

George Cobb tapes

Tape 44
Transcription

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Curve Lake, Christopher McKue [McCue], recorded June 19 1966

I shall be 82 on my next birthday in October. I was just a young lad when my mother died. My father got married 4 or 5 years after that, got married again to a woman at Christian Island near Penetang, and he moved there and lived there. I stayed home with my sister. My sister was big and got married and my brother was away to Georgina Island and he lived there. I was all alone then. I had my father's house and I sold the house and I sold the land. I started to work for a farmer, across here, in Smith Township for 11 dollars a month. I used to stay at the farm during the week and came home on Saturday evening. I used to pitch hay, drive team, pick stones, plough, threshing, and harvesting. I was the only man on the farm with the boss. I must have worked on the farm for 3 or 4 years off and on. The highest pay I got was 18 dollars a month.

I did my lumbering way up at -- they call it Cavendish, way up here, north, near Gull Lake. And I went as far as Sudbury, up around there, lumbering. Dryden. I stayed in the shanties all winter. Sometimes there were over 100 men in the shanties. We had straw mattresses and a blanket on a kind of a bunk on the side of the camp (shanty). I don't remember any of the old logging songs. I used to saw logs. I used to cut trails. I used to roll logs, that's what I done in the camp.

I used to drive the logs on the river all summer, bringing them out of Gull Lake. We used to bring them out to Buckhorn and I was driving way up north in Georgian Bay, at French River. (I gather that he drove the logs down French River and then another gang took over and brought the logs south using a tug to tow the booms). They used to draw the logs with a horse capsule with 2 horses on the crib. I used to drive an alligator. They took the anchor out in a punt and would drop it way down (i.e. far away).

We used to work day and night. We had 2 gangs, one for the day and one for nights. The bunkhouse and the cookery were on the crib. I lived on the lake all summer. The alligator belonged to one of --. We used to have a big drum inside that Alligator with the cable. When we were going to pull out a block of logs, the drum would go and we would pull that block of logs.

There was a man with the engine (in the alligator). There was a wheel there you could drive. You steered it the same as a boat. It was like a boat. It had side wheels. It burnt wood. It started up with steam. The engineer starts the engine and the cable would go and pull the blocks (of logs) all day. Some of the blocks of logs would be 120,000 logs. We used to have drives go by here and by Buckhorn, Burleigh, Young's Point and right through to Peterborough, Rice Lake and right through to Trent River. We took the alligator right through to Trent River. It could pull itself. If it was on that side of the lake, it would go right through here (i.e. over land) to that other lake. It would pull itself with the cable. They had a flat bottom just like a punt. We just had the wheeler, the engineer and one deck man on the alligator, to look after the ropes.

The horses ran right around, pulling the anchor on the crib, ran right clean around, all day. They worked about the same as the alligator. It's a slow job moving the anchor with a horse. The alligators lasted a long time. They would work all night without stopping and all day towing the logs. The highest I got the river driving was 104.00 a month. That must be about 50 years ago, I guess. We got our board as well as the pay, four meals a day, good meals, whatever you want. Two cooks and a chore boy, we got better food than salt pork and we got roasts. After the logging, I quit. I hung up the blocks, retired. I quite lumbering about 40 years ago and I've been around here (Curve Lake) ever since. I was born right here but I have half brothers on Christian Island. I heard no stories of the old days.