



Heritage Project

Hello!
I am Barb Thomson

Barb and John lived in the first log house which had been built in Little Red Deer District in 1890. It was moved to the Innisfail Historical Village in 2017. "When our grandchildren come to visit, we take them to the house at the Village and tell them stories of bygone days."



Barb was born and raised on the family farm north of Bowden, where the refinery is located. Her grandmother had moved to the area with her own family when she was 10 years old, traveling from Ontario to take up homesteading. They had been on the train for five days, and arrived in Bowden on New Year's Day in 1893. They soon established a cheese factory.

Meanwhile, Barb's grandfather had joined the Yukon Field Force and trekked from Ontario to the Yukon in 1898 to keep order during the Gold Rush. Later, when the soldiers were deployed to South Africa, he stopped to visit with friends and relatives at Bowden before he was to go overseas. But he met Barb's Grandma and never left! Once married, they farmed for a spell and then he ran the Bowden Post Office for 34 years.

Barb's dad was born on that farm and eventually took it over, raising dairy cows in the 1950's and shipping the milk to the Alpha Dairies plant in Red Deer. The separated milk was poured into large milk cans and moved by a stone boat, which was pulled by horses or a tractor, from the barn down the lane to the # 2A highway where a truck would collect it daily. They took the cream in those cream cans to the Bowden Creamery once or twice a week. A stone boat consists of one log on either side with about six feet of planks in between. They were originally built to remove stones from the fields, but farmers used them for many other purposes!

"The truck would come by at night to drop off the empty cans. These are the 'antique cans' that people paint pictures on now! Because we had all that milk, we would have whipped cream with Jello on Sunday as a treat from the separated cream. Dairy was a big, memorable part of my life growing up."

Barb and her husband John lived in the first log house built in 1890 in the Little Red Deer District, and they raised three children there. John was born and lived in that house for 55 years, until they built another house on the property. The Sinclair House was moved to the Innisfail Historical Village in 2017, and Barb & John moved into Innisfail in 2014. John had lived on that same land for 80 years! Their son Warren and his family have now taken over the farm.

Barb's Recipe - Great Granny's Oatcakes

Circa 1907

- 2 1/2 cups oatmeal
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup lard
- 1 tsp soda
- 1/2 cup cold water
- 1 tsp vanilla

Mix all dry ingredients with lard, as you would with pastry.

Add soda and vanilla into the 1/2 cup water, before adding to the dough.

Roll thin (about 1/4 inch, as they rise when baking)

Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 10-15 minutes

Barb included a note that these oatcakes, along with lemonade, were served to wedding guests between the ceremony and supper in her extended family.