relations to home and community.

CHAPTER III.

One Of The Best Type Of Aroostook Pioneer Farmers

In this connection it may be pertinent to the narrative to cite an individual instance, illustrating the best type of Aroostook farmer citizenship, as it was in evidence in our County in the early days. The party referred to does not represent precisely the average farmer of those days, but was rather in the class of our County's pioneer leaders. His career, however, reflects what the County as a whole has accomplished in the way of material achievement, and to a large extent what it represents in citizenship.

We refer to Hon. Elisha E. Parkhurst, who, though a thoroughly up-to-date citizen of our County now, has an active experience in our community dating back to the days before the Civil War. Mr. Parkhurst, who is a native of the fine old town of Unity, Waldo County, came to Aroostook first in 1857. Two years before that he took his first dip into politics by casting his vote for John C. Fremont, the "Pathfinder," for President. Like most of those who turned their faces toward Aroostook in