

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

those days, Mr. Parkhurst had no capital save health, energy, good habits, and an unlimited reservoir of capacity for the kind of old fashioned days' works common to those times.



HON. ELISHA E. PARKHURST

One of the Oldest Residents and Most Prominent
Citizens of North Aroostook

His feet got planted on Aroostook soil originally by accident. He did not have in his mind when he wandered up here into the wilderness, the thought of taking up a farm and settling down. No one who meets Mr. Parkhurst now, staid, dignified, prosperous—full of years, and justly full of honors, and the meed of public respect for what he has been and what he has done in Aroostook, would think that when he made his debut in Aroostook in 1857 it was as a tin peddler, a vender of tinware, taking in exchange for his merchandise, sheep pelts, fur, hides, etc. But after he got here, and he had taken soundings of the deep, rich loam, which, in the intervening sixty odd years, has made Maysville famous and wealthy, he concluded that was a good enough place for him to pitch his tent. He stopped buying sheep pelts and furs, struck up a bargain with the then owner, Augustus Allen, son of the late Squire John Allen, and bought what has since been known as the Ferguson farm, a tract of land of the regulation size, 160 acres. It was a barter transaction, as

all business then was. The man he bought of liked the looks of a horse Mr. Parkhurst had, and after the deal was sweetened up by adding to the horse the tempting bait of a hundred dollars in "greenbacks," as they were then called, the offer was accepted, and a deed was passed for the 160 acre tract. Mr. Parkhurst built a frame house and added to the clearing of five acres he found on his purchase, five acres more. He stayed there until 1865, when he sold the Ferguson farm and bought the homestead farm, where his son, Vincent Parkhurst, now lives. On this lot when he bought it there were six acres cleared, and a growing crop of two acres of wheat, three acres of oats and an acre of potatoes. One hundred and seventy five dollars swung the deal in this case, with half the crop thrown in. There being no buildings on the place, Mr. Parkhurst got busy and built a log house, which was his home for nine years. Then he made arrangements with Mr. Jos. Hines, who then ran a general store where the Klein Block, Presque Isle, now stands, to finance him. This meant that Mr. Hines was to carry him with such supplies as he needed from planting to harvest. This backing given by Mr. Hines included the enterprise of clearing twenty acres. This was felled, but the first year the season did not favor getting a burn, and the unfinished job went over to another year, when ten acres more were felled, making a chopping of thirty acres. Then the pioneer enterprise was rewarded by a good clean burn, the thirty acres was piled and further cremated, and when nothing further remained on the soil but ashes, and nothing hindered but the black stumps, the piece was sown to grain. This was repeated the following year, and then the patch was seeded to clover and timothy. The Civil War was then on. Mr. Parkhurst harvested 3,000 lbs. of clover seed and sold it at 40 cents a pound. Five hundred pounds of the crop were disposed of at home, fifteen hundred pounds were marketed in Woodstock, the buyers being the Woodstock Agricultural Society, and the balance was teamed to Bangor. The proceeds of the sales, \$1,200, was probably the biggest crop sale that had been made in Aroostook up to that time. It enabled Mr. Parkhurst to clean his slate with his backer, Mr. Hines. It left him, after he had done so, a roll of \$200, and he went home happier than many a man in these modern days is when he banks \$20,000 as the clean-up of some big potato plant in a banner year. It may be interesting to note in passing that when Mr. Parkhurst teamed his grass seed to Bangor, on the return trip he hauled back a load of hardware and stoves for Walter Bean, who then kept a

store on North Main Street, Presque Isle. His freight charge for this load was \$3.00 a hundred, and it paid the expenses of the round trip, which took twenty days.

Mr. Parkhurst had now reached such stature as a farmer that he needed a barn, and the year of the grass seed deal he built one. He went into the woods and hewed the timber for the frame himself. It was what the neighbors called a whopper of a barn, the biggest in the town, and probably in the county—42x63, with an eight foot basement. After it was boarded in with spruce boards that cost \$7 a thousand, it was clapboarded with No. 1 pine clapboards that cost \$20 a thousand, and the roof was shingled with the best grade of shaved cedar shingles. His master builder cost him \$2 a day and board, the other rough carpenters under this expert he hired for a dollar a day.

Mr. Parkhurst's pioneer farming schedule called for the clearing of ten acres a year. Some years this went to fifteen, and one year to twenty-five. His twenty-five acre clearing was all sown to grain, which was harvested with a crew of dollar a day men with hand sickles. The crew of six could reap and stuke two acres a day. The wages of the crew was paid in store orders on storekeeper Hines, and as it was war time, with everything about present day level—cotton for example, at 40 cents a yard, molasses at \$1.00 a gallon, flour at \$20, the dollar a day farm hands whose families were generally as large as their wages were small, had to do some figuring to make both ends meet. One thing, however, helped, and that was that clothing was practically all home-spun—knitting and home weaving achieving the miracle of putting clothes on the family's backs, after the "H. C. L." in the grocery line had left but a mere pittance in the way of salvage out of the dollar a day income.

Lower Maine and portions of Massachusetts in those days looked to Aroostook for what was called "pea-vine" clover seed, somewhat the same as other sections look to Aroostook for potato seed. There was quite a trade in grass seed, and this was supplemented with oats for the lumber woods. Live stock was also raised, and in those days drovers from what was called "outside" came into Aroostook and gathered up droves of cattle and sheep for the Brighton Market.

Mr. Parkhurst's connection with seed grass husbandry is interesting. Always alert to improve old and accustomed methods of husbandry, and to develop new lines, he learned of experiments that were being made in New Brunswick in raising alsike clover, and in 1868 he procured of a Woodstock dealer 10

pounds, which the dealer had imported from England. This he sowed, raising a crop of 150 lbs., sowing the product again. He then began distributing it, finding a market for it in Bangor and Portland. He filled orders to seed firms in those cities and elsewhere up to three tons annually, and also introduced it to Aroostook farmers. That was the beginning of the use of Alsike clover in New England, making a contribution to the husbandry of Aroostook, of the State, and other New England States, of the greatest value and importance.

About the year 1873 Mr. Parkhurst took up the breeding of thoroughbred cattle, choosing Shorthorns. He made a very bold investment in this line, and continued it successfully until 1883, when potato raising side-tracked everything else in the minds of Aroostook farmers. His enterprise, nevertheless, was of permanent benefit to the County, and as a campaign of education in the department of stock husbandry, and through the distribution of thoroughbred animals resulting from his enterprise, Aroostook was very substantially benefitted.

When potato raising came to the front Mr. Parkhurst turned his attention to that and the kindred industry of starch making, in 1886 building a starch factory at Parkhurst which he conducted successfully ten years. Later he went into raising and dealing in seed potato stock and for a considerable period was prominent in that line, operating several farms and raising and shipping large quantities of seed potatoes to Southern markets. His activity in this field has only recently been narrowed down, and he is still active in the potato game, and in looking after fruit raising and other interests he has acquired on the Pacific Coast.

Mr. Parkhurst has found time to make his mark in public affairs of the Town, County and State, as the following record, omitting minor local offices of trust, will show:

From 1871 to 1873 he was a member of the State Board of Agriculture. He was a member of the State House of Representatives in 1877-1878. Served in the Senate in 1883-1885, was a member of the Maine State College of Agriculture four years; was Chaplain of the Maine State Grange 1878-1881; was the first Master of the Aroostook Pomona Grange, and was Trustee of the Northern Aroostook Agricultural Society from 1870 to 1896, a period of 26 years.

All in all it is a remarkable record of sound, fruitful and highly successful citizenship, and we think Mr. Parkhurst may be rightly cited as illustrating what is typical in the best of Aroostook progress and development.