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Reel 119B

- 1-7. Local anecdotes told by Mr. Alvah McMinnon, Tata-
magouche about the amusing sayings
of local characters.
- 7-27. Talk on Lumbering by Mr. Alvah McKinnon who had
been a lumberman for eleven years.
- 27-28. Talk on Calling Moose by Alvah McKinnon.
- 28-end. Witch story told by Alvah McKinnon and finished
in note book. Witnessed in Liverpool, N.S.

I heard one onetime about a farmer in the west. He started out in the spring to cut his grain and when he got to the end he started cutting and he got home in the fall.

Told by Mr. Alvah McKinnon, Tatamagouche
Heard in the west.

The old people round here they used to have some funny sayings. There's older people than me used to know them. The old people would be telling somebody else about it and they'd make a funny speech about it, and somebody would pick that up and tell it to somebody and keep it a-going.

A man by the name of Eph he didn't go visiting very much. He'd been away for a visit and he'd come home, and somebody said,

"You don't go visiting very much. Were you ever out of Nova Scotia?"

"No, only the two weeks I spent visiting Uncle Eph." (That was two miles away.)

A man from Cape Breton went to Boston and he couldn't talk English and he got lost and they asked him where he come from and he said,

"Lost man never before," and they said

"Where did you belong?" and he said,

"Lost man never before." That's all he could say.

There was a Hielandman and he went looking for the bow piece for to built a boat, or a vessel - and he was telling a fellow about it and he said,

"I looked two weeks and a fortnight for a schooner's nose, and when I got it it was crooked too many."

There was an old man from up the river here. He had a son working in the lumber woods and he got hurt and he went home and they asked him what happened, and his son's name was Lem, and he said, "There was a lem fell and hit Lem on the head, and he had to go home."

Talk on Lumbering

The lumber season lasted up here generally from October till March or April. We'd stay in the woods mostly, in the winter. I worked eleven winters in the woods, straight. I worked different winters. We'd go all the way from two miles away to twenty-two, some winters on the mountains, some winters handy home. One winter I hauled deal. I left the first of December and

I didn't come home till the last of April. I drove a team all winter. We'd get up about half-past four or five o'clock. For breakfast we'd generally have hash - pork and potatoes chopped up, and all kinds of cookies, bread and biscuits and tea. Around 12 o'clock we'd have beef and potatoes and turnips, a wood's dinner. Very often a bread or rice pudding. Some places you'd have a good variety in pork, fish and so on, portaged in with teams. In the evening we'd have hash again generally and bread and cake and cookies and cake. We didn't have porridge in the woods.

We'd have to be out at daylight. Working in the woods you go out with the stars and come in with the stars. We had an hour at noon. At night you had to be in bed at nine with all the lights out. Before nine we played cards and sang songs and somebody played the fiddle mebbe. We put in the ~~the~~ evening till nine o'clock. Once in a while we ~~put~~ got into a camp where somebody would step-dance. Some winters you'd get into a camp where there was a lot of music, and somebody would dance and we'd have quite an evening till nine o'clock. Generally had a fiddle and a guitar, and once in a while a mouth organ (always called a mouth organ). Sometimes somebody might bring in a gramophone. Once in a while somebody'd be able to sing a song or two. Mostly played cards - forty fives or auction forty-fives. That is the big game in Nova Scotia.

There'd be a woods boss in charge of the men and to look after the woods. He'd most always stay in for the whole season. The boss that owned the lumber was generally there and he'd have a man to look after the men in the woods and the woods, and he kept everything going. Next to the wood's boss everybody was on their own from there. The wood's boss was the foreman. He was the river boss, the foreman in the song The Jam at Gerry's Rocks.

There's always a different crowd you know, the choppers and yarders and haulers. The wood's boss generally looked after everything and seen that everything was kept going. I chopped some winters and some winters I hauled deal with horses.

I forgot to mention the beans. That's one of the staple foods in the woods. We generally had beans once a day with one meal anyway, either breakfast or supper - beans baked in molasses. Generally put them on top of the stove and parboil them and put some molasses in and let them bake, in the oven for quite a while. They might be in there all night, and have them for breakfast hot. They were good. I cooked some myself in the woods, and I sat up different nights and baked beans all night for the men. They always baked their own bread, the cooks. They raised it generally with yeast. Them days they'd make their own yeast, the cooks. Some of them made it with pressed yeast and potato water. It made good bread. Pressed yeast is the ~~xxxxxx~~

leaves pressed into a block and you take so many of them out and put in the yeast and soak it out. These are leaves of hops. Hop leaves and you soak it out and that makes the yeast for the bread. It isn't difficult if you know how to do it. I don't think they ever use them nowadays. I never see any; it's all yeast cakes. They used to get the hops in half pound packages I think and they'd cut them up and put them in a dish and soak them out and make mix potato water with them generally and put that in your bread and you'll have good bread. Generally let it rise over night and bake it in the morning.

The hash, you take the meat and grind it up or chop it up and you take the potatoes and chop them all up and put them in a big pan and set them on the stove and chop them all up together. Generally use a can for chopping, a big ~~xxxxx~~ pan and a little round can for chopping and it chops them up fine, everything. Generally a little pork in it to make it fat and put it in a big dish and set it on the table. In the woods everything is set right on the table for the men, and when they come in they just set down and go to work eatin'. There'll be two or three dishes and a long table, and the tea is generally put into big pitchers on the table and they can help theirself. Everything. Set the table before the men ever sits down. If anything's needed they'll ask for it. They all have good appetites. They need plenty of food and generally got it most places. The cook was the main thing in the woods, a good cook. Lots of times you didn't get a good cook, and then there would be trouble.

Everybody generally went home for Christmas, and they'd just leave one or two men in for to look after the camp and to look after the horses. But as a rule all the men went home for Christmas and stayed maybe two or three days after Christmas. The men were mostly all back in the woods before New Year. We didn't celebrate the coming in of the New Year; we'd generally be working. No firing of guns, no drinking of toasts. The drinking was all over. The drinking was all done for Christmas. The New Year was just another day to work. We'd generally be out by Easter time.

On Sundays we'd lie around and read or maybe take a walk in the woods, if it was a fine day and look around. Maybe look for moose. Somebody was always hunting some day or other. There was never a service held in any camp I was ever in. We generally lied around and slept and had some papers or books to read. We didn't sing songs very often on Sunday. We never played cards on Sunday that I ever seen. We kept Sunday pretty good in the woods, any place I was ever in. Somebody might go huntin', that's about all. Of course they wasn't allowed to. Lots of times we would go travelling through the woods if it was a fine Sunday, and get lost maybe. Travel around for hours. I've been lost enough to have to walk five miles out of me way to get back. We'd get out to a clearin' we recognized and find our way out. If we didn't, and it was a dark day, it would be pretty hard. If you didn't know the woods it would be bad if it was gettin' dark or anything. No, we couldn't tell by the bark on the trees when it was north and we didn't

carry a compass very often. If they strayed in after dark there was stars, and if they see the north star they can follow that. Take their course from that and that will bring them out somewhere. We didn't have any fear of getting lost. You knew you'd come out somewhere sometime. Men got lost quite often. Different ones got lost in the night. I know one man and when we found him his feet were froze, and his hands was froze and he couldn't find his way back. We rubbed them with snow - kept snow on them- and we'd get him to a doctor.

When people cut themselves we'd generally pour on a cupful of iodine. If it was bad we'd have to get them out to a doctor. Iodine was generally the medicine for cuts in the woods then. No, I never heard of anyone charming for bleeding or for anything. I've cut myself many times in the woods, and that's all that was used - iodine. Tie it up till it got better.

Generally there was somebody who'd been around the woods a lot who would know what to do if there was a cut. A lot of them didn't care if there was a barber but there was generally someone who could cut hair and shave if you wanted it. Mostly everybody shaved Sunday. Somebody would cut their hair on a stormy day. Maybe somebody would let their beard grow all winter, but not very often.

Very often they didn't care very much about anybody drinking in the woods. Drinkin' around where there's sharp axes isn't very good. They never had much drinkin' unless it was Saturday night or Sunday. Some of the boys might get out and get some, but I never seen much drinkin' around the woods. It wasn't general to have it in the lumber woods. Too many sharp tools around. Wouldn't stand for it at all. Lumbering was quite dangerous. It's always dangerous with a tree fallin' or a limb fallin' off and strikin' you. Cuttin' with an ax or a saw, or a log breakin' on you. No, around here we didn't take logs down the river in the spring, not where I ever worked. We hauled the lumber to a mill and had them sawed. We didn't have danger from river drivin'.

Yes, I used to hear the song Peter Emberley quite a lot. No, I don't think it was a favourite lumbering song. Harry Dunn was sang quite a lot, and Foreman Young Munro (Jam at Gerry's Rocks). No, I never heard that Harry Dunn was a bad luck song. I used to know Young Charlotte, but I never heard that it was a bad luck song.

In some places they were superstitious. Some places. Some people are always superstitious. Friday was a poor day to go to work on. A poor day to start anything they always claimed. Some men in the woods won't leave their ax stickin' in a stump all night. I don't know what it's supposed to be. You just leave it standing up by the last log you've cut, or standin' by a stump. Most every chopper liked to use his own ax. I never liked anyone else to touch my ax. I don't know exactly why, but I never felt it was right. And I never wanted to handle another man's ax, only my own.

For one reason, there's no two men uses their ax the same and they don't chop the same. You might pick another man's ax up and it wouldn't feel right to you, and you might cut yourself. If a man did leave his ax in a stump there was nothing he could do to get rid of the bad luck. Maybe it wasn't bad luck anyway, but just the way they felt about them things. There was no good luck way to fell a tree - that was mostly skill to fall them the right way. There's a lot you have to watch when you're fallin' big trees. If they fall right you don't get hurt, and the chum that's with you don't get hurt.

Reel 119B 27- 28

Moose Calling Talk

There's three letters that you have to sound. You have to have a birch bark horn, and there's three letters, I, O, U. That's the real moose call. I'm not very good but I've heard them called and I've done it myself, and I've brought them out. There's a certain time of the year that it don't take much of a call to bring them right to you, around September.

Witch Story.

I was to a house in Liverpool one winter. I was down there visiting my mother and I got acquainted with a young boy and one evening I was out and I met him and he says, "Come on down to my uncle's." His uncle was sick in bed. So I went down and went in. It was cold winter in the night, and his uncle's bed was right across the window and the window was up, and the old lady was at the stove and she had a big pot settin on the stove and you could hear something going clickedy click, clickedy click, and her chaating somethin' and talkin' and saying something and something strikin' the pot inside and her stirrin' with a big stick, and she stirred there and stirred and talked, and after a while she stopped and she went over and put the window down by her husband's bed. We stayed there a little while, and after a while we left and the young feller says, "Did you notice what me aunt was doin' when we went in?"

"I seen her with somethin' on the stove, stirrin' and stirrin'. What was in the pot?"

"It was buttermilk in the pot and she had horseshoes in it and she was trying to drive the witch out of the window."

All stories on 119B told by Mr. Alwah MacKinnon,
Tatamagouche