

## Reel 148 B

- 1 - 15 Ox Pulling by Freeman Leopold. This is a talk on the use of oxen in Nova Scotia and how they are used in ox pulling contests. Mr. Leopold is from New Ross
- 15 - 21 Ox Pulling by Mr. Lawrence Keddy, Port Williams giving his experiences as a teamster.
- 21-24 Ox Pulling with Ferman McDow, Blue Mountain, winner at the previous night's contest.
- 24-end Short talk about French use of Oxen followed by examples of ox pulling. Directions given by the teamsters are heard here.



Question: Well, I'd like to have the oldest man, now who is the oldest? Who has been at it the longest time? The ox pulling?

A

Answer: This fellah . Freeman's the oldest.

Q

How long have you been attending these ox pulling contests?

Oh, I guess 25 years.

You've been going to ox pulls? How far do you go?

Oh, I go 20 miles. To Windsor is 25 miles, or Kentville or Port Williams

Do you take the oxen by truck?

Yes, take them by truck.

What do you get out of it?

A lot of fun (much laughter ). Get some money.

Enough to make it worth your while?

Oh, yes. Go mostly for the fun.

How big are your oxen?

My oxen six feet and a half.

What can they pull?

Well, around 40 or 50 hundred.

Do you find much difference in the places where you go to attend the contests?

Oh, it amounts about all the same. They're all carried on in the same line.

And what do you pull?

What on the drag you mean? We use a drag. It's made of plank, goes on the ground. No runners, No wheels, just flat and we have the sand in boxes.

And how large are the boxes?

About 2 to 3 hundred. They are made of wood.

Are they all the same weight, or do they vary?

They vary from 100 to 300. We start with half a ton or 1500. Keep loading on 'til we get on to where we get stuck. Sometimes we get on to ninety hundred, five ton or something like that.

What is the biggest weight that has been carried, do you know?

Well, around five ton.



A; The only way there's any neck yoke used here is if there's was little calves, that's the only way neck yokes is used, just to break them .

Q; Then there's along pole that runs from the yoke to the drag, isn't there? What do you call that?

A; Boom pole.

Q; And are these chains especially made to fasten the boom pole?

A; Yes.

Q; Where are they made?

A; They're made at the blacksmith's.

Q; In New Ross?

A; Yes

Q; And the bells and the pads, the leather pads, are they made in New Ross?

A; They're generally made in Bridgewater. The bells is probably made in Bridgewater, The bell maker's.

(Much sound of ox bells)

Q; The teamsters are always very much attached to their oxen, aren't they?

A; Oh, yes/.

Q; Do the oxen respond to kind treatment?

A; Oh, yes they want to be used good.

Q; Do they show any affection? I mean, you're all so fond of them, you're always very ~~kind~~ proud of them, but do they know when you come in the barn?

A; Well, oh yes, they know, when they can be broken to mind. Back-a-gee and back at haw and so on.

Q; But you really get fond of them?

A; Oh, yes/

Q; Have you any idea how long pulling has been going on in Nova Scotia?

A; Oh about fifteen, ( voice in background " more than that!") Windsor is the oldest exhibition, it must be forty years since they started hauling oxen in Windsor. It's near about ~~xx~~ forty years since ox pulling started here in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Chase, speaking in the background, "It's got bigger since then." It got larg

Q; How did it start do you know?



A; Exhibitions.

Q; To draw the farmers together and give them something interesting to do? I suppose it started in a small way did it?

A; (Mr. Chase) Oh yes, in a small way. I know when Bridgewater started there were just a few yoke of oxen and horses.

Q; When would that be?

A; That's about 30 years ago. Windsor is the oldest exhibition in Nova Scotia.

Voice in background "This one started with the second war (Port Williams) to raise money for the Red Cross, about 15 years ago.

Q; Won't you come a little closer and tell that?

(Much laughter.) Mr. Chase you started it here didn't you in Port Williams, didn't you?

A; No, the women kinda started it to raise money for the Red Cross. They started a contest in that King's county, horses and ~~xxx~~ oxen pulled to raise money for the Red Cross, Second World War.

Q; In these ox pulls you alternate, you have horses for awhile and then oxen, haven't you?

A; Horses generally pull first. The people seem to want to see the oxen and that's what holds the crowd, so we pull the horses first.

Q; The people prefer the oxen, do they?

A; Seem to.

Q; But it's the same principle that you use for both?

A; Yes. (Numerous oxen bells in the background)

Voice in the background, " You'd better get Lawrence Keddy up, on ~~making~~ <sup>hauling</sup> pulp wood."

Q; Last night when you had the ox pull here it rained ~~xxxx~~ it rained didn't it and yet when I left there was quite a crowd standing around. How long did they stay? Did they see it through?

A; Oh, yes, they stayed 'til it was finished, around two o'clock, between two and three.

Q; How many people would you say were here? two or three hundred?

A; Oh, no more than that, five hundred ----- twenty-five hundred.

Q; Twenty-five hundred to three thousand through the day. How many would have stayed then until the end?

A; Oh, the crowd hung right on 'til late.

Q; Most of the people who were here would be farmers, would they?

A; No, not all. Not all farmers.

Q; They wouldn't have oxen themselves would they?



A; No, just the farmers has/ oxen.

Q; When you're doing your work on the farm, do you talk to the oxen?

A; Oh, yes, yes, you have to talk to 'em.

Q; Of course, you give your orders gee-haw and that sort of thing, but then do you sort of hold conversation with them, while they're working?

A; Well, all the conversation is you're working and teasing

Q; But when you pull you talk to them, don't you? Well, that's what I'd like to hear. When you're pulling what directions do you give to them, do you get very excited  
KX about it?

A; Oh no, some people does, but not all.

Q; So you?

A; No.

Q; I think it would nice if we did a little pulling and you talked to the oxen the way you do when you're trying to encourage them. Do you pull with them?

A; You just hold on to their horns probably.

Q; Do you do any pulling?

A; No. Oh, no.

Q; All the pulling is done by the milk cattle? But they respond to your orders? And what do you say when you want them to pull extra hard?

A; Oh, yes. Well, gee-bright or haw.

Q;; Can they tell from the tone of your voice?

A; Oh, yes, they know your voice.

Q; Well, I think we'd better have a little hauling and get some of this on the tape.

Talk with Mr. Freeman Leopold and others at Port Williams recorded by  
Helen Creighton, August 1955.



## "Ox Pulling" by Lawrence Keddy

- Q; You <sup>have led</sup> haul wood for the Mersey Pulp Co. have you Mr. Keddy?
- A; There's been high as many as around about a 190 teams there in all the camps. They had twenty camps opened in one winter. That's in Queen's County. We went to Middleton on trucks some years and some years we drove them down to Middleton and went ~~by~~ then on the train. We drove them down to Middleton and loaded them on the the train and then we went to Caledonia and got off the train and went through woods 32 miles and drove them loose.
- Q; Did you have to go over very rough places?
- A; Yeh, rocks, lakes, swamps and rough country, barren country a lot of it.
- Q; What work were you doing down there?
- A; Hauling pulp wood?
- Q; Horses of course wouldn't be able to do it?
- A; Horses was there, plenty of them. The first year we went down there there was more oxen then as the years rolled by why the oxen go away and horses come in.
- Q; Horses can do the job just as well, can/ they?
- A; Pretty, well, yes.
- Q; What about this rough country Mr. Chase?
- A; Mr. Chase, "Get Mr. Keddy to tell you about it!"  
Mr. Keddy, "Well, it was rough country, rocks, barrens and swamps we call it and every-  
think like that.
- Q; Was there something special about hauling down there that Mr. Chase wanted you to tell us about?
- A; Nothing ~~special~~ extry. Mr. Chase says, "Ask what time he got out in the morning and how late he stayed at night?"
- Q; What time did you get out in the morning Mr. Keddy?
- A; Well, some mornings we goes out round about generally anywheres after six o'clock, especially working for Harold Messenger.
- Q; How late did you work at night?
- A;; Just according, somet/imes we'd get in around seven o'clock, sometimes it would be five, just accordin' to what luck you had in the hauling. Sometimes eight--Mr. Chase. There had been places there with eight I guess.
- Q; It's a long day, did they pay you well?
- A; Decent, about the best company I've worked for in this ~~country~~ country, taken for a company.
- Q; But the oxen are going out are they as beasts of burden?
- A; Well, in some ways, in some ways I don't know, there seems to be as many this year



as there was last at exhibitions, but they're gone out from years back alot, the last twenty years there was a lot more than there is now, they're just kind of a novelty now, this year and last year I couldn't see any difference, could you?

Q; How do they get the wood hauled now, Mr. Keddy?

A; They haul it with trucks mostly.

Q; Yes, ~~ix~~ but the trucks can't go in through the woods like the oxen can?

A; Well, they cut their wood now in long lenghts and they got rigs on their trucks with cables and they haul them that way now a lot of places, of course a lot of places they start them with horses to get to the ~~xyou~~ road but Mersey got rigs down there they call donkey engines still to yeard the wood but the average is getting beyond now the horses or oxen or anythingelse in the line in the of walking animals.

Q; What food did you have when you were down there at the Mersey plant?

A; Well, we had taters, vegetables and they fed awful well there and there was fish ~~spaw~~ and everything the same as it would be at home only a lot better, more money to buy it with.

Q; Did you live in camps?

A; Yes, the logs, some camps was built, logs standing on there ends up about eight feet then the roof went on, boards and then tar paper.

Q; When was this?

A; Well, it's been back in the neightbour hood when I first went to Mersey, it's about eight-seventeen years.

Q; Are you still going?

A; Not ~~ix~~ this last five years.

Q; They're still of course doing the same work?

A; They're still operating because oxen was our idea and horses and they're getting trucks and donkey engines to do the work with and some places bulldozers and all these things and it cuts it down.

Q; These cattle that we have in Nova Scotia, they're all bred here aren't they? Are they imported?

A; Well, sometimes they bring a gentlemen ox away off but mostly on the average there ~~rise~~ here after they get here. They buy the pure bred away some and bring them here.

Q; From where?

A; Well, you now 'bout gotme, they bring them from the States and I believe from Texas, I heard Ben Cook a couple of years ago when he was alive, he didn't bring them from Texas they come through.

Q; Where are yours from Mr. Chase?

A; Digby County.



- Q: Mr. Leopold, the oxen are classed aren't they? in the contest?
- A: Oh, yess, they're classed for their weight, small oxen, big oxen, they're classed from 2000 to 25 and from 25 to 30 and the heavy oxen all goes in one class--some of these weighs 2 ton, forty hundred.
- Q: Do they start with a small calss?
- A: Yes, they haul the small class, then they haul the medium and then the heavy.
- Q: And the small class could haul how much weight? approximately?
- A: Oh, well, around 40 hundred.
- Q: And the intermediate?
- A: Well, they go up higher, around 50 or 60 and so on and the big ones they run up pretty well in weight, well, they go to ~~ix~~ five tons and horses is the same, light and heavy.
- Q: Are there three calsses of horses?
- A: Yes, three classes.
- Q: What prizes are given for the winners?
- A: Well, all different prizes, they go from ten, someplaces 25 and some as high as 50 dollars. And they give pads for hauling off, ox pads. They give bridles for horses and so on.
- Q: And how are the prizes presented? Is there any ceremony?
- A: No, not much, someplaces in ox pulls they give silver cups, for the winners. Windsor, Bridgewater, and different places.
- Q: With the name inscribed?
- A: Yes, you can have it -- I have taken oxen to Maine and pulled them there at their fairs.
- Q: What prizes would they have?
- A: Well, they go up to one hundred dollars for first prize.
- Q: And do they have much the same system of hauling?
- A: Well, a little different system of hauling but it all amounts to about the same. They have the weights practically the same as we, they cut it out of stone over there. We start there with full load, that's all the difference I see and you pull there for five minutes and whoever can pull the furthest in five minutes gets the prize. We start here with a light load and keep loading on.
- Q: What's the longest you pull?
- A: Fifteen minutes.
- Q: You're not pulling all that time, are you?



A; No, that is your time in the ring.

Q; You're adding all the time. And the flat drag causes friction, doesn't it/  
which holds the team back.

A; Yes, it holds pretty hard.



"Ox Pulling" with Ferman McDow.

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Q; You were the winner last night, were you?

A; That's what they tell me.

Q; And what is your name?

A; Ferman McDow, from Blue Mountain. I was in the intermediate class. My oxen weighed 2860. They won pound for pound over the heavy classes.

Q; How old are you?

A; Twenty-two. Been hauling about 4 years.

Q; You've been going to these ox pulls for 4 years and is this the first time you've won.

A; Oh, no, I've won before ~~and~~ the first time I ever won a champion.

Q; How much did you pull last night to win the championship?

A; About seventy hundred, last night.

Q; What was your prize?

A; A set of pads, a nice set of pads.

Q; Well, you'll be very proud of those. Blue Mountain, how far is that?

A; About twenty miles from here towards New Ross. I work here, I work for Mr. Chase.

Q; Did you practice them?

A; Yes, I had them on the drag four times, before I brought them down here

Q; Oh, I see you practice for these contests, do you?

A; Get 'em used to pullin'.

Q; How long do you practice, when do you start?

A; You practice for a half an hour. I started last Tuesday night

Q; Just about a week before.

A; Couple of nights I was away and I didn't get them on the drags.

Q; Do the crowds bother them?

A; No, they don't seem to.

Q; You stay with your own team, don't you?

A; Yes



Q; What about the French at Metegan do they go in for any of these contests?

A; Not near so big.

Q; Do they haul them the same way?

A; Yes

Q; Do they yoke their oxen the same way?

A; Yes, anymore than their yokes is a little more flatter yoke than what we have here in New Ross.

Q; And lighter in weight?

A; Mr. Leopold nods assent.

Q; Otherwise is there any difference?

A; No

Q; Except that they talk to them in French?

A; Yes. The oxen when you're breaking them, they're broken with the whip, they learn the move of the whip and then ~~you~~ when you pull 'em, you raise the whip over their backs and kinda wave it and they know what you mean.

Q; Do you use the whip in the contest when you're pulling?

A; No, you ain't allowed to hit him in the contest. You can wave your whip and use the double of the whip a little.

Q; But you don't touch them with it?

A; No

Mr. Reddy pulls and the directions that he gives to the oxen can be heard.

Q. from man in charge, "What are you going to put on this time, Lawrence?"

A; About 400.

Q; You're dragging about four hundred, are you?

A; No I'm dragging around seventy hundred. ( He pulls and then he calls for another six. He pulls it again, for a start and goes two feet. More weight is added making ninety hundred. He pulls again and there is the pleasant sound of ox bells.

Q; Now that you've really got a lot of weight on and you want them to pull extra hard what do you say to them.

A; Oh, well, you just talk a little louder and holler a little harder.

Mr. Chase says, "Do you want another 50 more hundred on?" "You've got ninety-five hundred on now, what do you say judge, is that all right?"



A; I don't know if it will start or not

Mr. Chase urges him to put on another five hundred. "Oh, let him put it on he wants to try it, there you've got your 5 ton on, go ahead." The oxen pulled and Mr. Keddy thinks that that is enough. (This was not done at an ox pull but as a demonstration for the collector.)

Gulling continues with Ereeman Leopold doing it this time, from New Ross. The previous teamster was Lawrence Keddy, Port Williams.

He has two hundred put on after the first haul which makes him thirty hundred. He is the oldest teamster and his example of hauling is the best on this tape. He adds two hundred more. His directions are mostly whoa and back. They add another two hundred and he pulls again. He gives another direction which sounds like, "Go alive." They put on another 200 which brings it to thirty-eight hundred and he pulls again but his directions are difficult to put on paper. They keep adding weights up to 2 ton and on to double their weight making it forty-four hundred. Each time as weights are added he hauls a little further.