

Life in Edwards As I Remember It

- In the late 19th century -

As told by Frank L. Raymond, April 12, 1944

The drawing accompanying this story was the home of Chauncey Knox Raymond and Catharine A. Smith Raymond at Edwards, St. Lawrence County, New York. The house on the corner was known as the "Little Red House" where my folks lived while building their home. This home was built during the summer of 1866 where their son, Frank Leslie Raymond, was born on November 28th, 1866.

I am that son and made this drawing and wrote the following story during my leisure moments in the winter and spring of 1944. Although I am past 77 years of age the early years of my life are very plain to me. Many changes have taken place, in life and death, in the way of living and in the cost of materials. Many improvements over the horse and buggy days have come about. The automobile, airplane, telephone, radio and electricity are all new.

When this home was built hemlock lumber was worth \$6.00 per 1000 feet, spruce and pine \$10 - \$12. The shingles used were hand shaved spruce at \$3.00 per thousand.

The original roof is still in good condition. The large kitchen and woodshed are back of the wing. The woodshed bottom is down to the ground which is 3 feet below the level of the kitchen floor. It is open to the roof and provides storage for 75 to 80 cords of wood. Furnace or steam plants were not used; wood was the fuel for heating, and with stoves. Wood being our only fuel, Father would buy, during the winter, 75 to 100 cords of green maple, beech, and birch 20 inch stove wood delivered in our yard at \$1.00 per cord. Some was split fine, other in the slab, for the heating stove. This would remain in the yard during the spring to season, then it was my job to put it in the shed and pile it to the roof.

This house was considered a high class home although we were just an ordinary family. As was usual, the large front room was reserved for a parlor to be closed up and used on special occasions only. The parlor was finished in white enamel. The living and dining room was in the wing section. This was finished with pine wainscoting 3-½ feet high. The painting, as in most homes, was graining to imitate such woods as cherry, maple, oak or ash. I have seen Father point to the parlor door many times and say, "That door cost me \$18 to have it painted". That meant some time was required with labor at \$1.50 per day of 10 or 12 hours.

The outside of the house was white with green blinds. The barn was built a few years later. The outside was spruce coping and sealed inside with pine to the eaves. At that time the Rice and Emery Tannery was operating at Edwards and the space between the studding of this barn was filled with hemlock tanbark which made it warm and vermin proof. A box stall was provided for our horse off the carriage room and we had one cow. The Ash and Poultry houses and Pigpen were added later.

This home is on a lot of ½ acre of rich black soil. The garden was fertilized each year with the manure of the horse and cow stable. In those days much planning had to be done for winter supply of vegetables and to see that nothing was wasted. The large cellar is six feet deep which makes a grand vegetable cellar. Our cellar was arranged on a systematic plan with a large potato bin built about one foot from the floor, boxes of sand provided to pack vegetables, and a



**Frank L. Raymond
1866-19??**

platform 4 inches high by 2 feet wide built around the wall to place the pork, apple, soap, sauerkraut and pickle barrels, also for smaller crocks.

We always had 40 to 50 bushels of good sorted potatoes. They were worth 25 to 40 cents per bushel. The small ones were fed to the pig, first being cooked and mixed with corn meal.

We had several rows of sweet corn and when at its peak, the corn was cut from the cob and placed on tins or trays to dry for our winter use. The perfect ears of yellow corn were traced up to dry, later to be shelled for hen food. The cull ears were fed to the pig. We always raised enough popcorn for our use during those long winter evenings. After the corn was harvested, the stalks were cut and stored in the barn and later cut by machine for the cow.

The cabbages, after making a large crock of sauerkraut, were pulled up by the roots and hung from the ceiling of the cellar. There was always a good supply of cucumbers, and a full barrel of pickle size was packed in salt for sour pickles. Many were left to grow and ripen and these were made into sweet pickles. Tomatoes were not raised as plentifully as today when they are considered our leading vegetable. Just a few ripe ones were used and the green ones made into sweet pickles.

Very few green peas, string beans or such were canned and we had to wait for next season for a fresh supply. And people could not run out to a grocery store during the winter and get a head of lettuce as of today. Our bed of parsnips was left in the ground during the winter. They made a nice spring vegetable. In some corner of the garden we had several roots of horseradish that made a nice spring tonic.

Mother always looked after her bed of caraway to use in making sugar or butter cookies, seldom seen today. She also had her small bed of dill, sage and mint. We had four crabapple trees that furnished nice sauce and jellies. Father's favorite lineament was wormwood and vinegar and he had a shrub of wormwood growing.

In those early days in small villages every family raised a pig for their supply of pork for the winter. There was much strife as to who would have the best pig. Ours was generally up with the top ones and would dress about 300 pounds. On the day of the slaughter, the family would feast on pig's liver. When the pig was ready to cut up, the leaf lard and other pieces of fat were rendered, even the scraps were saved, pressed dry, salted and laid away to lunch on. The sparerib was taken out with the whole rib and most of the lean meat (now called pork chop or loin) was left on the sparerib. These were used fresh for Christmas or New Year dinners and was preferred to turkey or chicken. The hocks and shanks were pickled and used for boiled dinners. The shoulders were ground into sausage, seasoned and packed into pans with a light covering of lard and stored in the cold room. The hams were prepared and pickled, then smoked in the ash house with cobs saved from the corn shelled for the hens. The broadside pork was packed in salt in a 30 gallon crock, then enough water was added to make a brine to cover and a heavy weight placed on top. The head was skinned of meat that was made into head cheese.

For the beef supply, father would buy one fore and two hind quarters at 4 ½ cents and 5 ½ per pound. Minced meat was then made - about 100 pounds. This was stored in stone crocks. Mother was an artist in the making of minced meat. Next was the rump, brisket and chucks taken for corned beef. The leg, or ham of beef, was sliced into steak and packed in the cold room. The suet and fat were rendered and used for many purposes. The shank with many pounds of meat left on the bone was used for soup.

My father was a grand provider for man or beast, and milk was a large item of our living. He said a cow could not produce milk unless being well fed so ours had a pail full of corn and oats or bran made into a mash twice daily and she responded with a 12 quart pail of rich creamy milk twice a day for nearly the entire year. We used plenty of milk for cooking and on the table. Mother took care of the surplus, putting it in pans arranged on a rack in the pantry with orders for no one to disturb it. After about 48 hours it would sour and the cream was taken off and made into butter, which was also an item in our family. The sour milk that was not made into cottage cheese was divided with the hens and pig. The hens furnished a good supply of fresh eggs and a fowl for roasting when desired.

We had two sugar tubs made with covers and holding about 50 pounds each. These were sent out to a farmer in the spring and filled with soft maple sugar. This was used to sweeten Johnny cake and sweeten biscuits. We also bought 10 or 12 gallons of maple syrup at 75 cents to 90 cents per gallon.

Our breakfast in those days was a regular meal and not a make believe one as of today. We had a stack of griddle cakes with syrup, hash brown potatoes and a large slab of sausage or ham with homemade bread and one or more cups of Old

Government Java Coffee. Our cereal was not of 100 different kinds but instead was the old-fashioned whole kernel oatmeal cooked over night.

Father would buy a 60 pound full cream September cheese that cost 6 to 7 cents per pound. Meat markets, or butcher shops, as they were called, would only be open a couple days each week, or just after they had slaughtered a beef, hog, lamb, or veal. Most people considered that meat should be used as soon as possible. The ruling price was 10 cents per pound for round, sirloin or porter house steak, pork steak, lamb or chicken. Beef shanks with 4 or 5 pounds on was 25 cents. The liver, heart, and tongue were given away free to customers.

You might wonder about our entertainment or amusement as there were no moving pictures, radio, or electric lights. When night came on it was black dark on the streets and grownups and children did not roam the streets at all hours of the night as is done today. Our evenings were spent at home with the family, both grownups and children. Some evenings a large dishpan would be popped full of corn. Some liked this with milk and sliced apples, others enjoyed it with melted butter and salt. Another evening it would be a large pan of apples, on another a pan of cracked butternuts when all would gather around the table and pick the meats out. Butternuts were very plentiful around Edwards. We would gather 10 or 12 bushels each year. These would be stored above the kitchen to dry. They never spoil, are just as good when 5 or 6 years old, and they cost nothing, only the gathering.

There were no rich people in those days, but many well to do, and all hard-working people. No one ever starved or went hungry; neither did they count their vitamins. I think the families and children were as happy and contented as of today. We were early to bed and early to rise. We slept on rope bedsteads with generously filled straw ticks on top, had plenty of wool blankets and flannel underwear. Money was not so easy to get, but more caution was used in spending.

Our family was large; 6 of our own, and Grandfather and Grandmother Raymond lived with us in their latter years. Also two of Father's employees, Myron Huntley and Oscar Allen, boarded with us and Mother had a hired girl part of the time, so there were 11 hungry people to feed at each meal. Father purchased a second hand dining table from a Mr. Barbour for \$55. It was solid black walnut with 6 inch legs, had three 18 inch extra leaves and could seat 14 people. That table is still with the family relatives.

Frank L. Raymond , April 12th, 1944

Historian's notes:

The original of this document was donated to the Edwards History Center in the summer of 2002 by a gr. gr. nephew of Frank L. Raymond, Clarke L. Kidder, of New Hampshire.

For those familiar with the village of Edwards today, the house referred to in this story is the current home of Mert and Pat Rice at 193 Main Street.



Click on the drawing of the house to see the author's artistic rendering of their home in the late 1800's