

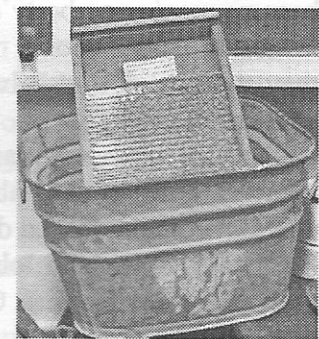
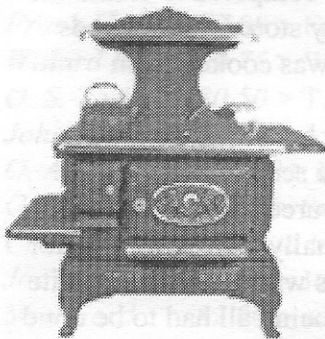
## A Country Boys View

Growing up in Crawford during the Depression and World War II by Gordon Lord

*The depression years for homemakers in rural areas were quite different than in the cities. The reason was the lack of electricity. Learn here what life was like before electricity. Thank you, Gordon!*

### MOM'S LONG DAY

Mother's daily responsibilities seemed to be never ending, actually, they were never ending. No electricity meant no running water; she often had to get water herself in a bucket. There was no icebox or refrigerator to keep food fresh, no decent illumination to work or read by, and of course the hundreds of electronic gismos, or gadgets available today were not even in anyone's brain, except for the far sighted, seventy years ago.



In our family, the day started with Dad getting up early to start the fire in the large, black kitchen cook stove. Mom could juggle at the same time baking bread in the oven, frying donuts on the stove top, cooking oatmeal, frying eggs and warming water to wash the meals dishes. During cold weather Dad would also light the living room heater each morning. While dad was doing his morning chores, Mother would be up cooking breakfast. After thanking God for his many blessings, we sat down to a breakfast of oatmeal or cream of wheat, toast and milk, or it could be eggs and, or pancakes, and sometimes a molasses donut, or two direct from the frying pan.

Kerosene lamps were used for light. By today's standards, illumination was quite poor, but we didn't know any different. There was no toaster, so bread was toasted on the stovetop. All cooking was done on the wood cookstove by our mother. Little if any, previously cooked foods were purchased at a grocery store. Food was cooked from scratch, by memory most of the time. The stove gave of a lot of heat, especially during canning season when it was already hot outside. This combination made it nearly unbearable for the housewife, slaving over the stove in a tiny kitchen with her cooking and canning. While the stove was hot she would also be baking bread, or pies or a cake, maybe a pot of beans, her family favorite. The dependable cook stove was used to heat the flatiron by setting it on top of the stove. This heated iron, a stone or brick wrapped in cloth was used to warm cold feet in bed during those cold, long winter nights in a house with no insulation of any type. Some of the brand names of stoves in those days, were Kalamazoo, Glenwood, Clarion and Franklin.

Canning season often began with the ripening of the berries. Among the popular berries for canning were the wild raspberries. This berry grows well in recently cut woodland. I often had to pick them with my mother as she thought me to be "a clean and fast picker." I wished I wasn't; besides I didn't like them. It was a family favorite so many of them had to be picked. Our father knew where the best berries were located and he provided precise directions. Occasionally bear would get there before we did, which kept us alert whenever we approached a berry patch, especially if she had a cub tagging along. The berries were collected in small buckets, which we would carry home, usually a mile or more away. Now the leaves and other debris was removed which was called picking over. Now it was left for Mom to do the canning.

Another similar berry is the blackberry which is much sweeter, that our mother did not can them because they were not growing in enough quantities, I presume.

There was, and still are, a good number of wild strawberries growing in our area. These are small and often found beside a roadway, as well as on edges of fields etc. They are sweet and delicious, but their use was mostly for jam and jellies. Its sister, is the cultivated strawberry, which is familiar to us all. I recall my father at one time attempted to commercially grow them, but he didn't have a lot of success for some unknown reason. Some food items Mom purchased were flour, sugar and molasses plus tea, coffee, salt, vinegar, baking soda and spices. Occasionally we had sardines, Spam during the war years, and deviled ham. Of course we had our own meat, beef, chicken and pork, milk, cream, butter, buttermilk, cottage cheese, both summer and winter apples and lots of vegetables, as well as that delicious home made ice cream. Molasses was very popular and had many uses, one of which became most everybody's favorite, molasses cookie. It seemed that housewives competed to create the tastiest molasses cookie recipe. Most housewives would not consider buying any store bought goods they could cook themselves, like bread, pastries and canned goods. Everything was cooked from scratch.

Besides the many quarts of berries to pick, pick over, and cook or can over a hot stove we grew many varieties of vegetables, which also needed to be picked and canned. Those seeds chosen to be planted were purchased during the springtime. Dad bought seed from several sources. I recall Taylor's Hardware, Calais and Johnny Stewart's in Milltown as his main vendors. He usually saved potatoes for seed the following year. Our father would have plowed the garden sites, perhaps with Doll our favorite mare. Next harrowing and rock picking would need to be completed, plus the hoeing all had to be done prior to planting. All of our family members were involved in the garden work. In a week or so some of the tiny plants of various size and shaped green heads would poke out of the cool fertile soil as they sprung to life, exactly the way the creator intended. Now, more hoeing and weed pulling would start while we debated whose job it would be. The peas and the tomatoes would need to be staked to keep them upright

Harvest time was from July to October. Again the whole family pitched in, but it was the housewife/mother who had to do the canning.

Why is it called "canning" when foods are cooked in a sealed "glass jar" to be eaten sometime in the future? Wouldn't "jarring" be more appropriate? A couple brands of snap-top canning jars that I recall were Mason and Ball. These were used over and over, because all you needed to do was replace the rubber seal. Previously used screw top bottles, containing items like coffee, and peanut butter were reused for canning pickles, beets and most berries and jams

I have a list of the items our mother canned one season. The year is not noted, but other items in the notebook were 1930 to 1934. Her canning products for the month of June were rhubarb and strawberries. In July, strawberries, rhubarb, and strawberries and rhubarb together, pineapple and rhubarb together, beet greens, raspberries and blueberries together, raspberries, currant jelly and peas. During August, she canned raspberries and blueberries together, blueberries, beans, peas, beans and peas mixed, sweet pickles, apple jelly, and applesauce. In September Mom canned, tomato pickles, mustard, sweet pickles, beans, peas, raspberries, blueberries, jelly and meat, probably deer meat.

**JAMES AGNEW'S STAGE  
SERVING CALAIS – EASTPORT – PEMBROKE**

Brenda Sabattus of Indian Township gave A-CHS a stagecoach logbook. David McCullough of GLS told us about the book and Kathy Diffin of Princeton arranged for the transfer. A-CHS greatly appreciates the help of these folks, but will give the book to the St. Croix Historical Society as James Agnew lived in Red Beach.

The title of this article is made up. We make an educated guess that James Agnew was the owner of this stage. The 1891 Maine Register lists James Agnew of Red Beach as in the livery business. The 1881 George Colby Atlas shows James Agnew's home opposite the Shattuck Road, on what is labeled as Agnew Point. The second clue as to ownership of the stage is found inside the front cover where it is written *George Agnew, Boston, Maine*. What's the meaning of *Boston*?

This is followed by many pages. On the top of each page is a name, such as *Fancy, Carlile Charlie, Lucy, Fred, and Annie*. Were these names of horses? Dates appear on some pages and are almost all in 1891. Then on each page is a list of people's names followed by dollar amounts. Let's look at a selected few entries:

**Chas. Lyons \$3.00 to Calais \**

*Man to Eastport \$1.50* > These three entries define the area of service.

*Man to Pembroke \$2.00 /*

*Frank Hodins \$2.00* > Frank lived on the Carson Road in Calais

*Willard Lane \$0.75* > Willard was a cooper who lived in Red Beach near Plaster Mill Cove.

*O. S. Tarbox \$0.50* > Tarbox was superintendent of the Red Beach Granite Works

*John Bohanon \$1.50* > John lived on the River Road in Calais, near Pratt's today.

*O. A. Jamerson \$1.00* > In 1891, Jamerson was Post Master in Red Beach

*Good Nash \$1.50* > Several Nash families lived in Robbinston.

*Chas. Synotl \$1.50 to train* > The train was the St. Croix and Penobscot that ran to Princeton.

*Joe Maloney \$1.50* > Joe lived almost in Red Beach, opposite Devil's Head.

*Mrs. Ford \$2.00* > one Ford family lived in Red Beach, another in Robbinston.

A separate page deals with *R. D. Pottle Horse Shoeing*. This was Robert Pottle, also of Red Beach. Among the items on this account are: *Grain \$5.00, Chimney \$0.10, Straw \$2.65, Powders \$0.30, Sponge \$0.20, Washers for the wagon \$0.50, Wagon to Gillespie \$5.00 and Lent Millie Kent \$1.00*. The wagon was likely taken to J. K. Gillespie, wagon painter in Calais.

Near the middle of the book is a page thus labeled: *This year I have been in 30 places, 34 ½ days besides being in my office and a month sick and two weeks vacation. My pony went on just the same*. Here are the places listed, except one that we couldn't read. After each place was a money value, usually less than a dollar. What was going on here? Why would a man spend 34 days earning less than a dollar a day, when entries elsewhere in the book indicate the stage business paid more? Note, Dover and Foxcroft became one town in 1922. Oldtown is the old spelling.

*Calais, Red Beach, Portland, Bangor, Waterville, Augusta, Dover, Foxcroft, Houlton, Eastport, Gorham, Machias, Lubec, Perry, Camden, Woodland, Addison, Sullivan, Baring, Newport, Carroll, Princeton, Bar Harbor, Ellsworth, Bucksport, Marion, Belfast, Unity, Oldtown*

A-CHS always appreciates getting any old documents. Those that belong elsewhere will be sent along, after we create an article for our readers.

