

PART 2

CHAPTER IV

Settlement of the Reach road: why called reach road: story of Mrs. Jacob Weeks, daughter of the first settler on the Reach road, now living at age 81: first school attended; books used; writing on birch bark: first school house: her marriage; first families to settle on Reach road, Andrew Scott, Philo Bean and the Pomeroy family.

The Reach road by conditions connected with the early settlement of the county, also intimately existing at the time of the Aroostook War, make this road the first to be written about.

It derived its name from the bends in the Aroostook River or from the crooks encircling two very high and valuable ridges of land, now parts of the rich and most productive farms including the three towns of Caribou, Fort Fairfield and Presque Isle, which also gave its name to the river.

Aroostook is an Algonquin Indian word signifying "Crooked", as Tobique signifies in the same tongue "Rapid or swift-moving water or river."

I have sought the most reliable authority and information upon the origin of its name to make it clear to our readers and public what appears to me to be a most satisfactory definition. We find in the following bit of history from our valued and ever-willing friend W. T. Ashby. He writes: "I do not know the origin of the word Reach on our river but have always supposed it was the custom in any country to call any smooth, straight piece of land between two angles, 'A reach'" as for instance the long reach on the St. John and the Coulter Reach on the Susquehanna.

"The State Road", so-called, was made from Presque Isle to Fort Fairfield in September 1840. The State put on three crews in different sections early in the spring of that year and before the ground froze they completed the road from the county line near Patten to Fort Fairfield, also the entire length of Fish River to Fort Kent.

Of course we understand that when the Militia came in the winter of 1839, they came through the wood to No. 10 and then down on the ice of the Aroostook and Fish Rivers where they built the forts in February.

The booms were built across both rivers in March, and a year's supply of food and ammunition was stored at each fort to "tide" them over until the road was built; and the road on both sides of the river was built by the settlers who paid for their farms wholly in road work.

In the winter of 1839, the Militia left the ice at the Week's place (in Maysville), and took the broad trail over the Reach Mts. and the Whitney Hill to Fort Fairfield, or the Fitzherbert place as it was then called. This trail had been used by the French and Indians, and also the timber thieves who were then stripping the territory of the Giant Pines. All the cannon supplied were hauled over this trail in the winter 1839, but the trail was abandoned when the State Road was built.

The town line between Maysville and Fort Fairfield runs near the top of the mountain (or ridge) about a mile from the river at that point.

When Windgate Haines came to Aroostook in 1844, he came by way of Houlton and Presque Isle, for there were scattered settlers along this route from whom he obtained fodder for his stock. When Haines came there was no direct road from Alva Corner (Blaine) to Fort Fairfield, but Mr. Haines had a road opened from the Black School house to the Houlton Road in Alva Plantation. This was a State road

THE STORY OF MRS. BERTIE WEEKS
DAUGHTER OF THE FIRST SETTLER

This is the story of Mrs. Bertie Weeks, wife of Jacob Weeks and daughter of Ferdinand Armstrong, first settler in Letter G (afterward Plantation G), incorporated in 1859 as Maysville.

Mrs. Weeks is now living in Mapleton on the State Road. She was born in Letter G and is a sister of Catherine Armstrong, the first white child born in the Aroostook Valley, in 1822. Mrs. Weeks was born in 1835, making her age at the present time 88 years.

Mrs. Weeks is well-preserved and remarkably intelligent lady who lives about four miles from our village, which she has seen grow to its present city-like proportions ... and is well informed as to its men, woman and other affairs.

She does the work for her family consisting of her son Fred and a hired man. She rises at four o'clock in the morning, summer and winter, which has been her practise since girlhood; she gets breakfast for the family in time to go to work as soon as it is light. She is also able to visit her old home farm neighborhood, her relatives and friends of which she has many.

To us she told the story of her early life and many reminiscences of the early days and their experiences in a clear and intelligent manner, which indicates a scholarly turn and strength of mind, although her school days were few, as her narrative will tell you. It will also convince you that she is a remarkable woman for one of her years and advantages.

She told of her early married life and also of the first settlers:

"I was born on father's farm, where Frank Ashby now lives, at what is known as Parkhurst Siding. For years there was no road on the east side of the river. When Veranus Chandler came to Aroostook in 1834, he walked over the Reach, and spent a night at father's house: he had to cross the river near there by boat, and then recross again below the Presque Isle stream to reach Fairbank's Corner.

"My father, Ferdinand Armstrong, moved to their home, where now Mr. Ashby lives, called in history by W. T. Ashby "Bradley's Island".

"The first settlers on this road were Thomas Fields, who came from Amherst, Nova Scotia, Benjamin Weeks, my father's father, who lived where Allie Scott now resides, and Leonard Brown, Thomas Field's father-in-law. There was also John Benjamin who married the daughter of David Nichols of Amherst, Nova Scotia: Mr. McDonald and Fred Bolstridge lived on the farm which is now the home of Augustus C. Bean.

"When Mr. Fields came from Nova Scotia, Mrs. Fields rode all the way on horse-back. I remember an exciting incident in the Fields family when I was a little girl. It occurred in the late November or first of December when the ice had frozen over, but before it was very strong. Mr. Fields thought he would give his wife and babe a ride on the ice. While they were riding they came upon a place where the ice was thin, and horse and family broke through and went in. Great was the excitement of the people living along the shores who came to their aid. Mrs. Fields with her babe floated down stream under the ice and was taken out some rods below through a hole in the ice, safe and happy save the ducking in Aroostook's cold December water." - - - If I am right in my recollection, Mrs. Weeks stood upon the shore, and saw the mother and babe taken out through the hole. - - -

"The roads on the east and west side of the river at this time of the first settlers, as is easily seen, were so inseparable that it is difficult to write their history without mixing and inter-mixing the one with the other, so close and intimate was the connection.

"Israel Morse, one of the first settlers, married Huldah Nichols daughter of David Nichols, also from Amherst N. S., David Nichols living on the farm next beyond the reach school house, which is now the home of W. H. Wheeler. This farm Mr. Nichols no doubt cleared and made because it was occupied quite a number of years by one of his sons after I became a neighbor by marriage.

"The next farm above, on the west side of the river was the farm and home of Andrew Scott, which is still in the possession and ownership of the family. Here Andrew Scott and his wife, who was Rehitable Dickerson of Woodstock, N.B., lived and died. They came from Woodstock in 1836.

"His son Lewis lived upon the farm from his sixth year of age until he was 71. His brothers were Robert, Andrew, Edward and

Wellington, who are all dead. His sisters were Lydia who married Sutter, Mrs. Lorenzo Tobin and Mrs. Mary Jane Tobin. The old Scott farm is one of the few farms along the river which has always remained in the family name. It is owned by Lewis Scott, Jr."

Mrs. Weeks, to whom we are indebted for the above sketch, keeps well informed with the questions of the day...

It is not easy for Mrs. Weeks to give up her life-long habits, and whoever rides by her home in summer or fall will see her large flock of turkeys and geese which she enjoys very much, and generally has ready to supply many homes at Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

Mrs. Weeks adds this bit of information about the first schools

"Of all the schools I attended I read out of the spelling book. We made our writing books out of birch bark; we had goose quills for pens. Our ink was made out of white maple bark, gun powder and blue vitrol. This school was taught evenings in father Armstrong's house or chamber by an old man from Nova Scotia, who lived on a lot where the Parkhurst Starch Factory stands."

She told how they were taught the multiplication table, etc. She remembers some of the pieces they were taught from the spelling book. The first school house was a log cabin near the Lewis Scott farm. Among the teachers was Angelie Tucker of Fort Fairfield, then Joel Bean.

When Mrs. Fields came from Nova Scotia she rode all the way on horseback. She recalled the death of the first child on the river as Tiny Sally, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Johnson, and was buried in the Johnson burying ground, probably where the Maysville Cemetary is. The Weeks family were buried where the A. C. Bean ground is.

Some may wonder why no more is said of Jonathon Park, the companion and brother-in-law of Mr. Armstrong. It is this; he settled in Fort Fairfield instead of Presque Isle, where he died. Leonard Thomas' wife was his daughter. The Thomas family is well remembered in our town and some of the descendents and relatives still reside here.

I speak of this because, as one has said, "The time has come when every scrap of history that relates to the early settlement of Aroostook will be treasured by historians to come as of great value."

THE PHILO BEAN FAMILY

The coming of Philo Bean and family is another of the early settlers on the road in Letter G which is worthy of special mention. He came to Aroostook about 1840, from Redfield, Kennebec County, Me., his son Joel came with him.

Mrs. Weeks is an authority about Mr. Bean's coming as her father helped move him in with a horse team, the names of the horses being Holly and Lark as she distinctly remembers. Probably Mr. Armstrong met the Beans at Houlton as the road from that place, or above Monticello was newly cut out and as was frequently done, someone went down and met the newcomers.

The Beans made the farms where Joel and Ozias lived, now the noted Hoyt and Wheeler Potato Farm. Their coming was an important and valuable accession to the community as the family was large and intelligent.

I find in the genealogy of the Bean family, this record a part of which I quote at length since there are so few of the genealogies of the early settlers of Aroostook in existence.

"The Bean family was of Scotch origin, descending from John Bean who came from Scotland prior to 1660, and settled in Exeter, N.H. His wife died on the passage, leaving one child, Mary.

"He married for his second wife a girl from the north of Ireland who accompanied them on the same ship. Mary, the child of the first wife, was born June 18, 1655, and John's second wife's child was born August 15, 1661.

"From this family nearly all the Beans of the country descended ---one line of descendants is through James 2nd, the eighth child of John the Scotchman. Then John 3rd, Joshua (4), who had two wives and twenty-one children.

"From this family one came to Gilmanton, N. F. and one to Readfield, Maine, in 1804; this was Joshua, Jr.

"The line of Joel of Readfield as descended from John Bean of Exeter, N. H. who came from Scotland about 1660 came John (1), James (2), John (3), Joshua (4), Joshua (5), Joel (6), Sinkler (4), Mary (5), Philo (7), Joel (8). As will be seen, we are descended from John (1), in two lines John (3) and sons Joshua (4) and Sinkler (4), Joshua (5), son of Joshua (4) who married Mary (5), daughter of Sinkler (4), were married. From that union came Joel, brother of Philo who came to Aroostook in 1840 and from whom the Haysville or or Presque Isle Beans descended..."

THE EARLY SETTLERS OF THE REACH ROAD

Passing to the other early settlers on the east side of the Aroostook River on the Reach Road, noted for being the first road settled in plantation Letter G, incorporated as Haysville, April 4, 1859, united with Presque Isle on Feb. 14, 1883, dating back to 1820 ---there were the families of the pioneers, Lewis and Chas. Johnson, William McBree, James Thompson, Cyrus Pomeroy, John Raymond, Richard Sutter, Mr. James Sutter, Edward Rideout, Joseph Boulier, David Delano, Philo Bean, Andrew Scott, James Nichols, John Nichols, and Joshua Bishop.

The above pioneers I give, as coming from the most reliable information of the few now living, some of whom were children of the early settlers, who can remember not only their names but personal characteristics, their manner of life, habits, who worked with them and attended school with their children.

Not being able to obtain genealogies of but a few families like the Beans, Pomeroy's, and Thompsons, because the records were never written, while we regret this deficiency, which may be a criticism we cannot avoid, we shall, however, give extracts of the few we are able to reach, which may be an aid for future information.

THE POMEROY FAMILY

Cyrus Pomeroy was born in Stocks, Maine, April 25, 1806, died in Maysville 1855. He was a soldier in the Aroostook War. He married October 5, 1832 in Merimachi, N. B., Miss Elizabeth Small.

Their children were (1) Mary born in Merimachi, N. B. Oct. 20, 1833, who died in infancy. (2) Elizabeth, born in Merimachi Aug. 6, 1837, lives in Smyrna, Maine. (3) Thomas, born in Merimachi Aug. 6, 1837, lives in Smyrna, Maine. (4) Mary Lovina, born in Maysville on April 12, 1840, died there April 18, 1873. She married James Sweetzer of Kennebec County. (5) Lidia Jane, born in Maysville June 30, 1842. (6) Charles C. born July 28, 1845. (7) Daniel Albert, born April 25, 1847. (8) William Allen, born May 25, 1849, living in Chapman, Maine. (9) George F. born Nov. 30, 1851, now living in Presque Isle. (10) Nancy Elizabeth born March 31, 1853; married George Kenniston of N. H. now living in East Cambridge, Mass. (11) Melvin Augustus born June 20, 1858; married (1) Rene Fields, child Perley now in Easton; married (2) Hattie Condon of Chapman, now living in Presque Isle. (12) David Walter born in Maysville Oct. 25, 1857, died in Maysville at the age of ten.

Charles C. (6) attended the public schools of Maysville and assisted his father on the farm until he enlisted Dec. 2, 1861 in Co C 15th Maine Regiment Infantry when only 16 years old. He served thru the Civil War and was mustered out as a Corporal July 5, 1866. He went to Augusta where his regiment remained until March 1862... the regiment was sent south on the ship "Great Republic", sailing from Portland...landed at Ship Island, then were sent to Santiago, Texas, where they took part in the battle of Espereno, Texas. He served through the Bouks campaign and took part in the battle of Sabine Bronroads, at Pleasant, at Cane River, crossing into Virginia, was in from Petersburg during the siege or battle. After General Lee surrendered he went to Washington and took part in the Grand Review. After the assassination of Lincoln, he was stationed at Charleston, S. C. He married in Caribou on May 18, 1867, Mary A. Landon of Grand Falls, N. B. who was a faithful helper and devoted wife.

From the families of the early settlers on this road...I am indebted to one who was born on one of these farms, who knew the families - parents and children - with whom he played and attended school in childhood days, worked, grew up and has since been a citizen. He is living today, was born in Letter G July 28, 1845...so of the times he speaks and writes, the information he gives seems to be most reliable and in the main, unquestionable authority.

Hence it is reasonable to suppose the list is correct and contains the names of the pioneers from 1827 to 1850 - 1860 very accurately.

And let me allude while passing, to the fact that all these settlers had to cross the Aroostook River, in winter on ice and in summer and fall by fording and scows, and small boats, for there was no bridge until 1860 when the bridge was first built by the State and town under the leadership of Sumner Whitney and others.