

trip a well-filled manger was awaiting them.

On arrival the traveller would notice several temporary huts of rough lumber with the inevitable stovepipe sticking through the flat roof. Through the one or two small windows he saw a smoking lantern. The main thoroughfare passing these huts was sometimes not easy to follow after darkness had fallen on the weary traveller.

The first act for a newcomer was to inquire for the "farmers" camp. This was in most instances made of logs, being put up as the first building by the owner of the sawmill before sawing operations were started and afterwards given over to people that stayed a few nights or until their own camp was put up.

These farmer camps sometimes were in a bad state of repair, nobody taking the trouble to fill holes in the roof or sidewalls, though plenty of firewood was always available free of charge. I remember seeing the stars through the roof at 30 below. We kept all our clothes on plus the fur coat and cap for extra protection.

Most of these sawmills had many patrons and did a thriving business all through the winter. Often the mills had to start sawing day and night by February to finish all the logs so as to clear out of the swamp before the breakup in the spring.

This night operation was of particular interest to the younger people. As the slabs had no commercial value at that time, they were all thrown into a fire that was kept going all winter, illuminating the dark nights around it. Then the weird call of the grey bush owl could be heard far away from some tree.

Another never to be forgotten picture is that of late loggers with big loads coming into the light, their steaming horses white with frost.

To my knowledge there was only one fatal accident involving the sawmills that operated for so many years around our community. A falling tree critically injured George Fast. He was brought home alive but died a few weeks later. He was the father of J. W. Fast the present Justice of Peace.

New timber areas sought in 1891-92

By around 1891 or '92, the supply of timber to the immediate east of the reserve was being exhausted and new cutting areas were being sought.

Playing a key role in establishing the site of the next major timber cutting area was Abram W. Reimer, son of Klaas Reimer. He became the son-in-law of Peter Barkman and joined as partner in operation of the first steam flour mill. After the mill burned down he left the partnership and went into the lumber business, blazing the trail to Pinehill in 1892 some 25 miles southeast of Steinbach in what later became known as the Bedford district. This remained the major Mennonite timber source for many winters.

In 1894 C. B. Loewen, father to C. T. Loewen, became a partner with Mr. Reimer. A few winters later, the sawmill was set up in Steinbach and a lumberyard business started at the present site of Steinbach Lumber Yards.

C. T. Loewen and Sons Ltd.

The firm of C. T. Loewen & Sons Ltd. had its beginning in 1905 when C. T. Loewen, then an enterprising young man of 22, left the family farm with his father's sawmill to go into the lumber business full time. For some years Mr. Loewen carried on the business from his home without the benefit of a downtown office.

The need for a Main Street office became apparent as business increased however, and in 1910 Mr. Loewen struck up a partnership with John R. Toews who was at that time running an implement agency and shop. This was a good arrangement because it left Mr. Loewen free to operate his lumber camps with a reliable salesman at home.

Until this time the business had been 100 per cent lumber but with the opening of a permanent office a line of builders' hardware, doors, windows, cement and other building materials were added.

Then came the first World War and business took a big swing upwards. Money became more plentiful and everybody with means was building a large, square, two-storey home. But this wasn't for Mr. Toews. True to the traditions of